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ATTEMPTING QUEEN MARGARET THROUGH THE ACTOR'S EQUATION

By

Elizabeth Ann Tantarella Burrell  
B.A., Adams State College, 2009

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Department of Theatre Arts  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky  
May 2012

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A Thesis Approved on

April 4, 2012

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my brother, who first introduced me to the world of  
theatre and ignited my love of Shakespeare

Mr. Daniel Joseph Francis Tantanella

And to my mother, who gives nothing but her undying support and love

Ms. Margaret Mary Rose Tantanella.

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ABSTRACT

ATTEMPTING QUEEN MARGARET THROUGH THE ACTOR'S  
EQUATION Elizabeth Ann Tantanella Burrell

May 12, 2012

This thesis is a brief examination of what is required to create a successful performance onstage, where a successful performance is defined by the audiences understanding of the text through the actor's performance. With that understanding comes a chance for the audience to reach a catharsis that can only be created in live theatre. The theory of "The Actor's Equation" is defined and applied to the performance of Queen Margaret in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, a production presented at the University of Louisville in October 2011.

The thesis is broken into four chapters including actor training, the challenges and fears of playing Queen Margaret, the Linklater performance technique and its application, and finally the results of the performance. The first half of the thesis is focused on the personal performance history of the actor and how this effected the performance of Queen Margaret as well as training specific to the University of Louisville's theatre arts program. The latter half of the thesis delves into the Linklater technique and the relationships developed between the director and fellow actors. It ends with result gleaned in use of the Actor's Equation and how this theory can be applied in future performances.

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## INTRODUCTION

Theatre is an electrifying way to create communities based on sheer humanity within minutes. While walking into a theatre, each audience member is a complete stranger. But within the theatre they are given the opportunity to laugh together, to cry together, to scream or shudder, to allow themselves to live through an imaginary world together; and whether that world is enlightening or frightful, individuals can allow themselves to connect with perfect strangers while unconsciously reminding themselves what it is to be human. Without knowing it, audiences leave the building having made a connection not only each other but with the actors as well.

Because theatre is live and ever changing, the actor's connection with audiences is changing. Theatre, and specifically acting, has become my vessel of connection with others in a world where people are becoming more disconnected. In an age of film, television, cell phones, text messaging, and internet; in a world where we are taught to never talk to strangers, I am allowed a safe chance to remind myself and audience members that not only is it acceptable to make eye contact, it is absolutely necessary in order to make full emotional connections with other human beings to thrive and survive together. Although the communities that are created are fleeting, they exist for a moment in time. Each new community

created with each new audience gathered allows one more opportunity to experience a world together—even if that world is imaginary.

If Shakespearean language stands as the ledge, the actor must use it to jump. The question is: will the actor fly or fall from that ledge? Within the world of a Shakespeare performance, the text can be what hinders or exalts the actor; it is what can create an engaging performance or it can create a long, uncomfortable three hours. In our modern world, an archaic text that is left misunderstood is the biggest obstacle in an audience's creation of community through shared emotional experience. If the audience can't understand the language, they have a tendency to 'turn off', not only from the actors and the production, but also from the vulnerability that exists with each other. If the obstacle of language can be conquered in Shakespeare, then dynamic communities can be created---the audience in relationship with the actors and production as a whole as well as the actors within themselves, the stage crew, the designers, and the director.

In the production of *Richard III*, I was most concerned with my relationship with the text and more importantly, the audience's connection with the text through my performance. The University of Louisville Theatre Department put Shakespeare's *Richard III* in production October 9<sup>th</sup> through October 11<sup>th</sup> 2011 in the Thrust Theatre. In this production I was chosen to play the part of Queen Margaret as well as the part Prince Edward as my thesis roles. In the production of *Richard III* the obstacle of translating the

actor/text relationship and text/community relationship was challenged greatly by the director, Dr. Rinda Frye's, use of the Linklater techniques.

The challenge in the Linklater techniques came first with shifting the traditional visually aided rehearsal process, where the script is studied by the cast in table work and used onstage until the last two weeks of rehearsal, into Linklater auditory inspired rehearsals, where the lines are given to the actor to repeat and the script is never carried onstage. In this way, developing the relationship between actor and text was approached in a very non-traditional manner in an attempt to improve the relationship between the audience community and the text. The relationship between the actor and the text is developed throughout the rehearsals, where my work on Queen Margaret and Prince Edward could be summed up in what is called the "actor's equation".

### **THE SUCCESSFUL ACTOR'S EQUATION**

While developing the roles of Queen Margaret and Prince Edward in Richard III, I have discovered that a successful actor will create a common community by bridging the gap between audience and text through a specific arrangement, which I will refer to as the "actor's equation." In order to bridge this gap, the actor's equation involves two equal yet binary parts. First, the actor must understand the text on an intellectual level. The actor will come to understand the text intellectually by studying family lineage and history of all the characters in the play, real or imaginary, but draw more

focus to the characters he or she is playing. The actor will understand the text more fully by knowing her characters' purpose in the storyline and how those characters drive the plot forward, and by understanding the dynamic relationships with the other characters in the play. Finally, the actor will understand wholeheartedly the characters' full capability in terms of power, and this understanding should be supplemented with performance theory or theories relating to that character's purpose in the play. It is with this final understanding that an actor will know the limits of acting impulses and reactions, as well as the characters' emotional life when performing onstage.

The second part of the actor's equation is to allow the intellectual understanding of the text inform the choices and impulses as an actor using the text in performance. These impulses will help develop the emotional life of the character; however, the choices made by an actor onstage must distinctly come from a place of *impulsiveness*, where the actor is free to make choices alive in the moment without preplanning. If the actor does preplan intentions based on the intellectual understanding of the text, the text suffers from loss of emotional connection. The opposite is true when an actor does not understand the intellectualization of the text and depends wholeheartedly on impulsiveness; the the actor's choices may become indulgent and create a character overcome with false emotion, or worse, an emotional life that does not support the character's purpose in the plotline.

With both parts of the equation an actor can create a successful performance, where a successful performance is defined by the audience's

relationship with the text. I developed both the part of Queen Margaret and Prince Edward using this equation in an effort to develop my relationship to the text as an actor. As this relationship became clearer, the ultimate goal to relay Shakespeare's text in a comprehensible fashion to the audience was also clarified. An audience that understands the text is more likely to allow themselves to be vulnerable to the characters and the plot, creating a community with each other and the actors onstage. A successful actor will create this vulnerability in the audience by mastering the relationship with the text through the use of the actor's equation, which is what I base the thesis of Queen Margaret and Prince Edward around.

In the production of *Richard III*, I used the actor's equation to first focus the intellectual understanding of the text to come from Queen Margaret's history within the Shakespeare canon and her position of power (or lack thereof) amongst the other characters, particularly her power-struggle relationship with Richard. This same power theory exploration was used while developing the character of Prince Edward, a much smaller role in Shakespeare's canon but an important role in furthering the plot of *Richard III*. Understanding Prince Edward's relationship with Richard and his place in the monarchy greatly influenced the emotional life of the character and the limitations of acting impulses onstage.

My first fears fell to the question of how our University of Louisville audiences would react to such a complicated and heavy play that also happened to have a language barrier. Was this a production that our

“Enjoyment of Theatre” students would be able to relate to? Was this a production that the Acting for Non-majors students would be interested in seeing? My answer to both questions was a solid “no” in my mind which brought the challenge: what can I do as an actor in this production to get University students interested and keep them engaged? This was a question that lingered throughout the rehearsal process and ultimately shaped many of my choices onstage. In *Richard III*, I was able to finally establish what I wanted from the audience as an actor: to enforce the sense of community among myself and them. This is a concept that I had never really been able to verbalize in my training and experience until coming to my thesis role and I think it is a concept that I will bring with me for each new performance that I am a part of. This performance also helped me verbalize the actor’s equation for myself, a concept which I don’t claim to be a new creation. It is rather the compilation of my understanding of the acting techniques I have learned in the past: Meisner, Linklater, LeCoq, Alexander, Laban, Margolis, Stanislavski, Viewpoints, etc. All of these techniques have different ways of leading the actor to what I determined as the same goal: to find and portray the truth in the piece and relay that truth to the audience with the given text. The audience develops the relationship to the text through the actor and the stronger the relationship is the more vulnerable the audience allows themselves to be to the concept of truth in the text, the humanity of the art that is meant to be shown.

