



5-6-2009

Jared Brown Discusses His Book

Charlie Schlenker
WGLT, Illinois State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/wgl_t_interviews



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schlenker, Charlie, "Jared Brown Discusses His Book" (2009). *Interviews for WGLT*. 116.
https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/wgl_t_interviews/116

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Interviews for WGLT by The Ames Library faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University with thanks to WGLT. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

A Bloomington Normal author and retired theater professor has published his first work of fiction. WGLT's Charlie Schlenker has more, on the mysteries of Jared Brown...

=====

[N:\news\DATESAVE\05-15jaredbrownqa.wav]

:05:02 me atc soq

=====

Charlie Schlenker: Jared Brown of Bloomington has written several well-received books on the history of the theater including some biographies. Brown says he's wanted to write fiction though for a long time. The book is called *Mind the Gap*, a novel packaged with two other shorter mysteries.

Jared Brown: Actually this story is this: I used to take students to London along with my wife for theater tours in May and we would see twelve plays in London and Stratford and one day on one of the tours, one of the students said to me, "I know that you write books but I had no idea what kind of books you write and what sort of books do you write?" And so just off the top of my head, just as a joke, I said, "Well, I write books about students who go to London and one of them gets murdered," and after having said that I thought, a few weeks later, I thought that'd be a pretty good idea for a mystery novel and so that's—formed the basis of the story and then I went from there.

Charlie Schlenker: Why mystery instead of literary fiction or something that would fit more with theater?

Jared Brown: I don't know if I can answer that Charlie. I just was drawn this story I guess and having written one mystery, I decided that in this volume I wanted to include a couple of other shorter pieces of mystery fiction, so I don't know that I had a specific reason for that. It's just that it turned out that way.

Charlie Schlenker: So, for listeners, describe it—is it a cozy, is it a hardboiled, what kind of mystery is it?

Jared Brown: The main novel, *Mind the Gap*, is—fits neither of those descriptions I think. A suspense story I guess. It involves at some point a detective but he plays a relatively minor role in the story so it basically follows these eight students plus their two professors and almost all of the activity takes place within that group, although there are outside characters as well who figure in the novel.

Charlie Schlenker: Do you read mysteries?

Jared Brown: Yeah, I do. I used to read a lot more but I—I mean I used to read mysteries at the rate of say, one a week but I don't keep up that sort of pace now but I do read mysteries. I have a good time with it.

Charlie Schlenker: Did that help or hurt with the writing process?

Jared Brown: You know, I have no idea what it would have been like if I had never read a mystery before but I guess having read mysteries, I'm somewhat familiar with the conventions and in some respects I wanted to try to alter the conventions in this book, at least the conventions I'm familiar with. But I've read a lot of awfully good mystery writers. I really appreciate—I'm going back many years now—but I really appreciate Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, bringing it up more to the present—Robert B. Parker—people of that ilk.

Charlie Schlenker: What do you enjoy about the writing process?

Jared Brown: Well, let me deal first with this question of what people—many people don't seem to enjoy about it. They say it's such a lonely life and you never get to see people and you're isolated all the time and I must say that never bothers me at all. I enjoy the writing process. I get a great kick out of it, especially when I feel I've accomplished something during the day. I like to just go down and stare at the blank computer for a while, blank computer screen, and see if I can fill it up with something interesting and if I do then what comes next? What might happen next? And that next—that gets entered into the computer and then if I can end the day with four or five pages, I feel great.

Charlie Schlenker: One author's remarks that there's nothing quite so terrifying as an empty page...

Jared Brown: I know that that's also a belief that many people have and I've never really quite felt that way for two reasons. One is that when I was writing biographies, I would spend more time probably preparing to write them than I would and actually write them because I would be interviewing people for months and months and months and as I interviewed them, of course, I would be thinking of, "Well how does this interview fit with this interview and this piece of information with this piece of information?" And in a sense I was already writing the biography before I ever sat down to put actual words on the computer screen, so when I was confronting that blank screen, it wasn't really very daunting because I knew what I wanted to do and essentially the way I wanted to do it. Now that's not quite so true in fiction but I also enjoy that other process of looking at the blank screen, inventing a line let's say or a paragraph, and then seeing whether that leads to another line or paragraph and how the two can be tied together or what needs to be filled in between the two or maybe that first paragraph has to be—has to be disregarded and so I take the blank screen as a kind of challenge that I enjoy meeting.

Charlie Schlenker: You can find *Mind the Gap* and the other two stories in the volume, a whimsical mystery and an affectionate spoof of the hardboiled detective genre, at Amazon or at Babbitt's Books in Normal. Jared Brown's other works include *The Fabulous Lunts*, *Zero Mostel: The Biography*, and *The Films and Life of Alan J. Pakula*. I'm Charlie Schlenker, WGLT News.

