

University of Louisville

## ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

5-2013

### An inter-theoretical approach to acting.

Cara Elizabeth McHugh  
*University of Louisville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd>

---

#### Recommended Citation

McHugh, Cara Elizabeth, "An inter-theoretical approach to acting." (2013). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 952.  
<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/952>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. This title appears here courtesy of the author, who has retained all other copyrights. For more information, please contact [thinkir@louisville.edu](mailto:thinkir@louisville.edu).

AN INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ACTING

By

Cara Elizabeth McHugh

B.A., Murray State University, 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 2013

Copyright 2013 by Cara Elizabeth McHugh

All rights reserved.



AN INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ACTING

By

Cara Elizabeth McHugh  
B.A., Murray State University, 2009

A Thesis Approved on

April 9, 2013

By the following Thesis Committee:

---

Dr. Amy Steiger

---

Professor Michael Hottois

---

Dr. Alexis Lyras

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mentors in life who have never given up on me and pushed me to achieve brilliance. Each one of you has inspired me to follow my passion and encouraged me to create new opportunities for myself.

Mr. Jonathan Awori

Mr. Rick Lamkin

Dr. Amy Steiger

Mr. Michael Hottois

Dr. Alexis Lyras

Dr. Beth Boehm

Dr. Paul DeMarco

Mrs. Zan Sawyer-Dailey

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking the cast and crew of *The Artifacts*. Without your help and support, I would have never been able to produce this show and give meaning to the themes the production highlighted. Thank you to Billy Flood, Ebony Jordan, Jennifer Levine, Beth Tantanella, Charles Nasby, Michael Hottois, Colin Sage, Amy Davis, and Jocelyn Matsuo. A special thanks to Zan Sawyer-Dailey who directed this piece with a powerful and beautiful concept. I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Amy Steiger, for being such a dedicated mentor who strives to meet students' needs and is always putting students first. Thank you Amy for being such an inspiration to your students and encouraging students to find meaning in theatre. Thank you to Dr. Paul DeMarco and Dr. Beth Boehm for financially and emotionally supporting me throughout my study. Thank you to my family who has supported me in my theatrical endeavors and for always being my biggest fans. Finally, thank you to the graduating class of 2013- Jake Beamer, Jocelyn Matsuo, Lauren Street, and Billy Flood. I cannot put into words what we have experienced together in the past three years and couldn't have picked a better class to share this experience with. I have learned from you and gained inspiration from you all.

## ABSTRACT

### AN INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ACTING

Cara Elizabeth McHugh

March 22, 2013

This paper examines my inter-theoretical acting process, in which I associate Konstantin Stanislavsky with aesthetic theatre, Augusto Boal with social theatre, and Bertolt Brecht with political theatre. The paper explores my acting process, by which through fusing elements of aesthetic, political, and social theatre, I achieve my goal as a theatre practitioner to change an audience from passive to active. By re-defining my relationship with the audience, I hope to use theatre as a forum to create change within my audiences. Through learning about these different theatre theories and practices in both my undergraduate and graduate study, I was able to pick and choose which elements I wanted to take from each. In my thesis role as Beth in Steven Fechter's *The Artifacts*, I found which techniques from these three theorists lent themselves most towards my goal as an actor. Through using elements of aesthetic, social, and political theatre, I achieved the goal in my thesis role of changing the audience's behavior from passive to active by being engaged in a panel discussion where issues of graduate student mental health, mentoring in academia, and gender roles were discussed.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
INTRODUCING KONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKY’S AESTHETIC THEATRE, AUGUSTO BOAL’S SOCIAL THEATRE, AND BERTOLT BRECHT’S POLITICAL THEATRE	4
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION- MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY	11
GRADUATE TRAINING- UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE	16
Acting	16
Voice	20
Movement	22
Community Service	24
Theory/ Academics	27
Sport for Development and Peace	35
APPLYING THE INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH	38
<i>THE ARTIFACTS</i>	45
Using an Inter-Theoretical Approach in <i>The Artifacts</i>	57
Refining My Process from Rehearsal to Performance	59
Evaluating Successes/Failures in My Performance	61

LESSONS LEARNED/CONCLUSION	63
REFERENCES	64
CURRICULUM VITAE	67

## INTRODUCTION

It was my second play at seven years old, *Winnie the Pooh*, where I played a baby frog. Yes, I admit I was tap dancing on the line of being too old for playing that role. And no, I do not recall any baby frogs in the original *Winnie the Pooh* either. Regardless, I will never forget that first day of rehearsal. I was so excited I could barely stand it. Before rehearsal the director asked the young cast members a seemingly simple question, “Why do we act?” This question has followed me through my education and career, constantly challenging me to develop this argument of “why do I act” and what form of theatre—aesthetic, social, political—is the best venue to achieve my goals in acting?

What qualifies and defines an actor as an actor? One who acts? One who mirrors life on stage in front of an audience? And what are the determining factors in measuring an actor’s success? Is it the size of the audience? The amount of good feedback after a show? Or self-fulfillment? These are just some of the never-ending questions I have asked myself through my journey in acting.

Would I consider myself an actor? Yes, but why? And how do I measure or define success in my own acting? I believe successful or good acting has the potential to create change in an audience. To what measure this change takes place varies and contains no one definition. This change can occur on a personal or a universal level, and I argue that

the most effective way of creating change through acting is by a cohesive blend of aesthetic theatre, social theatre, and political theatre.

My current goal as an actor is to provide a truthful, powerful, and visceral performance of existing issues within our society so the audience will leave the theatre changed. Whether that change takes place through a question, a difference in opinion, or actual action is irrelevant since these are all forms of productive change that theatre has the ability to create. As Augusto Boal once said, “Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it” (Boal xxxi).

I assert that the arts have always been an influential outlet where injustices in both domestic and foreign policies can be examined. The actors therefore are the vital combaters who must battle single-handedly with their talent to provide an audience with nothing more and nothing less than the truth. I recognize that theatre should not be just a mere form of entertainment, but a battleground to fight for altering current issues and problems existent in society.

Through both my undergraduate and graduate careers, I have been filtering and solidifying my acting process to create an organic blend of aesthetic, political, and social theatre. Since elements of all three genres have great value in my goal of actively affecting an audience, I combined them to create an inter-theoretical approach to acting. This combination of theories was tested in performing my thesis role as Beth in Steven Fechter’s *The Artifacts*. By choosing a play with important social and political issues, performing research to tap into the mental and emotional state of my character, and

discussing concerns raised from viewing the production in a panel forum after the play, I used aesthetic, social, and political theatre to engage my audience.

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCING KONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKY’S AESTHETIC THEATRE,  
AUGUSTO BOAL’S SOCIAL THEATRE, AND BERTOLT BRECHT’S  
POLITICAL THEATRE**

One of the drastic differences between my undergraduate and graduate acting experience was that as undergraduate theatre majors at Murray State University, we were taught that there was only one way of acting, and that depended on what theory/theorist your acting teacher studied. Since my acting teacher was “Stanislavsky trained” we only concentrated on that one method. In graduate school, I learned that I had been using the techniques of several different theorists in my acting process without even realizing it.