## CHAPTER 1:

### PREVIOUS ACTOR TRAINING

Before graduate school, I had only been in a few Shakespeare productions and have had little to no formal training in acting Shakespeare. I was first introduced to Shakespeare at age thirteen, when I was cast in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Lon Chaney Theatre in Colorado Springs. My small but eager role of Mustard Seed kept me involved in studying Shakespeare from a literary perspective throughout high school and college. At the Kentucky Shakespeare Company in Louisville, Kentucky. I was given the opportunity to perform an abridged version of *Twelfth Night: Or What You Will* adapted as a touring children's show. Although I had studied Shakespeare for many years, I have never considered myself to be confident in performing Shakespeare.

*Richard III* was one of the first Shakespeare productions I had ever seen and so it has always held a certain amount of nostalgia for me. It's one of the few live productions that I can recall many specifics from, although I remember my ten-year-old brain struggling through the language. When *Richard III* was solidified as the fall semester production, I was simultaneously excited and worried. My first thought was to the production I had seen so many years ago that first began my education of Shakespeare.

However my second thought was to the memory of both my high school and college Shakespeare classes who despised reading and studying *Richard III*, as it was deemed, “the most interesting of the boring Shakespeare plays.”

## UNDERGRADUATE TRAINING

Over the course of my graduate school voice classes, I’ve come to know the weaknesses in my voice as an actor. According to Robert Cohen’s *Acting One*, the actor’s instrument relies primarily in the body and the voice, and these must be consistently honed towards improvement. I have always found my strengths as an actor to rely on the use and stamina of my body and I have always felt less confident in my voice, both before and during my study at the University of Louisville. Before my study at the University of Louisville, I gained the majority of my theatrical experience at Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado. It was there that I fulfilled my bachelors degree in theatre and developed myself as an ingénue actress, consistently put into characters of innocence and naivety often driven in the plotline through the romantic male counterpart. These were roles like Wendy in *Peter Pan*, Mary in *It’s a Wonderful Life*, and the title role in *Cinderella*. As a new artist, these roles thrilled me, I was always excited to take on a lead. But as my schooling continued, I found these roles to be less fulfilling in terms of my growth as an actor. They were roles of women written rather flatly, more or less caricatures of women stilted by superficial dialogue and predictable outcomes. As time went on, being a lead actor became less

important to me and being cast in a 'meatier' role increasingly more challenging. My final year in the program I received the chance to challenge my training and was cast as Becca in *Rabbit Hole* the Pulitzer award winning play by David Lindsay-Abaire. In this realistic drama, Becca is a middle-aged woman coping with the death of her son in an auto accident. While this play really opened grounds for me to explore a complicated female character, I was left unsatisfied. As a twenty-one year old college senior, I never thought the role was cast correctly for me and I wasn't convinced I made anyone believe I was a thirty-five year old grieving mother. I fault this to the emotional recall theory that was taught in the undergraduate acting training.

In my undergraduate education, there was little to no focus on voice training techniques or movement techniques. The classes around these areas were very few and often consisted of working on projection of the voice, articulating, and handling props onstage. Overall it was a general theater education that involved more classes focused on script analysis, dramaturgy, theatre history, stage management and other literary based classes. I received a general understanding of acting through Stanislavski-based acting classes. In this method of acting, I came to understand scene study, the use of actions, and emotional memory. This was the beginning of developing the actor's equation for me, starting with understanding how a play is composed through the intellectual work of scene study. This came down to fully understanding the circumstances of the characters in the script

and the history of these characters (real or imagined). Using that intellectual work from the script analysis, the scene is then broken down into beats determined by action verbs. It is then I became familiar with the idea that rather than simply applying my preconceived emotions to the scene, to determine instead what my character wanted in the scene, and use an action verb to describe what the character was doing to achieve what she wanted. This is probably the simplest acting lesson in my career and by far the most important. These action verbs, or intentions, would carry with me through graduate school and through my development of Queen Margaret and Prince Edward, and become a base part in the actor's equation.

In the Stanislavski system, the method of emotional recall was also introduced to me. In this method, the actor recalls a moment similar to that of the character's and brings those emotions to the stage in their acting. This was something I experimented with heavily in the production of *Rabbit Hole* and ultimately lead to my feelings on the less than successful performance as Becca. Finding the emotional equivalent to a woman who lost her child was difficult, and bringing those past experiences to the stage every night in rehearsals and performance took a huge toll on my emotional health. It was an incredibly difficult process, and by the time the production was introduced to an audience I became incredibly numb to my own emotions and relied on faking the emotions through the run of the show. "Faking" emotion is something I have always been against as it can often isolate audiences. Creating a character in her truthfulness is what I relied on to create the

community with the audience through catharsis. Consequently, faking my emotions through the production not only saved my emotional well being, but I also determined it closer to acting than using emotional recall. In emotional recall I allowed myself to relive my own painful experiences and was not attempting to create a character at all but rather be myself. After this experience, I abandoned the emotional recall method for its dangerous consequences to the actor, which is what allegedly Stanislavski himself is also said to have done near the end of this career.

### **TRAINING WITH THE NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY**

After letting the emotional recall method go, I was introduced to a new method that sat with my understanding of acting much easier. Through a month long intensive with the New York Film Academy, I was taught the Meisner technique. “Living truthfully in imaginary circumstances” was Sanford Meisner’s mantra and his theory was heavily based in listening to the scene partners onstage, being alive in the moment, and allowing the circumstances of the situation inform your emotional self rather than your personal past. If this method had been used in *Rabbit Hole*, I would have lived through the imaginary world of a grieving mother rather than living through my personal past and attempting to apply it to the life of a grieving mother. Immediately I was enthralled with the Meisner technique. The training itself was long and tedious, with up to six hours a day of repeating lines back and forth with scene partners, intently listening for the nuances in the partner’s repetition. However, this tedious work opened up my ideas on

intentions and living in the moment. From this intense training I was able to feel confident in not only creating impulsive intentions, but also in allowing myself to be changed by my partner's impulsive intentions. In fact the intentions themselves changed for me. They are still based in the action verbs the actor uses to achieve a goal, but the action verbs are always used directly through the scene partner. Not only is the actor's personal life left offstage but the actor's complete focus is taken off of his or herself and put squarely on the acting partner. This training has stayed with me and become part of my actor's equation encouraging the impulsive moments in plays and abandoning the idea of strict, rehearsed lines and emotions.

### **GRADUATE TRAINING**

I came to graduate school with the expectation of honing my acting skills through the exposure of many different techniques. I also had the expectation of being able to teach an acting class by the time I graduated the program at the University of Louisville. While I have learned many techniques, the only two that have been taught in depth are the Linklater progression in Voice classes and Lecoq's mime in Movement classes. With two full years of each method, this is what the graduate program primarily focused on. While I feel somewhat comfortable teaching the Linklater progression, it's not something I have really adhered to in my personal training. Mostly I know and understand the technique because of class and using it in a few productions here by Dr. Frye's suggestion, not because it is a technique that I personally use to enhance my performances. The first

year of Voice classes was dedicated to learning the Linklater progression. The second year of Voice classes consisted of learning the International Phonetic Alphabet and translating accents to be used in performance. While I think this was interesting, I don't think it was necessary to fill the last two semesters with only learning this. It soon became overkill and tiring to do the same process of picking a dialect or accent, being coached on it for half an hour and reciting it once for a grade. Although this is important work to learn as an actor, it didn't aid me in my process with *Richard III*. If this time had been filled learning alternative techniques to the Linklater progression, I may have been able to address the issues that arose with Queen Margaret more thoroughly during the rehearsal process. However, the Linklater technique was the main method being taught and although I have found many positive applications of this method in performance, I wish I had been exposed to another technique or method to help carry me through the times when the Linklater technique became hindering. In terms of the actor's equation, I became stilted in the area of impulsiveness, constantly trying to recreate moments in rehearsal rather than allow myself to discover new things. With a few other techniques under my belt, it could have been possible to tap back into the impulsive nature a performance requires.

