

**SHOW GUIDE**

**MCC  
THEATER**

world premiere musical

# **THE CONNECTOR**

book by **JONATHAN MARC SHERMAN**

music & lyrics by **JASON ROBERT BROWN**

conceived & directed by **DAISY PRINCE**

choreographed by **KARLA PUNO GARCIA**





# PROFILE

Study someone in your life for 5 – 10 minutes. Note what they do, how they talk, and where they go. Write a 1 paragraph profile on them.

## OVERVIEW

THE CONNECTOR is a new musical following a young journalist on the hunt for the next best story. The show dives into the world of the mid-1990s, a time when the face of journalism was rapidly changing. In 1980, CNN became the first 24-hour news station which forever altered the landscape of the industry. At the same time, media companies began to merge, newspaper readership declined, and cable television became culturally dominant.

## DEMOGRAPHICS IN JOURNALISM IN THE 1990S

The 1990s were a time of cultural shifts. The era was defined by the rise in popularity of Rap and Hip-Hop, the boom of Wall Street and capitalistic greed, and the increase in representation and focus on “multi-culturalism.”

- In 1990, only 8.72% of journalists were Black, Hispanic, Asian or Indigenous/Native American despite making up at least 25% of the population (1).
- 51% of organizations had 0 journalists of color. The majority of these were in rural areas (1).
- Between 1994 and 2004, 44% of news organizations saw decreases in workforce diversity, while 37% remained run by entirely white staffs (2)
- In 1990, 39% of newsroom staff were women (3).
  - 28% were executives and managers
- In 2001, women made up 40% of TV and Radio staffs, and 35% of managers.
- Despite initiatives made to employ greater numbers of white women and men of color, retention in their positions was difficult due to reported poor working conditions and treatment from white male colleagues (3).

## THE TABLOID DECADE

To the right are some news stories that fueled the 24-hour cycle around when THE CONNECTOR takes place. With these garnering international television attention, print journalists felt the pressure to find new ways of captivating consumers. During the 1980s and 1990s, “gossip columns” and advice segments became increasingly popular, bringing tabloids and magazines to become the top-selling publications. At the end of the 90s, Vanity Fair deemed the era to be “the tabloid decade,” with the “tabloidification of news, culture, and even human behavior.” This human-focused, story-centric type of storytelling came in various forms with varying degrees of prestige. Ethan, one of THE CONNECTOR’s protagonists, works in what is known as “profiling.”

## TIMELINE

- **1998**  
Bill Clinton was impeached and denied relationship with Monica Lewinsky
- **1995**  
Oklahoma City bombing
- **1994-95**  
O. J. Simpson slow-speed police chase and Trial
- **1994**  
Sinéad O’Connor rips up a photo of the Pope on SNL
- **1992**  
Los Angeles Watts rebellion
- **1991**  
Police brutality of Rodney King
- **1990**  
CNN covers the Gulf War
- **Ongoing from 1990-1997**  
The media frenzy surrounding Princess Diana and the Royal Family

# READ

Look up a profile of a public figure you're interested in. Reflect on what was compelling about the way it was written.

## PROFILING

A profile is a biographical essay, usually developed through a combination of anecdote, interview, incident, and description.

Reports of short-form biography-based storytelling in print date to the 1730s, but has since become a common practice. Contemporary profiling as journalism is credited to The New Yorker in 1925 and still remains the leader in the field. To create a profile, a journalist may utilize a combination of interviews, observations, and assessments of the subject's works to build a narrative.

This is where this genre becomes controversial. Subjects of profiles occasionally take issue with the end result, not liking how they are depicted. Journalists are still bound by journalistic integrity and are not allowed to fabricate experiences. Yet in this medium, the journalist is also a storyteller, crafting a narrative. Journalist and author Helen Benedict claims "profile writers have the artistic license to recreate people, not to create them from scratch."

## KEY WORDS FROM THE WORLD OF JOURNALISM (4)

**Standards and Ethics:** at larger organizations, these can be full regulatory departments that ensure that content published/aired follows guidelines set by networks and producers. Other organizations have published Code of Ethics guides that are accessible to the public.

**Fact Checking:** Department or organizations that check resources, citations, statistics, or any other claims in a piece of media

**Journalistic Integrity:** the SPJ (society of professional journalists) deem that the following are the tenets of ethical journalism

- Seek truth and report it
- Minimize harm
- Act independently
- Be accountable and transparent

**Source:** Anyone Interviewed for a story

- On-the-Record: sources that are named and identified in an interview
- Off-the-Record: An anonymous source

**Copy Editor:** A person who corrects or edits copy written by a reporter

**Editorial:** An article written by, or on behalf of, an editor, giving the news organization's opinion on an issue

## ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

This quest of ethics becomes the center of debate in the world of THE CONNECTOR. In 2023, we have furious and frequent conversations about what is "fact" and what is "fake news." Throughout the 1900s, new publications firmly established themselves as sources of unbiased fact. In the 1990s, the general population trusted most major media conglomerates to report "the truth." However, as mentioned, this was a time of change. Since 1999, there has been a consistent decline of American trust of the media at large (5).

### SCANDALS WITHIN THE JOURNALISM COMMUNITY IN THIS ERA

**Janet Cooke:** Pulitzer Prize winner in 1981 for profile "Jimmy's World" about an 8-year-old heroin addict. It was later found out to have no source or basis in reality.

**Ruth Shalit Barret:** in 1994 and 1995, Barret was discovered to have plagiarized and falsified articles for the New Republic.

**Stephen Glass:** Most famous and notable fraudulent profile journalist, many of his articles were based on people who were anonymous or had no sources

**Jack Kelley:** Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2002. In 2004, USA found that 4 of his stories were completely fabricated.

**Jayson Blair:** In 2003, he was discovered to have fabricated or plagiarized many of his stories written for The New York Times.

## CONCLUSION

Storytelling is a form of art, but the medium chosen to do so matters. THE CONNECTOR probes the blurry of the lines between fact, art, and a good story. In an environment where ambition, glass ceilings, inequality, and integrity are all called into question, we're left asking if truth is even attainable.

Sources:

- (1) <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/12/us/editors-report-gains-in-1990-in-minority-journalist-hiring.html>
- (2) <https://www.powerreporting.com/knight/>
- (3) <https://niemanreports.org/articles/a-pioneering-generation-marked-the-path-for-women-journalists/>
- (4) <https://www.thenewsmanual.net/Resources/glossary.html>
- (5) <https://news.gallup.com/poll/176042/trust-mass-media-returns-time-low.aspx>

## DEBATE

Write down what you deem to be objective truths, or, if truth is subjective. With a partner discuss what you agree and disagree on.