Through a deep analysis, I found which theorists lent themselves more toward the type of theatre I want to do and the type of acting I hope to convey. These theorists are Konstantin Stanislavsky, Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal. I studied Stanislavsky and because I believe his work relies on audience members watching actors imitate life on stage at a distance, I refer to this kind of theatre as "aesthetic theatre." I also studied Boal and because he uses theatre as a forum for audience members to participate and role-play in an effort to find solutions to social issues, I refer to this kind of theatre as “social theatre.” Finally, I studied Brecht and because he was focused on creating theatre that focused on contradictions through controversial content to engage audiences, I refer to this kind of theatre as "political theatre." Through combining elements of aesthetic theatre, theatre for social change, and political theatre, I hope to pinpoint global issues of

concern, question how to address these concerns, develop an active conversation from these questions, and continue the conversation after the curtain closes. Through an inter-theoretical approach, I believe my goal of creating change through the lens of an audience member can be achieved.

Konstantin Stanislavsky, who is known as the “father of psychological realism”, created the technique termed Method acting (Carnicke 6). The Method trains actors to always be present on stage and live in the moment in which they are playing (8-14). Stanislavsky teaches actors to practice “emotion memory” and “the magic if” by placing themselves in a similar or exact position that their character is facing (8-14).

Since Stanislavsky’s actors believe they are living in their character’s world, they separate themselves from the audience, becoming the spectacle for audiences to watch. The decorum of audience members is a defining factor in Stanislavsky’s aesthetic theatre and distinguishes it from social and political theatre. Audience members in aesthetic theatre are expected to enter, sit down, be quiet during the show, and to leave after the show. The audience is to be mindful of the implicit fourth wall that separates the actors from the audience and watch from a distance as the actors imitate life on stage.

I have used Stanislavsky’s aesthetic theatre both in my undergraduate and graduate training. All but one of my graduate level acting classes were taught in realism. Also, I used Stanislavsky’s technique in all of my performances at UofL. The key elements of Stanislavsky’s aesthetic theatre that I use to accomplish my goal of using theatre to create change is Stanislavsky’s use of active verbs to propel a scene, psychologically tapping into and relating to a character, and using a multi-disciplinary

process to approach any character.

I was able to combine all three of these elements in my thesis performance of *The Artifacts*. I used active verbs to both control and be controlled by my scene partners and to keep the energy alive and shifting. I was able to psychologically connect to the mental health state of my character and show how the overwhelming amount of mental, physical, and emotional stress affected Beth's actions. Finally, in *The Artifacts*, I used multiple disciplines including psychology, philosophy, literature, and gender studies to strengthen my acting.

The main component of Stanislavsky's aesthetic theatre that I resist is this stagnant relationship between actor and audience. If my goal as an actor is to produce and perform works that have the potential to inspire audiences to transform society, the work must engage the audience on a deeper level. Audiences should be more than mere observers, but instead, should become as Augusto Boal calls it "spect-actors".

Boal's social theatre is less concerned with spectacle and more concerned with the content, the process, and the effect that the performance could potentially have on an audience. Rather than the actor having an inner focus, as is the case in aesthetic theatre, the focus becomes self-removed and placed on the audience. Social theatre encourages its audience members to speak up, yell, engage, debate, and question the performance. The spectator's role becomes re-defined in its relationship to the actor and to the theatre (Worthen 148-9). An active audience and minimalism are vital components of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). In TO, democracy is emphasized in that any and all can participate and make art (Babbage 305).



Boal wanted to develop theatre that would be accessible to all, that would give a voice to the oppressed or the minority, that could be applicable in diverse cultures and situations, that is non-exclusive, that has a free-flowing line of communication, and that is based on the actor's ability to listen, observe, and show sensitivity in all situations (319). He also wanted actors to have a relationship with their audience where they listened effectively to their problems and used the arts as an open forum for debate. Here, audience members play an active and integral role in discussing current issues and situations of oppression. Boal believed the best way for an audience to take any kind of social action was to allow them direct participation in the process from choosing the topic of discussion to offering multiple ideas of solution. Boal's theories are based on his belief that "creative engagement increases the human capacity to imagine multiple possibilities for our world and, further, that the encouragement of this stimulates the desire to do it" (310).

One of my experiences with Boal's forum theatre influenced my selection of *The Artifacts* as my thesis project. In a forum workshop for The School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies, one of my work colleagues and I interviewed graduate students about bad mentoring experiences they had encountered, and used these experiences to create a script of three separate mentoring scenarios. With the help of three classmates, I performed these scenarios several times for a group of graduate students and faculty members to offer ideas on how these situations could have been turned from a negative to a positive experience. It was very eye opening both helping to lead the workshop and participating in the skits. This workshop showed me the incredibly troublesome scenarios graduate students endure with faculty members and how much this issue needed to be

addressed. Through my Forum theatre workshop, I realized the vast number of students that desire a change in the current state of mentoring at UofL. The dialogue that created this forum theatre workshop inspired me to want to continue the conversation through my thesis performance of *The Artifacts*.

I believe one of the most unique aspects of theatre and the driving force of Boal's social theatre is this opportunity for role-playing. I think by role-playing, people put themselves in situations in which they may never have been, and get to inhabit a character from which they can learn. By using theatre as a social forum, theatre has the ability to build a community that can expose problems existent in society and brainstorm possible solutions to these problems. Boal's social theatre has the ability to transform an experience into something universal and break divisions.

In practicing Boal's social theatre, I see an audience as a collective unit that can universally relate to a piece and use that experience to transform society. By bringing a community together in an academic setting, my aim in my thesis show was for audiences to see the effects of bad mentoring and begin a discussion on how we can confront this issue. This emphasis on existing issues that spark controversy to create change is also a primary focus in what I call Brecht's political theatre.

The focus in Stanislavsky's aesthetic theatre is on the internal life of the actor and the spectacle. The focus in Boal's social theatre is on audience engagement and participation. The focus of Brecht's political theatre is centered around the content and choosing controversial, challenging pieces that will cause a shift or revolutionary change in the status quo. As Edward Bond states, "Political subjects in themselves do not make

political theatre” (Worthen 154). Unlike social theatre, political theatre candidly exposes governmental issues with a pre-determined political stance that dictates action (Kirby 129-30). Even though the spectator may interpret any play as political, “political concern and engagement must be in the work, not in the mind of the observer” (130).

By this definition, the political intent should be precisely written and clearly conveyed in the piece. Political playwrights such as David Hare and Caryl Churchill blatantly express their political position in their pieces. Even though I used Brecht’s Epic theatre techniques to shine light on the political subjects in *The Artifacts*, I do not believe it is considered a political theatre piece by Bond and Kirby’s definition. However, it is not solely the content that defines Brecht’s political theatre.

Brecht’s technique is also categorized by constant contradictions, spontaneity, the visibility of the production, an active audience, the presentational actor, attention given to history including the present-history, the actor/character double agent, the actor’s concentration on *gestus* (where they give attention to both the content of the piece and their critique of their character), and the focus on questioning “why not” rather than “why” (Thomson 125-6). In Brecht’s Epic theatre, the actor and the character can be described as the two meeting in a limbo where the actor takes on the character while still having enough distance to critically comment on the character in hopes of encouraging the audience to comment as well. The actor must keep his or her attention outward and focused on the audience. “The actor both presents and scrutinizes the behavior of the character in such a way as to invite the audience’s interrogation. The outcome for the audience should not be psychoanalysis but moral debate” (125). Epic theatre is dedicated to emphasizing the message of the piece to create a transformational experience for

audience members.

Both social and political theatre share the common objective to change the spectator from passive to active. They both desire active engagement from the spectator and that the content of the performance have a strong political or social message (Kirby 132). In performing *The Artifacts*, I chose two very strong themes of graduate student mental health and gender in performance to highlight in the production. In my goal to make the audience active participants in the theatre, I organized a panel after the show where we could gather as an academic community to discuss these issues. My role as a producer became just as important if not more important than my role as an actor in my goal of engaging the audience to question gender in performance and to change the current state of mentoring at UofL.