Movement classes were mostly confusing for the first year, as Professor Tompkins' teaching method was based in letting us figure out the technique slowly on our own. I felt incredibly frustrated, especially because I didn't know what was expected of me and there were never any books

assigned on the method, therefore no written references of the history of what we were learning or what the exercises were, or what we were to gain from them. However, the group movement pieces we were asked to create and perform every month allowed for an ensemble among the class to grow, as well as my personal creativity. This ensemble development and creativity aided my overall instinct to obey impulse reactions, which has become a weighty part of the actor's equation. By the second year of Movement classes the Lecoq method became clearer as we got into learning mask work and Commedia Dell'arte. It wasn't until the final semester of Movement that I understood what we were being taught in the first semester. While I did not use the Lecoq method in the process of *Richard III*, it was very relevant with work in The University of Louisville Repertory Company, which will be expanded on later.

The only acting classes that I feel I have gained from were Mrs. Zan Sawyer-Daily's Audition Technique class, her Scene Study class, and Professor Tompkins' Solo Command class. With Mrs. Sawyer-Daily's class I gained a wider knowledge of the industry and acting as a business, as well as how to sell myself as an actor. I also was able to put the academic script analysis classes into performance with the Scene Study class, as it was really the first time in graduate school that I was able to consistently work on contemporary pieces and realism as well as a variety of styles that had not been introduced yet such as Restoration Comedy and Greek theatre. This particular class also focused in on how to approach a script in terms of the

actor's equation, where the circumstances of each scene were defined in full context. The actor could then approach the material with a set of choices and those choices often shifted through impulses discovered. This class also helped pull the intellectual work of our academic classes into use in performance.

"Tools of a Global Theatre," "Shakespeare," "Playscript Analysis," and "Performance Theory" were all academic classes that discussed the importance of theatre and how it's portrayed, and the many types of techniques and what their purposes are. These classes also challenged me to ask the big questions on intellectual side of the equation: How is theatre defined? What does theatre mean to me? How do I translate my definition of theatre to an audience? All of these questions milled in my head as intellectual work, and only half of the actor's equation existed. But finally putting these questions into scenes and performances finally composed the full equation.

Professor Tompkins' Solo Command class was a great way to put all of these questions onstage in a concise performance. Through impulsive play and intellectual questioning, my Solo Command piece was "Emota-Work", a short scene about the exercise program that releases the emotional weight instead of physical weight. This project was a main source of developing the actor's equation through my personal writing. The key was to take this equation and apply it to text that has already been written. However, the most influential training in graduate school and developing the

actor's equation had very little to do with classes and had more to do with my graduate assistantship duties.

My assistantship duties at the University of Louisville were teaching undergraduates in "The Enjoyment of Theatre" and "Acting for Non-Majors," as well as being a member of The University of Louisville Repertory Company. I attribute the majority of my growth as an actor to both of these duties. I was desperately afraid of teaching a class. Overcome with worry that I wouldn't be able to control a classroom of college freshmen, I avoided the idea of teaching like the plague. So I did what I've been learning for the past ten years: I acted. I simply walked into the classroom and pretended like I was playing the role of a teacher. This method proved successful. Teaching the subject I am most passionate about learning only made me eager to learn more. It also solidified the concepts for me more; I don't think I truly understood them until I taught them. Teaching widened my perspective of what it is like to be a student. Although there were the normal classroom hiccups to be dealt with, to my surprise the students never rebelled. Being able to teach also brought to my attention the power of theatre in the academic setting. Many students expressed not only their excitement about class but also about the connection they felt with the other students, something that can be easily lost in a huge lecture hall. So while teaching scared me the most (and to be honest, it sometimes still does), I was able to discover the theatrical elements of everyday life, bringing my theatre techniques into my daily world.

Being a part of the University of Louisville Repertory Company has had the biggest impact on my growth as an actor and as a person. The Repertory Company tours two children's shows a year to many of the elementary and middle schools in the Louisville Metro area. Learning techniques all day in the classroom means nothing without putting it into performance. With Rep Company, the opportunity to perform happens every day. Not only this, but the constant need to adapt a performance depending on the size of the audience, the size of the space, the general ages of the audience became a key part in my growth as an actor. It is from Repertory Company that I have been able to use the actor's equation and use it to help myself adapt in order to be able to have the text reach the audience. This again became a simple notion that if the audience can't understand the actor, the purpose of the play is lost.

While my thesis performance was to aid an academic audience in comprehending the text to reach catharsis, I consider working in the Repertory Company and attempting to aid elementary and middle school students comprehend the text as my biggest challenge. While there were many performances at the University of Louisville that I participated in, the most influential were through the Repertory Company. I did use the Lecoq method in "The Seven Labors of Arelechino," written and directed by Professor Tompkins. Applying this technique to the mask work done in the show really opened my perception of the technique and what we learned in

Movement class. Although I do feel this is important work as an actor, it did not aid me in any other production, at least not consciously.

I did not use the Linklater technique in the Repertory Company shows. However, I was cast as Celia in *As You Like It* and as Mistress Overdone in *Measure for Measure*; both directed by Dr. Rinda Frye. In each show I was acquainted with Kristin Linklater's techniques and even aided Dr. Frye in "Dropping In" and "Feeding" the other cast members, which will be discussed in full detail later in the paper. Although the Linklater methods are far from the traditional rehearsal process involving initial group analysis of the script and using the script throughout the process; and I was much less experienced in the Linklater techniques previously, I became very familiar with them during graduate school and felt comfortable doing for my thesis. The traditional Linklater voice warm-up is something that had been instilled in graduate students from the first year, and I felt comfortable leading the cast through these warm-ups. With the academic courses taken in graduate school I felt prepared for the intellectual preparation of Queen Margaret, the physical and emotional training would be gleaned from the years of training before graduate school. Overall, I was content to have a Shakespeare production as my thesis.

## CHAPTER 2:

### THE CHALLENGES AND FEARS OF QUEEN MARGARET

Originally, I was chosen to play the role of Lady Anne in *Richard III*, a character I had always admired for her complicated through-line and incomprehensible choices. However, her major actions rested within one scene and I worried her function in the play wouldn't be enough to support an entire thesis paper. Later Dr. Frye approached me with an option to choose a role I wanted to play, her reasoning being that Lady Anne was a role that might not have catered to my developing strengths as a character actor and still prove challenging. With this option at hand, I did not hesitate to choose Queen Margaret instead. The first reason I chose Queen Margaret was due to my memories of her character in the first production I had seen as a child. I was never aware of her actual relationship to Richard or anyone else in the play, but I distinctly remember the feeling she gave me when she entered every scene and how all of the other characters reacted to her onstage. Queen Margaret's wild rants were both fascinating and frightening to me and she was one of the only actors who helped me make sense of the language and therefore relationships and plot lines.

The second reason I chose Queen Margaret is because I felt the role would wholly embody my growth as an actor at the University of Louisville

and act as a fine challenge to a closing chapter of graduate performance education. Before I entered graduate school to study acting, I had always considered myself an ingénue actress, having been almost always cast as a young, romantic lead, or a woman of innocence. Those were the roles I was most successful with and in which I was almost always cast. At the University of Louisville, I was given the opportunity to play characters outside that type and was able to expand my range of acting skills. In this way, my graduate school education allowed me to surprise myself as I was cast in roles completely outside what I thought I would be considered for.

This spark first happened during *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kauffman directed by Dr. Russell Vandenbroucke. This particular play is written for an ensemble cast to take on many parts, each actor playing up to seven characters. In this production I was able to develop myself as a “character actor,” or an actor that is predominantly cast as unusual, quirky, or eccentric characters. This was quite the opposite of the girl-next-door persona I had developed for myself. This was also the first time I had been encouraged to develop specific character traits and be able to consciously and deliberately shift from one character to another. The new found skill was honed in my time with the University of Louisville Repertory Company while playing Mistress Overdone in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* and more specifically in researching and playing the role of Djamila, an Indian woman in Charles Mee’s *A Perfect Wedding*. In a professional world of acting, all of these roles would be deemed outside my character type.

However, in an educational theatre, I was given the chance to broaden my acting range and I was eager to create roles I would never normally be given.

I saw this opportunity in Queen Margaret, a character far beyond what I was in life. This idea both excited me and frightened me about the role. It presented many challenges I was intent to take on but I was nervous about actually succeeding. The first challenge for me was Margaret's age. Historically, Queen Margaret of Anjou was fifty-two years old when she died. However, the University of Louisville's production called for Margaret to be characterized as older, between sixty-five and seventy years old. I was concerned that I would not be able to create a believable and honest character of that age.

The second challenge was embodying the emotional distress that Margaret carries throughout the play. Within the first act of the play it is revealed that her husband Henry VI was killed while imprisoned in The Tower, and her son Edward was killed in battle. Not only this, but Margaret has also been banished from the kingdom. She is a Queen who once sat at the top of the hierarchy and within moments has fallen to the absolute bottom. The only means of survival she has depends on those that murdered her family and took everything from her. The bulk of her monologues are long-winded curses, spitting out vengeful rants filled with hurt. She is often described as "the angry woman," but the last thing I

wanted to portray was simply an 'angry woman,' as I felt there was much more behind her intentions.

The third challenge came about later in the rehearsal process, after researching more into Queen Margaret's history. I soon discovered that Margaret was not the mistreated woman she presents herself to be in Richard III, but that she has a dark past of her own. Queen Margaret had killed Rutland as a child, one of Richard's brothers. Not only had she killed the child, but she horrendously mocked his father by using a handkerchief steeped in Rutland's blood to dry the tears of Rutland's father before killing him. I understood from the text Queen Margaret's passion, but I did not fully understand the extent of her limitations. In studying her past, both historically and in Shakespeare's canon Queen Margaret is an intensely dynamic powerhouse, and I was concerned in creating the role that I would not do her the justice of a fully fleshed out character. For me, the challenge lay within the creation of a completely vulnerable state that equates with her low status and most recent loss of family, and at the same time create the essence of a high status woman capable of the horrendous past deeds done within that vulnerability. This was a character completely beyond my range and unlike any other part I've played before.

While I bring the majority of my focus to Queen Margaret as my thesis role, I am hesitant to neglect the role of Prince Edward. This role was not chosen or sought out for me, but rather passed on in the last minute when no one else could fill it. The issue Dr. Frye held was that she didn't

want to cast children in the production, as this adds a new level of complication in terms of childcare throughout the rehearsals and extra time coaching. She reasoned that my small stature could be disguised as a young boy to a point of decent believability, and doubling would not be an issue as Queen Margaret and Prince Edward are never onstage together. I said yes to this idea, knowing full well the choice was not mine anyway, and smiled at the opportunity and challenge of playing dynamic and opposite ends of the Shakespeare character spectrum. Queen Margaret and Prince Edward contrast in every way imaginable; age, gender, social status, and general demeanor. Along with all of the dreary weight of Queen Margaret, I was excited for the chance of a light, comedic Prince Edward. There was comfort in knowing that if my performance of Margaret failed, my acting may still be salvageable through Edward.

## INTELLECTUAL WORK

*“Margaret lived in a world of rank and hierarchy, in which inequality was perceived as complementary, and in which the relationships between the separate parts were necessary for the whole to exist. In this world it was understood that some held authority over others by right... The gender system in which Margaret lived theoretically denied that a woman could ever hold political authority. At the same time, however, it permitted and even encouraged women to act in ways that had political consequences; this was most true for the queen.” (Mauer, 5)*

Shakespeare’s Queen Margaret had no trouble making moves that held political consequences. Within the first few lines, she makes it well known that she is the widow of the murdered Henry VI and her son Edward was murdered as well. These were of course political moves made so that

Edward IV could come to power and as the play begins he is the current king. She mentions their deaths several times in the script and this is why it is easy to believe it becomes the essence of what drives Margaret through the play; their murders become the foundation for her rage, sorrow, and mistrust.

Although not mentioned in the script, historically Queen Margaret was born in the Duchy of Lorraine, and came from royalty. Her mother was Isabella of Lorraine and her father was Rene I of Naples. She was a leader for the Lancastrians and was a major part in the War of the Roses. Her son Edward was in fact killed in the Battle of Tewkesbury which was fought with the Yorkists. She was taken as a prisoner after the wars and eventually died in France at age 52. In Shakespeare's script, Margaret mentions more than once her intention to return to France, but this is after confirming her curses have come to fruition (Dunn).

Historically, Margaret married Henry VI at age fifteen and began her rule over England then. I imagined she was a highly intelligent woman who understood her political demands to the throne. As Mauer describes, "...she came from a line of strong women, accustomed to wielding power when necessity dictated. It is important to emphasize the word necessity. These were not women who sought power for its own sake, but who, when the need arose, had the ability and the self-confidence to step forward and take charge" (23). Especially because Henry VI was noted as a sickly man, even possibly mentally unstable, I can infer that Margaret stepped up to her

responsibilities as Queen. In creating the character for this production, I believed she loved Henry as her husband, but I imagine her damaged ego of York usurping the crown fueled Margaret's wrath more than a wife's commitment. This idea is supported with the line she gives to Elizabeth when teaching her to curse, "Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were/and he that slew them fouler than he is/Bettering thy loss makes a bad causer worse..." (IV,ii,335) Her son Edward was her only son, and was also rumored to not be Henry's. It was challenged that Henry was mentally incapacitated enough that he would not be able to father a child, and Margaret had several close male allies. However, for our purposes in terms of the content of the play, Henry was the father of Edward. There is nothing in Shakespeare's text that suggests otherwise, and I imagine Margaret strove to be a good mother and lived for her son and prided herself as queen, although Mauer suggests she was not extremely well-liked as a ruler. Within the content of the play it is never really mentioned if Margaret was a good queen or not, but I made the decision as an actor that she found herself to be a great ruler. This decision supports the wrath behind her wrongful usurpation.

The hatred for Richard III is obvious in Shakespeare's rendition, although historically it is uncertain how the conflict began. Mauer states:

“Because of the bitter enmity that came to exist between Queen Margaret and Richard, duke of York, and because of York’s death at the hands of Margaret’s troops at the end of 1460 and Henry VI’s forcible deposition two months later by York’s son, there has been a tendency among historians to take this enmity somewhat for granted, without looking too closely for its origins...If there is no concrete evidence of hostility between Margaret and York prior to the crisis of 1453-1454, there is some indication that they were on reasonably good terms.” (81).

Both historically and through Shakespeare’s text, I came to perceive a woman that was not hindered by morals, a woman who determined what she thought was the best for her, whether it be in terms of political status or emotional compensation, and followed through with her intentions and goals. This was a woman with a lot of life experience and who was not only familiar with political power moves, but was not afraid to make them for herself.