Stanislavsky's aesthetic theatre, Boal's social theatre, and Brecht's political theatre have all influenced me in specific ways. I could not just use one of these three theories to execute my goal of actively affecting an audience, but believe components of all three must be present to achieve this goal. This inter-theoretical approach combines strong acting techniques with the use of Stanislavsky's active verbs and psychological actor-character relationship, audience engagement with Boal's implementation of the spect-actor, and a focus on controversial content through Brecht's constant contradictions. It is through my undergraduate and graduate coursework and performances that I learned about these theories and how to best apply elements of each in order to dynamically move an audience.

## CHAPTER 2

### UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION- MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from Murray State University in the spring of 2009. At Murray State, I double majored in Theatre Arts and Political Science. I was encouraged by faculty in both departments to find the linkages and gaps between these two studies and to discover a way to fuse the two together. This led not only to my interest in interdisciplinary studies, but also to my interest in dramaturgical research.

I began performing research on every play I was involved in. I was interested in how the political, economic and social climate of a play influences the acting of a play. I performed the dramaturgy for three plays at Murray State and even co-published an article on the importance of dramaturgy in *Chrysalis: The Murray State University Journal of Undergraduate Research*. My work as a dramaturg strengthened my acting skills by taking an interdisciplinary approach and learning the vitality of research, the value of play analysis, and by creating a multi-dimensional and fully fleshed character.

The text is a huge part of a play but without meaning, without history, without relating to people's lives-the text is nothing. Text is simply words but the history gives it life. That is why I hold dramaturgical research as invaluable to a production's process, and more specifically to my personal process. Without research, I feel I would be giving

a false and uneducated version of a character. I believe a solid intellectual basis has the potential to give shape to the most vulnerable, even primal, human performance.

I used these dramaturgical skills when cast as “Spirit” in the South African play *Tooth and Nail* at Murray State. This play was composed by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company and explores such issues as social activism versus social conformity, oppression versus resistance, and stagnancy versus motion (*Tooth and Nail*). The play is set during the apartheid-era in South Africa and these themes are depicted through sexuality, race, politics, religion, class and culture (*Tooth and Nail*). As the character “Spirit,” I re-told the story of Noah’s Ark and how the biblical myth laid the foundation for racism. My character’s narratives re-told the popular story of Noah’s Ark in a way to challenge and question the accuracy of this story that society has accepted as truth. My character’s goal was to jolt the complacency of the audience and lead them to question what they believe and why (*Tooth and Nail*).

I believe my research of the text was apparent in my performance of *Tooth and Nail*. Before rehearsals started I began researching apartheid in South Africa. I knew what the definition of apartheid was, but that was about the extent of my knowledge on the subject. After reading about apartheid, I realized how much was at stake, how urgent the message of the play was, and how long and emotional this history was. To be able to be a part of a play that represents such a large part of history to an audience, who may be just as uneducated on the subject as I, was an honor.

Through my research, I found the textual references and sentence structure to play a vital role in my process as an actor. For example, the entire text is written in fragments.

This was on purpose to illustrate the fragmented and torn state of South Africa during apartheid. Also, the references to Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and those prosecuted for their artistic expression such as Meyerhold, strengthened my relationship to the text (*Tooth and Nail*). My research also proved an integral part of my process when trying to establish the emotional significance of this time in history, which I used Stanislavsky's method to portray. My research helped me understand a new level of emotion that I could produce by learning about the lives of people who lived during apartheid and the atrocious acts that happened during that time. And knowing that the history was what I needed to begin to relate to this world foreign to me, I knew the history would be just as important to an audience. Therefore, not only did I research the history of the play and its text, but also included footnotes and references in the play programs to help audiences better understand the play and its rich history.

*Tooth and Nail* also discussed themes that are just as important in the U.S. today. These themes were especially resonant for an audience in Murray, Kentucky, where, located in the middle of the Bible Belt, the county still operates on a very old and conservative belief system. Therefore, topics of race, mixed couples, different class systems, religious tolerance, and tolerance in general were very important to get across to an audience and more specifically this audience.

I wanted these themes and the injustice that still exists today regarding racial, religious, and political intolerance to resonate through these audience members so they would leave wanting change. The message was as dire as the need for change, and I was honored to be a part of an experience that had the potential to influence action from an audience. By using Stanislavsky's method in conjunction with a clear social and political

goal, I used this performance to reach out to audience members. I only wished that the discussion had continued after the show was over.

I will say that for this play, with its extensive history and complicated format and content, it would have been nice to use Boal's model to encourage active participation and discussion from the audience. This play exposed sensitive subject matters and therefore resulted in strong emotional reactions from audience members. I wanted to use this play to allow people to express and voice their emotions, which they did not have the opportunity to do. I believe with Boal's model of encouraging discussion, the audience could have released their reactions and a dialogue might have formed.

While I was challenged from a research perspective, I was not challenged vocally or physically at Murray State. Although I learned a lot from my acting classes, we did not have a voice teacher that taught IPA or dialects, and not until my last semester did they hire a movement teacher. This limited knowledge of voice and movement techniques is what led me to looking into graduate acting programs where I could hone these much needed skills.

I felt prepared academically to enter into a graduate performance environment, but felt very amateur in terms of voice and movement. I felt confident in my character analysis; however, knew I could not move forward in my acting without the essential training of the voice and body. I decided to enter graduate school to receive training in these two areas and to better understand what goals I wanted to set for myself in terms of my acting. I chose University of Louisville's M.F.A. program since it had a community service component built into the curriculum, since it had a relationship with Actor's



Theatre of Louisville, and since it offered two years of graduate level training in both voice and movement.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**GRADUATE TRAINING- UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE**  
**ACTING**

The acting classes at UofL varied based on the professor that taught the class. These classes were taught by Professor James Tompkins, Dr. Rinda Frye, Zan Sawyer-Dailey, Daniel Hill, and Erin Crites. Professor Tompkins focused on realism through telephone scenes, Dr. Frye taught acting Shakespeare, Zan Sawyer-Dailey taught a monologue and scene work class, Daniel Hill directed the class in two contemporary plays, and Erin Crites' acting class centered on devising theatre. It was very beneficial to receive a wide array of acting training methods by five different teachers.

In Professor Tompkins' class, I did not find the telephone scenes useful or helpful. By being given a minimal script around which to create a scene, we were not as concerned with our acting as we were with the given circumstances of the scene. However, the class was beneficial in deeply exploring the style of realism, specifically through Robert Cohen's book, *Acting One*. By spending a semester on realism, I was able to hone my acting skills used in aesthetic theatre. Through strengthening my Stanislavskian technique, I am confident in using realism not only in aesthetic theatre but channeling these techniques to make stronger political and social theatre pieces.

The Shakespeare acting class did teach me a lot about Shakespeare that I did not know. However, most of our learning about the techniques and methods came from the assigned books that we were to read outside of class and never discussed in class. Also, performing *Richard III* on the main stage and in class was frustrating and overwhelming. Those in the cast were being compared to our classmates who were assigned the same roles for the class assignment. Also, those who were in the show spent class time and rehearsal time performing the same scenes, killing any spontaneity that the scenes could have fostered. We also performed scenes from *Merry Wives of Windsor*. It was nice to perform a comedy after *Richard III*, and I think the class had a great time playing with comedy. This class taught me how to analyze and perform classical theatre and learn to define and understand the differences that classify this genre. The most important thing I took away from the class was how to relay a piece of theatre to an audience in an archaic language. Since Shakespeare can be difficult for audience members to digest linguistically, I learned how to specify my goals and cater to an audience. This relating of theatrical work and molding it to a specific audience's understanding is valuable to aesthetic, social, and political theatre.

Zan Sawyer-Dailey's classes were my favorite of the acting classes, not just because she allowed us creative input by choosing which pieces to perform, but also because we were given inside information about the current state of equity theatres and advice on how we can make ourselves marketable for future job placement. Zan's goal in teaching the class was to make us ready for the job market. She worked with us on monologues and coached them from a casting director's perspective. She also directed us in scene work and offered critiques in an effort to test our ability to change tactics and

methods. I believe these classes provided me with the tools to get a job acting in a theatre. In admiring Zan's methods of directing and teaching, I asked her to direct my thesis show. I was thrilled when she agreed.

Not only did Zan provide me with superior direction on my thesis project, but her class taught me a lot about the business of theatre and what avenue I should take in developing future projects for large audiences. Since I do want to continue adapting and devising theatre pieces based on social issues, her class offered entrepreneurial ideas on how to make it happen. In becoming my own business manager and producing my thesis show, I was able to implement a lot of what Zan taught about the business side of theatre and what makes an actor successful in taking control of their career.

Daniel Hill framed his acting class around the rehearsal process of mounting a show in professional theatre. We were given two scripts to perform and designated a very short rehearsal process to prepare for the shows. He chose what I believe to be two very challenging scripts that had a lot of meat to them. The scripts required everyone to get out of their comfort zone in some form or another. My favorite thing about this class was getting the opportunity to be in a show with all my classmates and act as an ensemble.

In Daniel's class we focused on Stanislavsky-based technique, but covered controversial social topics in both plays. One of our performances commented on mental health and the different mental disorders people are diagnosed with. In the other play, Daniel went against the specified racial casting, which inherently made a statement on race throughout the piece. I believe both plays were better executed by primarily using elements of aesthetic theatre. However, I believe it would have been very beneficial to

have a talkback with the audience after the shows to see how the commentary on mental health and the reverse racial casting affected the audience. I believe this is the next step that needs to become common practice to move audiences from passive to active as Boal encourages.

Erin Crites encourages acting that excites, intrigues, and challenges us in her class. She opposes students desire for teacher approval, but instead encourages self-analysis and self-approval. By allowing us the opportunity to devise our own theatre based on our individual interests, she hopes that we will find what excites us about theatre. I think this teaching philosophy is extremely important, especially at the graduate level where we are becoming burnt out and disillusioned by constant reviews and critiques. It seems that in this department taking risks is frowned upon, and we are to complete assignments with little creative input to the process. Her class excites me and allows me to throw around crazy ideas and not be concerned with judgment or failure. This is the mindset I feel must be present in order for magnificent theatre to be born.

In Erin's class, Jake Beamer, Jocelyn Matsuo, Lauren Street, and I are working on our second piece centered on school shootings. We performed a piece on school shootings in our Performance Theory class using theories from Artaud, Brecht, and Boal. We really liked our piece and wanted to take this idea even further especially after the Sandy Hook shooting. We decided to frame our acting performance around the question, "Who is responsible for these shootings?" The piece asks this question as it relates to the victim, mental health, parents of the victim, media, gun laws, the government, and many others. Through acting out this blame game we hope our audience will contemplate who is responsible in an effort to stop this trend of school shootings. Our group used Boal

exercises to create movement sequences in the piece and to start a conversation on this troubling social topic. We are also making blunt commentary on the government and gun laws. We are employing Brechtian technique by taking a firm position in the current debate surrounding gun ownership. Finally, we will use Stanislavsky's elements to perform our piece in realism. We combined all three elements in our performance, which we hope will move and disturb audiences.

Through all of the acting classes I was able to take away skills that can enhance my performance in aesthetic, political, and social theatre. Through learning the techniques of both realism and acting Shakespeare, I feel more prepared to enter the aesthetic arena. Through choosing controversial and political monologues and scenes in Zan's class and through experimenting with Brechtian elements in Erin's class, I am more aware of the possible effects of political theatre and how to make it more engaging. Finally, through devising theatre and including audience participation in my devised works, I am creating potential social theatre pieces.

## **VOICE**

I have learned a lot through the voice training at UofL. Through the techniques of Linklater and Alexander, through intense IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) instruction, and through researching and performing a plethora of dialects, I am confident leaving UofL in good vocal standing. These are all much-needed tools and skills to enhance my vocal range on stage to portray a full range of human emotions and conditions. I know how to use all these techniques independently, feel confident in teaching others these techniques, and feel the results of the vocal training in my current

work as an actor. In my second year of voice class we performed 6-7 different dialects. Some we could choose and others we were assigned. For me, using a dialect really strengthened my acting. It was a way to tap into the deeper complexities of a character.

One of the dialects I chose to perform was Haitian. When I selected a Haitian dialect, I was drawn to political monologues about war since Haiti has been engulfed in racial wars since its existence. I found a beautifully written and powerful piece by Howard Zinn where the title character Emma, based on the life and political battles of Emma Goldman, describes the atrocities of war. This piece mirrored Emma Goldman's life as a political activist and anarchist who voiced her opposition of the government with the hope that others would join her. Emma Goldman was known for her great rhetoric and using her powerful speaking abilities to influence political and social change. She strongly opposed war and campaigned for women's rights and birth control ("Meet Emma Goldman"). Goldman was imprisoned for publically criticizing the required draft of men to fight in World War I ("Meet Emma Goldman").

In performing Emma, aesthetic theatre was utilized with a Haitian dialect since I was able to connect to my character on a deeper level through the Haitian vernacular. The monologue contained both a strong social and political message. The historical figure Emma Goldman and her fight for social and political change strengthened the meaning of the piece. Emma Goldman's hope was that audiences who heard her speak would take action against the government, and I used this goal in my performance ("Meet Emma Goldman").

I think the Haitian dialect affected the interpretation of this character by showing Emma as a political public speaker that contains the potential to create change in others. In the Haitian dialect, the consonants are very thick and emphasized. I think this helps Emma prove her points in her speech. Also, Haitians tend to emphasize the first syllable of a word. This helps Emma draw the audience in from her first word and give meaning to each and every word she speaks. In the Haitian dialect, syllables are separated instead of running together. This allows Emma to take her time in her speech and emphasize all parts of a word giving each word a powerful meaning.

I believe Haiti has been a country filled with the same themes Emma is fighting against -war, violence, poverty, and crime. I believe the meaning of Emma's speech and her hope to move people with her words is stronger with a Haitian dialect. I was so much more emotionally attached to this piece and had so much strength behind my voice by simply performing this monologue in a Haitian dialect. I was much more connected to the piece with such a strong political message simply because I felt the dialect to be a more authentic representation of this character whose goal had urgency and tangled emotions behind it. This was just one of the many dialects I performed that I believe was a viable piece of theatre based on a deep Stanislavskian emotional connection and a strong political intent.

## **MOVEMENT**

When entering the program I was very stiff in my movement. I suffered from a lot of tension and needed to learn to trust my physical instincts. I do not agree with Professor Tompkins' method of teaching movement. He was against giving instructions or telling



us how he wanted us to perform an assignment. I am in agreement that self-learning can be a very powerful teaching method; however, when we spent time coming up with different ideas, he would disagree and say there was only one way to complete the assignment. I believe this stifled creativity in the classroom and limited the possibilities that students could have created. Also, we were critiqued harshly by him saying we failed the assignment or simply that we did not do it right, rather than him offering constructive criticism on how we could correct our errors and what we could do to improve our movements in performance. Regardless of my disagreeing with the teaching style used for movement, I did learn to trust my instincts, my body, and myself more than I ever have.