Having found the intellectual understanding of Queen Margaret historically and using critiques of Queen Margaret in Shakespeare’s canon, I was able to plug this information into the actor’s equation for the performance. The defining statement for Margaret became simple: There is nothing left to lose. Margaret holds nothing back. For an actor’s character analysis, while I imagine that when she was first banished she went through many stages of grief, confusion, and sorrow, I think she has been hardened after so many years. She now has turned to rage and thirsts for revenge. I believe that her anger has been the only thing that has kept her alive, and although she died at fifty two, she probably looked and felt in her eighties. She sees others as below her—Margaret has never truly abandoned her status as queen. She is undeserving of her treatment and the only thing she

wants is the acknowledgment of her family's wrongful deaths and for the consequences to land on the truly deserving parties (i.e. Richard III). Her main tactic is to curse, and the elaborate and dark curses she sheds in hopes to frighten the current royalty prove as foreshadowing for the play. While Margaret is thought of as crazy, old, wretched, decrepit, and evil by the other characters, it is she who determines and predicts the fall and deaths of everyone, including Richard. Richard brings up her past, that she has killed Rutland, one of Richard's brothers; but as justification for myself as an actor, this was *only* in response to her son Edward's murder. Margaret is ambitious and dominant and has not a fearful bone in her body. "Margaret of Anjou is remembered for the anomalous circumstances of her queenship. These conditions permitted and, indeed, forced her to act in unexpected ways." (Mauer, 208).

## CHAPTER 3:

### THE LINKLATER TECHNIQUES

While playing Queen Margaret and Prince Edward in *Richard III*, director Dr. Rinda Frye had asked me to take on several techniques specific to performing Shakespeare. These techniques are referred to as “Dropping In” and “Feeding,” and they were created by Tina Packer and later influenced by Kristin Linklater, co-founder of Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, Massachusetts. Although both techniques deal specifically with the language, neither involves reading from a script. These are methods used to create a deeper connection between actor and text, allowing the spoken words to create a more personal and visceral relationship with the actor and therefore extending that relationship with the language to the audience. Dr. Frye also used a Linklater-inspired approach through her overall direction of the play, including impulse blocking and voice specific techniques to evoke emotion.

I began the rehearsal process with Dr. Frye with only a few goals in mind concerning my voice, which only touched on the same goals I have held and maintained since my first semester of graduate voice class. The first goal was to continue to break down my habit of ‘going nasal,’ where the vibrations of sound resonate in the nasal cavity creating a “stuffy nose”

quality in the tone of the voice. Although this habit has lessened over time, it is my tendency to slip back into nasality when I am feeling underprepared or nervous onstage. The nasality can hinder the audibility of my voice as well as articulation which is very critical in theatre, and most especially in Shakespeare, as my personal goal is to make the archaic language as accessible as possible to a modern audience. Therefore, over the past few years of practicing Linklater techniques and the Linklater warm up, I have become very aware of my habit and try to avoid it at all costs.

### **THE REHEARSAL PROCESS**

Throughout my history of performance, I have always depended on body manipulation in order to create characters. This was directly related to my undergraduate training and the Stanislavski system. Within the system there are two paths to creating a character, the “Outside-In vs. Inside-Out.” In this theory there are two worlds of the character that are to be presented onstage, the mental, emotional, and intellectual side of the character and the physical world of the character. The actor can use either the intellectual preparation to inform and promote the physicalization of the character, or the actor creates the physicalization of the character to inform the emotional life of the character. Using this theory, I have often used my physical self first in order to tap into the emotional life of the characters I have portrayed onstage, specifically with Celia in *As You Like It*, Mistress Overdone in *Measure for Measure*, and Djamila in *A Perfect Wedding*. While in both of the Shakespeare plays I was still acquainted with the Linklater process,

most of my acting intuition came from developing specific physical traits of the character first and slowly evolving those movements into the final characters. For Celia, the intellectual analysis of the character was supported mainly through her relationship to Rosalind. Her dialogue was always as an advocate to Rosalind and in opposition to those who oppose Rosalind, mainly the Duke, Celia's father. Because I interpreted Celia's text through her loyalty to Rosalind, I created her movements to be reminiscent of a pet to Rosalind, specifically a cat, which represented her higher status as well as her quick snippiness to others. During rehearsals, I would move and slink across the stage as a cat would around her owner. The movements onstage determined the attitude of the character, which supported the text.

Mistress Overdone in *Measure for Measure* was approached the same way. In terms of power, she was the highest of the low status ring. As I studied the text, I determined that she was the essence of the classic Shakespeare juxtaposition: the surprisingly intelligent woman of the underground prostitution scene. From the text I analyzed that she held a majority of the power among her class, and yet no power outside of it. The movements were influenced heavily by the costume design that was presented on the first day of rehearsal. Mistress Overdone's costume was embellished with a long tailcoat, and I distinguished her as a circus ringmaster. All of my physicality was grounded in this idea and the character flourished from it.

Djamila in *A Perfect Wedding* was a different process altogether. First, this was not a Shakespeare play. The director, Dr. Amy Steiger, did not use the Linklater technique but rather focused on Viewpoints, a technique developed by Anne Bogart and the SITI Company that is heavily ensemble and physical based. The development of the character Djamila was also supported by an entire semester of class, "Acting, Performance, and Community." Within the class I was able to develop a full history for the character, experiment with physicalization and vocal patterns, relationships with other characters, hone in on an accent, and even create my own solo piece of based on my research. The solo piece consisted of a seven minute monologue, addressing the character's history and relationships. All of this carried over into the performance itself.

I have also found this acting theory useful while playing more than one character within a production and being challenged to differentiate the characters, which is what I was called to do in the ensemble piece *The Laramie Project*, and eventually what I would have to do in *Richard III*, switching from Queen Margaret to young Prince Edward. While I have learned to train my voice using the Linklater technique in grad school, I have never dedicated myself to the technique itself or the honing of my voice. Instead, I have focused on training my body through an intense yoga practice, sharpening the connection between the physical body and the mind while strengthening breath, stamina, and the ability to be alive in the moment. At the beginning of the rehearsal process for *Richard III*, I was set

to use the “outside-in” theory supplemented with yoga practice as a gateway to both Queen Margaret and Prince Edward. However, Dr. Frye’s directing led to me shift the majority of my focus away from this and toward honing my voice to create the characters.

I began this shift by simply identifying the weaknesses of my voice and spending more efforts in strengthening those. In order to avoid slipping into nasality, I began the rehearsals with a majority of my focus on opening up the nasal resonators which is a step toward the end of the Linklater-warm up. Another weakness in my voice training is that I tend to “go off the voice.” Whenever I tap into a highly emotional scene, I tend to fall into a whisper instead of directing the voice outward. I connect this directly with my training at the New York Film Academy and ‘acting for the camera’ classes. The film acting classes really hone in on being as honest as possible within scenes, not pushing any emotion or exaggerated physical actions. While I learned to be very truthful and intimate in my acting in these classes, I also developed a much smaller presence which did not fulfill the acting requirements in a theatre, where your voice must reach to the person sitting in the back row. The next focus in terms of voice work was to ‘stay on the voice,’ pushing the sound vibrations all the way out especially during emotional scenes where my habit is to get caught choking back on tears and swallowing the vibrations. To remedy this in the rehearsal process, I also spent extra energy on sustaining breath all the way through the vocal ladder, from the lowest chest resonator to the highest pitch possible. However, I was more

concerned with my breath and sending the vibrations out rather than the quality of the sound.

## **THE WARM UP**

During *Richard III*, the techniques began at the beginning of every rehearsal with Linklater exercises to warm-up the voice and body. These exercises have been taught in graduate voice class starting in the first year of graduate school so I was very familiar with them. Each warm-up lasted about thirty minutes and focused on breath, pitch of the voice, sound resonators within the body, lengthening the spine, projection, releasing tension, and articulations. The warm up is designed to first focus on the breath, allowing the body to relax fully so that each breath is taken in at your body's fullest capacity. Developing and controlling the breath is specifically important to me as an actor as I have a tendency to get lost in emotional scenes which alters the breath and can hinder the emotion from being processed and exerted. Breath work is done with huge sigh-like breaths both on the voice creating vibrations and sound as well as off the voice using just air. This includes lengthening through the spine and finding correct alignment by stacking each vertebra on top of the other, standing with feet hip width apart, shoulders directly over the hips, and chin parallel to the floor. By realigning the body, the actor can release hidden tension and begin to reverse bad habits that can alter a performance onstage. This also promotes a deeper connection with the breath which supports the specific iambic pentameter of the text.