We spent three semesters learning Lecoq mime sequences such as chopping wood, picking apples, shoveling, turning a baton, pulling a rope, and many others. In teaching mime, Professor Tompkins would not explain how to do it, but rather would show us, and we were required to pick up on what his body was doing. By paying attention to his body and how he was achieving mime, I was able to hone my demonstrative learning techniques. I did, however, struggle to find the purpose in learning mime since we hardly ever implemented any of the many different mime combinations we learned in the class exercises. The mime became a separate study from the movement pieces and mask work, so it seemed unproductive and purposeless to the class as a whole. I enjoyed the neutral mask work a lot. Neutral mask teaches the importance of being neutral and not a character all the time, the intensity that can be found in one head turn, and the ability of the body to perform an emotion when you can't

rely on your facial expressions or voice. I found this work to be challenging and rewarding as an actor.

I have found just as much merit in the emotional masks. These are masks that represent some of the most common emotional states such as fear, anger, happiness, sorrow, shock, and judgment. This mask work is a true testament to spontaneity and improvisation on stage. It teaches an actor why it is important to have a clear intent before entering the stage, how the body can be a powerful tool in expressing a wide range of emotions, and how devising theatre based on goals through improvisation can create both beautiful aesthetic theatre and more meaningful social theatre.

I believe the mask work is helpful in autonomously using the body to express a human's wants and needs. The body becomes the sole unit in creating universal emotions that strengthen my actions and intentions as an actor in aesthetic theatre. By connecting physical movements to a larger context, I am also making my body easily available to access weighty human emotions and connect to humanity cross culturally, which is imperative in social theatre.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

During my training at UofL, I had the pleasure of working with iAdelante! Hispanic Achievers for my community service class. Adelante is a Hispanic organization whose mission is “to provide opportunities for Hispanic youth and their families to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to function cross-culturally and to contribute to society as informed and proactive citizens” ([adelanteky.org](http://adelanteky.org)). Through this program, I had the opportunity to lead workshops for three different groups of students. I began in March

by leading dance workshops for the students at Jefferson Middle School's after school tutoring program. After teaching the students dance, I continued working with four students on a hip-hop routine that they then performed before an audience at the University of Louisville I.D.E.A.L.S Festival.

I also taught workshops for the students who attended the iAdelante! Saturday program. I led both a Zumba workshop and a cardio kickboxing workshop teaching the importance of physical activity to the students. I then headed a literature and acting workshop that centered on environmental awareness. I divided the students into groups and gave each group a different current environmental issue. The students were given appropriate websites to research their issue and were then asked to write a script based on their research. The students performed their skits for another group of students to raise environmental awareness. In this activity, I used social theatre methods to dissect environmental concerns and perform applicable solutions to spread awareness.

During the summer I served as the artistic director for Adelante's summer program, iSigue Adelante! As the artistic director, I directed the bilingual play *Los Mariachis Mexicanos* and taught the students the basics of acting. I also helped the students make all their own costumes and props out of minimal materials. This sparked creativity in the students, making them find alternative ways to create props and costume pieces that defined their characters. The play was a huge success in creating a bilingual outlet for these students.

I whole-heartedly believe that this organization's target of students being both young and of Hispanic origin gained a lot from these workshops. These students are

dealing with issues of identity while fighting barriers of language. Teaching demonstrative workshops on exercise, art, and acting fell into the laps of this target audience. Also, performing a bilingual play helped fuse the division between the culture they are surrounded by at home and the culture they are surrounded by at school.

Education outreach is very important to me. It is events and workshops like these that will forever leave an impression in a child's mind. Therefore, I am very happy and grateful to have had the opportunity to work with iAdelante! I was also proud that through my work along with others involved in the Sport for Development and Peace class, we were awarded with the 2011 Outstanding Community Engagement Award from UofL. This award honors organizations that make ties within the community to make a difference, which is what I hope to continue doing in my future theatre career.

My success with the children at Adelante can also be tied to my fusion of aesthetic, social, and political theatre. I combined political and social theatre in assessing the needs of this community. Since these children were conflicted and divided linguistically, I decided to represent both languages in the play to emphasize the importance and relevance of both in their lives. Brechtian elements were represented through masks, signs, singing, dancing, and the visibility of the production. Boal's methods were applied by discussing this issue with the children and by using a bilingual production to show each language's significance. Finally, since the cast was made up of different animals, we spent a lot of time on animal walks, animal sounds, and the psychology of different animals. In using Stanislavsky's "magic if", students imagined themselves as their animals. By tapping into their inner animals, the students employed Stanislavsky's method.

## THEORY/ACADEMICS

The academic courses at UofL were my favorite part of the program. I was able to not only learn in depth about a number of theories, many of which I had no prior knowledge, but was also able to put this theory into practice in an interactive way, showing that I understood the content. I was able to learn about feminist theorists like Helène Cixous and Luce Irigaray whose theories intrigued me and made me question my work and goals as an actor. I was also able to look more closely into the techniques of Artaud, Suzuki, Meyerhold, Bogart, Stanislavsky, Brecht, Boal, and many others. My academic work led me to analyze what theorists and theories I find most in line with my goals as an actor. The courses also led me to examine what it means to be a Caucasian female on stage and being fully aware of what signs I give off as an actor. This new information helped strengthen my work as an actor and led me to assess my goals in theatre more closely, as was the case when playing Lady Anne in *Richard III*.

Playing Lady Anne was a challenge for me, not just because she is one of Shakespeare's leading ladies, but also because of the extreme "femaleness" of how the character is written. By using Irigaray and Cixous's articles on constructing gender based on a property model and a binary scale, I was able to explore the question, "To what extent is Lady Anne's character defined by her relationships to men and how is the male/female dichotomy portrayed in her character?" In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray comments on the historical and social habit of viewing women as man's 'Other' and in this comparison, she forms a "negative mirror image against which [man] defines himself" (Counsell and Wolf, eds. 59). Women are defined only in their relation to Man and this creates an exchange system between men and women where women are the

product to be exchanged and consumed. A woman's value can be determined by her title, based on Irigaray's three statuses. A woman can be classified as a *mother*, a *virgin*, or a *prostitute* (59-65).

The mother is defined as private property and her value lies within reproduction and domestic services. The virgin represents "the sign of relations among men" and her value is defined by the possibility of exchange among men (63). However, "once deflowered woman is relegated to the status of use value, to her entrapment in private property; she is removed from exchange among men" (63). The prostitute is valued exclusively by her body and her body is seen as "no more than a vehicle for relations among men" (63). It is important to note, "neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her own pleasure" (64).

Hélène Cixous states in segments taken from '*Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/ Forays*,' how philosophy and literature have created the standard of defining relationships in couples based on opposites. And with these opposites, the 'other' only exists to define its counterpart and therefore bears a negative connotation. So, in the Man/Woman comparison, man is historically defined as the *active* and woman as the *passive*. "Either woman is passive or she does not exist" (68). Cixous preaches against these age-old comparisons and advocates for sexual liberation (59-65). I used both Irigaray and Cixous' theories from the Performance Theory class to analyze gender in my acting performance of *Richard III*. These theories caused me to have a critical eye in examining the commentary on gender in Shakespeare's text and in my performance.

To start, *Richard III* is one of Shakespeare's history plays and is written as such. In this time period, in support of Irigaray's article, women were excluded from socio-economic systems and were forced to live through men – first their fathers, then their husbands, and then their sons. Women's value was based on their function and relationship to men at this time (59-65). Therefore, Anne can be seen as a product of consumption being exchanged from her fiancé Edward to Richard and her need of Richard in order to survive economically. Since I am not capable of changing history, this was a historical truth that I couldn't ignore in my performance, but instead, tried to utilize this information in my acting.

Beginning with the written text, I was playing Lady Anne. Just the character's name, with the prefix of "lady" already denotes a certain mode of behavior and female characteristics. Also, my binary counterpart, *Richard III*, was awarded a suffix- one that signifies a proud male heritage. Just the difference in titles is an important point to raise in discussing gender construction.

Also, the costumes given to the actor playing Richard and to me playing Anne said a lot about our characters and the binary construction of our gender. I think it is vital to point out that Anne was covered from literally head to toe with a non-form fitting dress and a black cape with heels. None of the body was exposed, and I believe this costume fully represented Irigaray's token virgin, whose value lies within her virginal qualities. I was also wearing a long blonde wig with curls. The only jewelry or prop that Anne bore was a huge cross necklace further supporting the claim of her being a "lady" and typed virgin (59-65). Richard's costume, on the other hand, was comprised of leather and straps, which are considered very primal and manly. He also carried a sword on his body,

which could be used to threaten and cause physical harm (59-65). In trying to perform such an emotional high-stakes scene in a very large wig and clothes that enveloped my entire body, I felt extremely restricted in what physical choices I could make. Also, changing my hair from straight and brunette to curly and blonde commented on certain characteristics associated with female beauty that were imposed onto my character and my performance.

Anne's first scene, 1.2, begins with her mourning over her recently murdered father-in law, Henry. Therefore, the scene begins with Anne's relation to a man and her goal to follow his body to see to a proper burial. However, she is interrupted by Richard who, in an attempt to woo her, claims he killed both her fiancé Edward and her father-in-law Henry as a result of her beauty.

In that scene, Anne never speaks of her desires for herself but only desires based on men such as the proper burial of Henry, the justice driven revenge for Edward, and finally, having to find identity through marrying Richard. Also, noteworthy, the script places Anne in mourning at the beginning of the scene crying over Henry's dead body, and that high level of emotion carries through to the end of the scene until she is successfully wooed. The female stereotype of being highly emotional is depicted in the text (I.ii.1-284).

Playing Lady Anne was a huge challenge. To begin, I had a critical attitude towards her. I saw her to be a victimized, overly weepy, weak ingénue type. This character's sole purpose was to be aesthetically pleasing and therefore did not drive or move forward the plot of the play. To begin playing the role, I had to abandon these



judgments and find a way to relate to Anne and to her extenuating circumstances. By using Stanislavsky-inspired technique, I utilized experiences where I felt oppressed or limited by my gender to connect to Anne and fuel my acting. However, the femaleness of Anne was still blatantly apparent in the time period, in the text, and in my performance. This femaleness can be proven through Irigaray's ideology of her identity being based on her relation and service to men, and through Cixous's ideology of the dichotomies that exist on the male/female binary scale.

I believe the text lends itself to most of these binary comparisons. Culture and history make up for the associations not represented by the text. I found myself, in playing Anne, trying to escape the negative end of the pole. I fought the extreme feminine character structure of Anne, and instead played Anne with some directness, intellect, and power. I used weeping and signs of high emotions sparingly and instead threatened Richard with aggressive physical touching and with strong objectives such as "to mock," "to shame," and "to hurt." Stanislavsky encourages this use of strong action verbs to cause a shift in the scene and in intentions. I found that by specifying my objectives and making them active, Anne was a more relatable representation of a female in performance.

I think the final detriment to Anne's character is her submission to Richard's clever manipulation and wooing at the end of 1.2. Instead of wholly believing Richard and his clever antics, I played Anne as giving in based on her own sexual needs and economic needs. To me, this made Anne a very smart and complex woman and I decided to resist the social gender construction and binary comparisons in my acting. I chose for Anne to be sexually stimulated by Richard's aggressiveness and touch. As a character

choice, Anne needed that sexual void to be filled and she allowed herself the right to sexual desires and pleasures. She also lost both her title and any inheritance/means through her husband's death and knew she could find this new title/security in Richard. So, even though Anne chose to become wooed by Richard, it was for means of survival.

Anne's other two scenes in the play are also based on her relation to men and on female stereotypes. I think the text is written in a way that supports this male/female binary relationship. As Cixous proposes, I tried to break the bounds of this construction by giving Anne some "masculine" associations such as strength, intellect, power, and sexual lust in an attempt to shift the paradigm. Also, I chose strong active verbs to aid in this shift (Counsell and Wolf, eds. 66-71).

I think both theorists, Irigaray and Cixous, and the play *Richard III* say a lot about gender construction and how gender is represented historically and presently in culture. Cixous disagrees with the current representation and states that, "men and women are caught up in a web of age-old cultural determinations" and that by defining relationships based on a binary scale we are excluding the complexity that exists in such relationships. This binary scale of man/woman, and women's identity being based on their relation to men, is woven throughout *Richard III* and throughout society. I agree with Cixous that "it is time to change. To invent the other history" (70). I aim to go against the female norm in my acting and re-define the "other" (59-71).

Another component of the academic courses was the scheduled workshops that helped implement theories learned. My favorite performance in Tools for a Global Theatre was when we performed at Catholic Charities. Through learning about Japanese

and Yoruba culture and theatre practices and through my interview with the Zedan family from Catholic Charities, my group created a performance with the question, “What is your identity?” This question seemed highly appropriate for the audience members of Catholic Charities, since all have had multiple identities as their culture and locale have changed. Also, the question seemed very important since the class focused on interculturalism in theatre and these are people who have multicultural identities.

We decided to use the form of a children’s play to emphasize this question of identity and how having multiple identities can affect a person. We also thought a children’s play filled with music and dancing would engage the audience making them active participants of the theatre and entertain audience members from across the globe and across generational lines. We wanted this to be a fun and interactive experience and change the role of the audience from spectator to spect-actor as in Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed.

The elements of Japanese theatre we used were masks, costumes, narration, a lot of physical movement, and specific characterization. We decided to represent the layering of different identities with masks similar to those used in Japanese Noh Theatre. In Noh theatre actors wear different masks that convey their identity to an audience. Certain masks denote specific characters and characteristics. By using masks, actors are able to transcend boundaries of gender, age, and class. We thought the masks and other costume pieces complemented our form and supported our question of identity.

We also used a narrator to help dictate the action of the story similar to Kabuki theatre. Our play consisted of a lot of very physical movements such as the dance, animal

movement, and a chase scene. The physically drawn parts of the play were created from the physical rigor represented in Suzuki theatre with the fundamental basis of having a strong relationship with the ground. Finally, we drew upon Noh theatre in creating our specific characters and by focusing a lot on character work. Taking lessons from Epic theatre, we commented on our characters and other characters throughout the play and used masks and other props to show the visibility of our performance. Not only did the narrator comment on the characters, but also Jocelyn as the Gazelle, commented on her character's difficulty fitting into any one identity just as the Zedan family had experienced.