The warm-up then proceeds to extend the spectrum of pitch in the voice while incorporating the breath. The pitch of the voice goes up as the actor 'drops down the spine,' which is a movement where the actor stays standing but folds at the hips letting the upper torso and head hang toward the floor, a basic forward folding motion. The forward fold of the body is to promote releasing the muscles in the upper torso from holding or tensing against gravity. For me, this pose also clears the mind from distractions, forcing myself to focus on my body's reaction to being held upside down with the blood rushing to my head. My theory has always been that when one is caught thinking in only one world view, the world view should be turned upside down. This is literally the physicalization of turning that world view upside down, but I clung to this action throughout *Richard III* and other productions as I prepared to play someone with a world view very far from my own.

This applied very heavily to both Queen Margaret and Prince Edward. The body within the forward fold is asked to return to the deep sighs both on and off the voice and then restacking the spine to stand tall with correct alignment. This allows the body to relax, releasing any tension hidden within the body. If tension is held, the body cannot be fully vulnerable to emotion onstage, causing actors to force emotional states of being as well as block sound vibration from reaching its fullest capacity, making the text inarticulate and hard to hear.

The next part of the warm-up involves opening up sound resonators within the body. It starts with going to the lowest pitch possible and opening up the chest resonator by beating on the chest with the fists. Then comes lengthening through the spine to open up the neck and throat resonators, followed by massaging the face to open up the nose, sinus and head resonators. This rids the body of nasality, where sound vibrations reside in the nose giving the voice a specific flu-like quality which often audiences label as a distinct character. Jaw work is also done, where the jaw is gently loosened and massaged to release tension. Finally, tongue twisters are said as a group to warm up the mouth and tongue, creating crisp word articulation. This may be one of the most important parts of the warm up when dealing with a Shakespeare text. The language is archaic to our modern audiences and emphasis on word enunciation can be key in aiding the audience's comprehension. The Linklater warm up is a long and detailed system designed to ultimately relieve unnecessary tension and create a relaxed performer. If the actor is physically relaxed, it allows for the release of self-consciousness, opening up a creative artist who is fully living in the moment and making intellectually supported acting choices. The full awareness of breath supports the actor while handling the difficulties of the text, creating a clear character thought process that the audience can follow. This warm-up is full fledged, meant to include voice, physicality, breath, and focus all at the same time.

## THE ENSEMBLE AS SUPPORTED WITH TEXT

These are all important aspects in developing the ability to be present in the moment onstage, but it is also important for the cast of actors to go through the warm-up together. Developing an ensemble with trust can be the most important aspect of releasing tension while performing. This is also an opportunity to diagnose the relationships between characters and come to know your characters' power-struggle over the course of the play, which is an important part of the actor's equation. My most important relationship was with William Salmons, the actor who played Richard. Mr. Salmons and I have worked on several productions together and were excited to go head-to-head with each other in *Richard III*. A lot of the impulsive choices I made during rehearsals were in direct relationship to how Mr. Salmons would react as Richard. This essence of trust between us as actors really opened the door for making exciting impulsive choices in the rehearsal process.

In one rehearsal of Queen Margaret's scene in Act I, I had the impulse to prove Queen Margaret's conviction at the end of her curse. Looking at Richard, I saw him laughing at my final speech, mocking the words of my harsh premonition as Queen Margaret. This only infuriated me as Margaret even more and to counter his reaction I had an impulse to spit at him. I followed that impulse in the moment and without warning saliva flew out of my mouth and onto Richard! It shocked the entire cast and I left the scene with Queen Margaret winning her battle. Mr. Salmons took the spit in

stride and we laughed about it later (although from then on I was to warn him of those decisions before the rehearsal). We had a strong understanding of each other that encouraged risk taking, where an ensemble without this trust factor would suffer in following creative and dynamic blocking to develop relationships onstage.

Another important relationship I had was with Ms. Lauren Street who played Queen Elizabeth. From the circumstances of the play, it is obvious that Queen Margaret has a strong tension with Queen Elizabeth, as she is the woman who replaced her on the throne. Through the text, Queen Margaret also delivers a fair amount of curses to Elizabeth in Act I, but then appeals to her heartbreak in losing her sons in Act IV. The very last exchange between Queen Margaret and Queen Elizabeth is highly informative that the relationship between the women could end on a positive connection. Queen Margaret delivers a long-winded and harsh triumph in Queen Elizabeth's woes. The final exchange between the women follows:

**Queen Elizabeth:** O thou, well skill'd in curses, stay awhile,  
And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

**Queen Margaret:** Forbear to sleep the night, and fast the day;  
Compare dead happiness with living woe;  
Think that thy babes were fairer than they were,  
And he that slew them fouler than he is:  
Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse:  
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

**Queen Elizabeth:** My words are dull;  
O! quicken them with thine!

**Queen Margaret:** Thy woes will make them sharp, and pierce like mine.

With the final moments between the two women being a sort of lesson that Queen Margaret teaches Elizabeth, I concluded that women are finally on the same side of the political battlefield. The question for me as an actor became how to develop the relationship so that this final moment of Queen Margaret agreeing to reveal her cursing lesson not be a total surprise to the audience. Along with this, the final lesson in cursing drives the plot forward with the next scene being Elizabeth standing up to Richard's schemes.

In this sense, I understood the scene and relationship on an intellectual level of the actor's equation. To follow through with the second part of the equation, during rehearsals Ms. Street and I would experiment with how many different ways one could curse another. It could come from a place of emotional hurt, from revenge, from the attempt to belittle or hurt the other, there were many different ways. With Ms. Street, I was able to discover that perhaps Queen Margaret wanted Queen Elizabeth on her side from the beginning. This concept ended up expanding and carrying the bulk of my performance. Queen Margaret said every line in an attempt to win over Queen Elizabeth's favor to help her defeat Richard. She asks for this help from Queen Elizabeth because she is as Queen Margaret describes, "a vain flourish of my fortune." I believe that Queen Margaret can see herself in Queen Elizabeth, which excites both her rage and simultaneously her pleas. With this new-found objective through impulses supported by the intellectual analysis of the text, I was confident in the final creations of what Queen

Margaret could possibly become. This, however, was layered underneath the complications that arose through the Linklater techniques.

## **DROPPING IN**

Early in the rehearsal process, Dr. Frye asked me to switch my vocal goals from my nasal resonators and longevity in the breath over to my chest resonators and opening up the deepest sound within my range. This was a surprising suggestion to me, as I never considered my voice could go any deeper than my current vocal range. Dr. Frye felt it was important for me to extend my vocal range both high and low while working on Margaret because the character is beyond my normal “acting range.” I reasoned with this concept: Queen Margaret is a character very far from my traditional ingénue casting, and so I needed to expand my vocal abilities to meet that perception. I reasoned that this expansion is also needed with the character of Prince Edward, who is not only outside of my traditional ingénue casting, but also the very opposite of Queen Margaret—and I needed to play both characters within minutes of each other. I was determined to make Queen Margaret and Prince Edward both characters unrecognizable from myself as well as each other, so I began altering the Linklater warm-up by turning my focus towards expanding my vocal range.

While I still needed to be aware of the breath sustaining and my tendency toward nasality, these were goals I have been aware of and

working on from my first year of graduate school and for the most part they weren't considered setbacks anymore. Expanding my vocal range would be the most beneficial goal in terms of my voice capabilities for *Richard III*, as well as the most challenging in my graduate school career thus far, as my confidence in my voice capabilities is low and I have always considered voice to be my weakness. Opening up my chest resonators ultimately became the most frustrating and difficult part of the rehearsal process, and using the Linklater techniques onstage with the text.

After the half hour Linklater warm-up, Dr. Frye introduces the cast to the "Dropping In" technique. This technique is not necessarily a substitute for what Stanislavski would define as table work, but it is an active form of delving into the text beyond the paper and pen conversation. Shakespeare & Company of Lennox, Massachusetts expands the use of the Dropping In technique saying, "It can also be used to create a dynamic and visceral alternative to traditional 'table work'" (Shakespeare.org). The Dropping In rehearsals begin with the cast sitting in a circle where each actor is completely visible to all the other actors. The actors who are present in the first scene then come to the middle of the circle, forming a smaller and more intimate circle amongst themselves while the actors not present in the first scene are in the outside circle observing. The actors in the scene will align themselves with proper posture; sitting with an elongated spine, flat feet on the floor, open legs, parted lips and teeth, and hands palms up on their laps. This alignment is to encourage open, full breaths as well as a sense of

physical vulnerability. The actors are asked to make full eye-contact with each other while focusing on the need for each breath as it enters the body. Another person will sit behind the actors (between the two circles, ideally) with script in hand as the Feeder. In our case, this was Dr. Frye, until other graduate students understood the concept and could take this responsibility. The Feeder begins by saying the first line of text (where each line of text is defined by iambic pentameter as opposed to punctuation) to the actor who plays that character. The actor will repeat the line of text while keeping eye contact with his or her fellow scene partner(s). The Feeder will then ask questions to provoke thought within the actor, referring to either the world of the play and the characters, or to the world of the actor. The Feeder then repeats the same line of text. In this case, a line from Margaret's monologue in Act I, scene iii, line 680 will be used as an example:

Feeder: "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Actor: "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Feeder: *Is Richard trying to turn away from you?* "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Actor: "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Feeder: *What kind of dog is he? Is he a mean dog that bites?* "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Actor: "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Feeder: *How will you get him to hear what you have to say?* "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

Actor: "And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me."

The actor will then embody the questions at hand and repeat the line of text to his or her scene partner(s). This process can go on with several questions being asked about the same line of text before moving onto the next line.

The process is done for each actor who speaks within the scene until the scene is complete. Then a new circle of actors is created by those in the second scene. This continues until the entire play has been “dropped in”.

## **FEEDING**

The second part of the process is Feeding In. In this case, the actors are not confined to the chair, but walk about the stage. The Feeder is still present, and follows the actor onstage, whispering his or her lines for the actor to hear and repeat. This allows for impulse blocking not constricted by the cumbersomeness of a script in hand and encourages bolder choices and more honest reactions between scene partners. Feeding In prevents the actor from knowing or planning what is next and so the actor is left with only their instinctive choices. The actors work in this manner with Feeders until they are memorized. Scripts are never used onstage, and in my experience, blocking is never written down.

As the rehearsal process goes on, Dr. Frye had me experiment with a few other Linklater approaches in order to connect with the script on a more kinesthetic scale. First, each line of iambic pentameter was to be said followed by a breath. Ideally, within this approach, each line was to be said out of discovery and the rashness of human thought, which then lead to emotional connection. In taking a breath after each noted punctuation, a more logical statement would be found but it was not as supported by emotional connection or urgency within the character. Second, the breath

could not be hindered or cut off in any way. The body alignment was to be stable, relaxed, and tall so only full breaths could enter. The spine was held in a completely neutral manner and each breath was to full capacity.

There was also a lack of preplanning moves or intentions because as an actor I didn't know what line I was going to say next, allowing me to be fully alive in the moment. It also helped me create a Margaret that I would not have been able to find within the lines of the text alone. The Margaret that was my most honest approach was not just "angry" (as she is often perceived) but an aching and mauled woman, holding on to the string of life with one thread of revenge. The potential softness of Margaret, the desperate sincerity within her foul words, was found in rehearsal through the technique of using heavy breath (as opposed to cutting the breath off with extreme emotion), Dropping In and use of Feeding In. This was a huge jump in connecting fully with the archaic language as an actor.

### **APPLICATION OF THE TECHNIQUES**

These Linklater techniques were most useful in terms of enhancing my connection with the text as an actor. I was more connected to the text on an emotional level and it felt more personalized to me. This was especially true for me during the Dropping In technique. Although the technique is an incredibly slow process and can be exhausting because it requires narrowing all of your energy into individual each word, it was pertinent to focus on the many different meanings that can be derived from the lines. As

with most of Shakespeare's language, there were many lines that held layered meanings, referring to Greek mythology or biblical allusions and puns.

Dropping In was an important part of opening up the many different intentions behind each line on an intellectual level. In this part of the actor's equation, I was able to acknowledge several different intellectual standpoints on speeches which directly opened up to an array of impulsive choices of intention onstage during the Feeding In process. For example, Queen Margaret has a few lines in Act I when she first confronts Richard, Queen Elizabeth, and the royal court: "A husband and a son thou owest me; / and thou a kingdom; all of you allegiance: / The sorrow that I have, by right is yours, / And all the pleasures you usurp are mine." (I,iii,150) Within the first two lines, I am able to glean that Queen Margaret has lost both her husband and her son and she points the fault to Richard. She then accuses Elizabeth of taking her position in the court as queen, and finally addresses the courtiers in their misplaced loyalty to Elizabeth. I kept this choice standard while onstage, turning my focus to each subject as they are addressed in the speech, signaling to the audience the three ways Margaret has been wronged by those onstage.

In the last two lines I discovered that the intentions could be shifted depending on which character was directly addressed. "The sorrow that I have, by right is yours/ And all the pleasures you usurp are mine" could be addressed to Elizabeth or Richard and the intention behind this line is

malleable depending on what Queen Margaret wants from either character or from the crowd that has gathered. If I chose to give the line to Richard, the intention was always to challenge him; with this choice a fearless Margaret acknowledges that Richard can kill her as he killed her husband and son, and yet she is not afraid of death because she has nothing to lose. If I chose to give the line to Elizabeth, the intention was to draw sympathy from her, where a helpless Margaret reminds a new queen Elizabeth that she can be replaced as quickly and easily as Margaret was, especially with Richard around. It is with the Dropping In process that I was able to discover the many different routes the language could possibly take and then to decipher what each route signified to the audience. This is the main technique that aided me in creating a community with the audience first through enhancing the actor/text relationship and fleshing the relationship out to the community/text relationship.

Dropping In was an obvious source for supporting the intellectual side of the actor's equation, but it also surprised me when I discovered an emotional life attached to it as well. Because of the nature of the Dropping In process, the actor is allowed full contact with her scene partners all the time. The feeder reads the line and quickly gives an intellectual (or several intellectual) understandings of the line so the actor can sustain contact with scene partners without the interruption of looking toward the page for text or slowing the process with actor analysis. The actor can focus on breathing and their scene partners, and this opened up a very connected emotional

life for me with Queen Margaret and Prince Edward. While going through Queen Margaret's curse in Act 1, each line had a chance to resonate within my body through the slow process, and I was able to digest all of the misery that Margaret had endured and understand the reasoning behind her harsh words. Upon the line, "Rivers and Dorset, you were standers by / And so wast thou, Lord Hastings, when my son / was stabbed with bloody daggers: God I pray him, / That none of you may live your natural age." (I,iii,220) The Dropping In process had helped me create a striking visual of this image. By sitting in the center of the circle of cast members, it also helped me embody the idea that Queen Margaret was surrounded by the people who watched and allowed her son to die a violent death. In a very quick sense, I understood the loneliness and fear that could reside in Queen Margaret hidden by the fearless curses and prayers for revenge. In this moment of the rehearsal process, I felt triumphant that I could understand the softness that was hidden in Queen Margaret, and some of my anxiety of playing her character was relieved.

An emotional life in Prince Edward came out as well during the Dropping In process. While Dropping In, a lot of the focus was built around developing the relationship between Prince Edward and his little brother, Richard of York. The two young boys don't have much stage time, yet still hold an essential part of driving the plot forward, as they represent the lengths to which Richard will go to become king, even through the unforgivable murder of the children. I knew it was important for the audience

to feel connected to the boys so they could sympathize about their death later in the play and understand and accept Richard's fateful demise. But with the problem of such little language and stage time Prince Edward had, I knew that it would be easier to connect with the audience through the empathetic brotherly relationships between the two boys. While Dropping In and later while Feeding In, Cara McHugh, the actress playing young Richard of York and I would end up in laughing in hysterics as we came to understand the playfulness between the two boys in teasing their strange Uncle Richard. The Dropping In technique was incredibly useful in developing an intellectual understanding of the characters and through that understanding lead to a stronger, more connected emotional life of the characters.