The elements of Yoruba theatre we used were singing, dancing, improvisation, the use of a chorus, narration, the use of instruments, and breaking the fourth wall. Our play was a children's musical and consisted of a lot of singing and dancing, similar to Yoruba theatre pieces such as *Death and the King's Horseman*. Since Yoruba theatre is an oral tradition, the story telling and singing were very important to our piece. Also, we used dancing and improvised interaction with audience members, which was drawn from Yoruba performance. We also used narration and the use of a chorus to tell the story of Riam, which we learned is a common Yoruba practice, and Brechtian. We used instruments and broke the fourth wall to interact with the audience. All of these elements along with improvisation are all common practices in Yoruba theatre and Epic theatre. Our group used components of all three theories in devising our piece.

### **SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE**

I was introduced to Adelante through taking electives with the Sports

Administration program in Sport for Development and Peace. Sport for Development and Peace, a fairly new practice, is based on the principles of Olympism. In 2005, The Doves Olympic Movement “emerged from the recognition that sport has inherent educational value” (Lyras et al. 3). This movement sought to use sports as an educational tool to “promote personal and social development” (3). From the Doves Olympic Movement, Sport for Development and Peace (SFD) was born.

“Sport for Development can be described as ‘all form of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interactions, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games” (14). Sport for Development, with its educational emphasis, holds that the concentration of sports should not be on winning or competition, but instead on “self improvement through participation in sport” (19). Therefore, SFD should take place in a non-competitive setting and strive to enhance the social and personal development of each participant. Through different programs, SFD ideals, education, sports, and the arts are promoted to increase the values and understanding of the individual so that they may better society.

Through learning more about Sport for Development and Peace, I was able to make the connections between sport and theatre. Theatre and sports have more in common than one may think. To begin, they both have defined roles for those who participate and have a long rehearsal or practice schedule for the live production/game. Also, they both occur at a certain time in a defined space with spatial limitations, contain ritualistic elements, and have stars that society recognizes and looks up to. Another large similarity that both sports and theatre share is the role of the spectator and how the spectator’s behavior and actions can affect the performance. However, it is defining the

purpose of the spectator that more closely links the two specific fields of Social Theatre and Sport for Development and Peace.

Social theatre and Sport for Development and Peace seek very common goals. They wish to involve their participants to make them active agents in creating change. They both hold the individual responsible for starting this transformation. Both seek to emerge in developing countries or countries that are in dire need of change. They both require practitioners to do their research before starting any programming and are more concerned and focused on the process rather than the product.

Both Social Theatre and Sport for Development and Peace are essential programs in community building and creating positive change. They are also both unique in what they have to offer. Social Theatre offers the opportunity to role-play, widening the perspectives and opinions, that we alone can offer. Role-playing is social in its existence and creates a powerful forum to discuss social issues. Since competition is a part of daily activity, sports can use this idea of competition and our inherent desire to play to enhance the learning experience. Sports are also popular and widely used so they can be used as a common dialogue across borders, languages, and cultures.

It was through Sport for Development and Peace that I learned more about social theatre and decided how I wanted to use it for my goals as an actor. Through my work with Adelante and Louisville I.D.E.A.L.S, I used the arts as a forum to create social change and openly discuss any issues that arose. It was through serving as the artistic director of Adelante and as a theatre practitioner for the Louisville I.D.E.A.L.S. team that I realized I had the potential to produce my own thesis show that openly displayed a

social issue in urgent need of changing.

## CHAPTER 4

### APPLYING THE INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH

Through learning about aesthetic theatre, political theatre, and social theatre in my undergraduate and graduate classes, I was able to learn how to best implement which techniques I wanted to use in my own work. I believe a combination of all three theories is needed to successfully create change. In experimenting with all three theorists' elements in coursework and productions, I have designed my own method of picking and choosing what I have found successful in my acting process. Step one of my process is always analyzing the script I am working on. I make notes in the margins of questions I have or things that stick out to me. I also underline words, people, or places that I am not familiar with so I can look them up. One example of this was when I played Trudy in *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe* at Murray State. *Search for Signs...* by Jane Wagner, originally performed as a one-woman show, threads together different scenarios of females during the women's consciousness movement of the 1970s and 80s. There were many terms and historical references that I did not know and had to refer to my research skills to unravel. Female political activists such as Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Flo Kennedy, and Geraldine Ferraro were made reference to and were pivotal to the plot of the play.



The play also made reference to transcendental meditation, Mantra, and Erhard Seminars Training, which were all widely popular and practiced in the 70s and 80s, but with which I, myself, was not familiar. In order to achieve my political and social goal, which was to educate audiences on the women's consciousness movement of the 70s and 80s, I had to be educated on the movement. Through looking up all the script's references and through a deep analysis, I was able to understand the premise of the play. This understanding led me to make more specific Stanislavsky-inspired acting choices, led to my social goal of wanting to educate the audience on the women's movement, and led to my political goal of wanting to question the current affair of gender politics.

Step two is using my dramaturgical skills to research the time, place, socio-economic climate, and the political state both historically and presently. Step three is to clearly define my goal in the acting of my role. Is it for people to question the ideas and stereotypes we have attached to gender? Is it to ask an audience to re-examine the binary comparison of the male/female? Or is it to make a social commentary on the effects of bad mentoring and the current state of graduate student mental health? These are examples of different goals I have implemented in some of my roles at UofL.

One role that I used my dramaturgical skills to help define my acting intent was through the character Bob in *A Perfect Wedding*. Bob was such a comedic character that it could have been very easy to just settle on my intent as "to make the audience laugh." However, I wanted something deeper and more complex to make this character multi-dimensional. I decided to learn more about the profession of gravediggers and their thoughts on death. It made sense that Bob said some of the most meaningful things in the play, since dealing with death everyday can give a person perspective.

My goal was to make the audience think about both life and death and to question if they are in fact living before death comes knocking. In fighting for this goal, I directly addressed the audience. I formed a relationship with audience members during intermission before I entered the stage. Once on stage, I looked audience members directly in the eyes and delivered my monologue to them, which is a combination of Stanislavskian and Brechtian technique.

Since a lot of what I was saying was questions, I posed the questions to audience members (and sometimes they answered, which was great, and sometimes they refrained). Regardless of if they answered or not, I formatted my delivery so that they were forced to think of answers to these questions, to interact, and to relate these questions to their own lives. One example of Bob's direct address to the audience was:

A person loves the idea of forever. A thing that lasts. Eternity itself. Not like so much of life that comes and goes-- and you have to wonder: where did it go? Was I committed to anything? Did anything ever matter?

<http://www.charlesmee.org/perfect-wedding.shtml>.

Through dramaturgical research, a social interaction with audience members, direct address, and putting myself in the shoes of this character, I combined elements of aesthetic, social, and political theatre to successfully make Bob multi-dimensional. I had an interactive relationship with the audience that allowed them to think, question, and debate issues related to their own lives.

By combining elements of aesthetic, social, and political theatre, I know I can achieve my acting goals within a play and my personal goals as a theatre artist at large.

Pulling from Brecht and Boal, I crave an active audience. I want to interact with the audience and let them feel like they are part of the action. I want them to feel comfortable gasping, talking, and even debating out loud. This gives power to the audience and allows them to comment and analyze the situation. This should be used in partnership with Boal's method of using theatre as a powerful forum that can create an open dialogue on issues revealed through performance.