However, while Dropping In brought the characters to life and began to develop relationships, it did not give an understanding to the play as a whole. Because Dropping In only requires your presence during the scenes in which you are assigned, actors did not have a chance to hear the play aloud as an entire piece. Each actor worked only on his or her own scenes and an overall through line of each character's significance in the entire play was lost. Although I took time outside of rehearsals to understand the through line and purpose of Queen Margaret and Prince Edward in the play, it wasn't until the last week of rehearsals that I was able to put their journeys on through line in comparison with the other characters. So I had a full understanding of Queen Margaret, but I can't say that I had a full

understanding of Queen Margaret's purpose in the play until much later in the process. This is intellectual work that I believe may have opened up more impulsive choices onstage to help guide the audience in understanding the play as a whole.

This lack of understanding Queen Margaret's purpose in the play lead to setbacks to the Feeding In process. I found myself getting caught in rehearsing moments without the full understanding of Queen Margaret's purpose in overall plotline of the play. If my understanding had been more clear, I may have opened myself up to more acting choices which would lead to more impulsive reactions.. Again, the actor is not taking time to read off of a page in a script and this allowed for a full connection with partners in the scene, but without a stronger intellectual understanding, some of those connections became stagnant.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE RESULTS**

Impulsive blocking gave to a certain desirable amount of actor's freedom. It also helped me create a Margaret that I would not have been able to find within the lines of the text alone. The Margaret that was my most honest approach was not just "angry" (as she is often perceived) but an aching and mauled woman, holding on to the string of life with one thread of revenge. The potential softness of Margaret, the desperate sincerity within her foul words, was found in rehearsal through the technique of using heavy breath (as opposed to cutting the breath off with extreme emotion) and use of Feeding In. This was a huge jump in connecting fully with the archaic language as an actor.

However, as time went on, I found myself rehearsing emotions, or worse, trying to recreate emotions. Within these Linklater techniques, the emotion came first through the connection with the text and the action or intention followed naturally. But when I was caught without emotion, I had no real action to motivate my choices. I was trapped in a world of rehearsed impulses---instead of taking my motivation off of what my scene partners were doing in the moment, I would recreate an impulse that worked in an earlier rehearsal and force that 'impulse' on my partners. I felt as though I

had run out of intuition. Whenever it was obvious to Dr. Frye that the emotions were pushed, I was reminded time and time again to open up my chest resonator and reach for my lowest sound. This became increasingly frustrating for me. Because my voice generally lives in my mouth and nasal passages, it has always been difficult to reach such a low range. Dr. Frye would consistently ask me to beat on my chest and get in touch with my lower register while doing the warm-up and in the middle of scenes. If she felt like my lowest register was not being met, she would beat on my chest for me. In her theory, Queen Margaret's righteous wrath lived within my lowest register, and waking that sound up within me would also tap into my connection with Queen Margaret's emotional life.

The flood of emotions and tears that came from me in rehearsal ended up having little to do with my breath or chest resonators, but rather came from the sheer frustration and disappointment in thinking that I could not achieve what the director was asking of me. The emotion did not come from living in the imaginary circumstances of Queen Margaret, but from living in the real circumstances of my current situation. In these intense rehearsals, I was not acting as Queen Margaret, even though I was saying all of her lines. Unfortunately, the results of these rehearsals set the bar to what was expected of me during performance. I was often very down trodden after these rehearsals, knowing that I would not be able to reach such a crazed, emotional state through my actor's equation and most likely not endure such a state in performance because in those moments I was

not performing. Placing pressure on myself to reach those emotion-ridden states only created more tension and left me pushing and straining even more than before.

This pushing led to another strained circumstance involving my voice. In general, Linklater teaches that certain emotions can be tapped into using the voice. For a scene that involves vulnerability and tearful emotions, Linklater teaches to use the higher register, letting the voice come through the front of the face. Throughout the performance when I could not depend on creating a truthful emotional life in Queen Margaret, I came to depend on this method. This pushed my voice in a different direction, from forcing through the chest resonators to forcing through the higher register, giving my overall tone what I felt to be a shrill sound. In this situation, I understood Queen Margaret's circumstances of fear and vulnerability and fell on my voice to create this emotional life for the character instead of my body, which was my usual method. Although I believe the general audience member understood the pain of Queen Margaret and recognized the wrath of her curses came from a place of pure vulnerability, I believe that the majority of my words were lost in translation, creating a cacophony of general hysteria. Therefore, the relationship between audience and text was easily lost, enforcing an environment of crippled communication and infringing on the audience's ability to connect as a community through the story.

In this sense, the actor's equation was not completed for Queen Margaret. I would like to argue however that it was completed for Prince

Edward. The text and intentions were clear in every performance and the audience was able to connect with the relationship between the two young brothers and understand their purpose in the play. What could have been done differently to change the outcome of Queen Margaret? Theoretically, the majority of the difficulties are placed on the Linklater techniques.

However, I do not blame the technique for the downfall of the performance. Instead, I turn the blame on my lack of communication with Dr. Frye. I felt uncomfortable with Queen Margaret's development for a majority of the rehearsal process. While I did achieve a different take on Queen Margaret that presents a vulnerable woman in need, my focus on my voice to carry out that intention was a mistake. Instead of voicing this to my director and suggesting a change of tactics in creating the character, I kept working at the same path placing the blame on myself for not being able to reach the emotion truthfully and not being able to use the technique to my advantage. Overall, I was disappointed in my performance as Queen Margaret. But I was more disappointed in my fear to address my situation during rehearsal. The fear of upsetting the director and my ego of telling myself that if I am a good actor I will make it work ultimately determined my disappointment in the performance.

With this lack of communication, I was not able to fully envelop the necessary parts for the actor's equation and therefore it could not be totally fulfilled. And from this my success lies in that there is no absolute equation to a perfect performance, because the perfect performance does not exist. I

take away from the experience the understanding of a phrase Samuel Beckett allegedly says, “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” The actor’s equation is to lead to the actor to bridge the gap between audience and text and to create a community. Even if this only happens with one audience member, then the performance was successful. From this, I take away the necessary skills to analyze a script and from it glean the active choices that can be made onstage. I bring that knowledge to future performances as well as the understanding *trust* is also a major component of the actor’s equation. Trusting the director and the fellow actors will open up the necessary communication needed for a successful performance. This thesis has taught me that in a future performance, I intend to keep the components of the actor’s equation but I will not use it as a measuring stick to define my success as a performer in black and white. Honoring the magic of live theatre, connecting audience and actor relationships through the text, and understanding and empathizing with each other as humans is the most important aspect of being an actor. This is where the true success lies.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education

- High school diploma from Coronado High School, May 2005
- New York Film Academy Summer Session, July 2007  
Meisner Technique and Acting for the Film training.
- B.A. in theatre and a B.A. in English liberal arts from Adams State College, May 2009  
Graduated *Magna Cum Laude*
- CorePower Yoga Teacher Certification, January 2010  
Two hundred hour certification which included anatomy education, injury modifications and hands-on teaching in the class
- M.F.A. in performance from the University of Louisville, anticipated May 2012

### Employment

- The Lon Chaney Theatre Summer Camp Director, 2002-2004
- Box Office Manager, Adams State College Theatre, 2001-2004
- Sizzilin' Shakespeare Touring Children's Company at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival, 2010
- Yoga Instructor at Yoga on Baxter 2010-present
- Graduate teaching assistant at the University of Louisville, 2009-present  
Assistant teaching for "Enjoyment of Theatre" course and teaching Acting for Non-majors courses

### Awards

- *Best College Actor Award*, Rocky Mountain Theatre Association, 2008
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- Woodard Acting Scholarship, 2005-2009
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