How as an actor do you create this symbiotic relationship with an audience? I think by fusing elements from Stanislavsky, Brecht, and Boal, the relationship between actor and audience can be re-defined. First, I find it pertinent to, like Stanislavsky, pull from as many different fields as possible. Taking this interdisciplinary approach and using psychology, sociology, business, and other fields, I am able to achieve more depth in my acting. Secondly, Brecht encouraged the "Intelligent Actor." The "Intelligent Actor" is someone who is aware of both the history and the present and how that influences the play. Therefore, it is important to continue performing dramaturgical research for productions I am a part of. As an actor, it is vital to live in the moment and be open to spontaneity as Stanislavsky teaches. He also proposes the idea of the double agent between an actor and the character and suggests that you are never one or the other but rather in a constant limbo both experiencing and being on stage. These are two vital Stanislavskian elements I use in my acting.

In Aunt Mary's monologue about her husband cheating in *How I Learned to Drive*, I embodied the character and felt both the love and betrayal of her husband mixed with the emotion of sheer manipulation by her niece. I also imagined myself as her and how I would feel if my husband were cheating on me with my niece. I felt that for Aunt

Mary it was easier to place the blame on her niece and deny any guilt by her husband. She was so in love with Peck that she could not come to terms with his guilt. If she did, she would not have had the hope for him to come back to her. The desperation of this character met with the hurt I would feel if I were her merged to give the most honest portrayal of this character's emotions.

By using Brecht's theory, I find myself constantly searching for contradictions and questioning the facts. By questioning the facts and showing the contradictions in my acting, I am opening the door for commentary. There is the constant question in Epic theatre of "why not," rather than "why," which I find to be a challenging question that can more clearly guide my intentions. One role that I had a lot of fun finding the contradictions in was Sketchy from *Wrong With Me. Wrong With Me*, a play written by classmate Jocelyn Matsuo in conjunction with the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Louisville, showcased depression and bipolar and how the disorders affect human behavior. The piece was abstract and embodied intangibles such as science and drugs. I performed the role of Sketchy, who was an embodiment of the medications given to depression and bipolar patients, and how they can affect these patients behavior.

In developing this character I wanted to embody drugs by placing my personal opinions on drugs and their affects onto this character. My character had its highs and lows where he would be really fun and happy one minute and then very serious and somber the next. Sketchy tried to act very smooth, but when he thought he may get caught, he ran. In all of these actions, decisions, and through the delivery of this character, I showed the contradictions.

Also, Sketchy changed every night. Since I was embodying drugs, he was constantly inconsistent and spontaneous and I often went for the “why not” in my acting rather than the “why.” Keeping some distance from this character and his emotional states allowed me to improvise and allowed for commentary.

Finally, Boal’s theory poses that there is just as much merit in the process as in the product itself. I find this to be vital in theatre. If our goal is to create change why aim for just an audience, why not challenge to change ourselves, our cast mates, and heighten the experience for all? In my process as an actor I look forward to the process and see it as a social growth opportunity, rather than a process for individual and isolating growth.

One excellent example of Boal’s social mission was through the play, *Plays: A Play*. This play was created by and for students. By keeping our target audience of students who are required to see the shows in mind, we developed a piece we thought they would find fun and engaging. Also, since Louisville is a very athletically driven community, we chose athletics as our topic. Our goal was to devise a piece of theatre that involved both students and members of the community. I believe this goal was achieved very successfully. Through interviews of both students and audience members, through Louisvillian references, through games and a cookout before the show, and through audience participation, the cast interacted and depended on students, community members, and audiences to bring this piece to life.

This was the definition of a show that had just as much if not more merit in the process as in the product. As a class, we wrote the entire piece. Then as a cast, we blocked the piece. We tried out different movement sequences and scenes and decided

what worked best. We all had a say in everything. The process was very democratic and allowed everyone to serve as both a follower and a leader by utilizing personal strengths and honing weaknesses. It was truly an ensemble effort.

This process was new to me. It was very frustrating at times, but the payoff was worth it. Audience members were amazed that we had written and created such a piece. They were engaged, interactive, and from the feedback I received, had a blast. Students and community members were honored to have been a part of the show whether in the writing, in an interview, or as an audience member. Audiences felt a part of the action and saw how their words influenced the production. It was a wonderful way to show how social theatre can be achieved and how it cannot only bring audiences together, but also a community.

## CHAPTER 5

### *THE ARTIFACTS*

When Beth, a graduate student, sits down to take her dissertation comps and is greeted by the enigmatic Hedda Gabler and the infamous Miss Julie, she knows something is wrong. *The Artifacts* follows the life of Beth and comments on the mental health of graduate students, the abuse of power of professors in academia, females in academia, femaleness from the nineteenth-century to the present, and the mental health of artists.

When I first read the script for *The Artifacts*, I dismissed it. The character Beth's sexual relationship with her father made me feel very uncomfortable, and the blunt commentary on academia in general made me question if this script would be worth pursuing. However, on the second read when more of the stresses of graduate school had begun to take their toll, I thought the message was worth pursuing, even if it scared me. This script possesses all of the subject matters that graduate students unfortunately all too commonly experience.

After performing some preliminary research, I found that the number of graduate students today who are diagnosed with depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and high stress are very high and only increasing. This led me to research the common causes that attribute to declining graduate student mental health, most of which were either included

in the script or causes that I myself as a graduate student have experienced. This led me to think of not only my fellow classmates, but also the graduate student population at large and what an affect this play could have on students. This was also a wonderful way to fuse my classwork in the Theatre Arts department with my graduate assistant work for The School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies.

It was through an interdisciplinary approach and through using aesthetic, social, and political theatre that I produced and acted in my thesis role. My goal with this show was to create awareness about the negative mental health diagnoses that graduate school can cause and to begin a dialogue of why this is and what we, in academia, can do to change this statistic. In my first meeting with director Zan Sawyer-Dailey, we discussed why I chose this play and how I wanted this to be my goal for this piece. Zan also mentioned how conceptually the two different worlds of reality and non-reality and the two different styles of early nineteenth century and present day collide in this play. I told her how the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (SIGS) declared this year The Year of the Mentor and how I wanted to include this event on their calendar.

The Year of the Mentor is a program developed by SIGS to address negative mentoring issues within graduate departments at UofL and to highlight positive mentoring experiences. Its aim is to improve mentoring around the university, which will enhance the graduate student experience as a whole. Since this play contained a lot of blunt commentary on the relationship between a student and her mentor, and contained examples of how they both went about their relationship in a wrongful or negative manner, I thought this would be a wonderful production to include as a Year of the Mentor event. My hope was by using theatre as a forum, the play would serve as an agent



to get people talking about what the real issues in mentoring are at UofL and how we can go about confronting these issues.

The play also deals with the subject of femaleness and how gender roles have not changed much since the nineteenth century. By the playwright's choice of Hedda Gabler and Miss Julie, two females who committed suicide due to feeling trapped by men, he was making direct commentary on gender and oppression. These women serve as Beth's confidantes against her own struggle with a man. The playwright also chose to re-tell the stories of Hedda and Julie from the female perspective, completely changing the validity of the stories we thought we knew. It was these two overlying themes that I wanted to dissect in my performance and use as the catalyst to start a conversation.

My first step in my thesis process was analyzing the script. There were a lot of references in the script that I did not know. The play contained segments of many different poems and quotes from literature. These references were taken from works by Goethe, Eliot, Strindberg, Shaw, Pirandello, O'Neill, Brecht, Pinter, Beckett, and Shakespeare, to name a few. My character, since she was getting her Ph.D. in English Literature, also commented on how to break down a text and the different genres of literature such as romanticism, naturalism, expressionism, futurism, and symbolism.

My character asked a lot of the questions included in her exam booklet and spoke her thoughts of the possible answers aloud. Some of these segments from the play included, "Discuss at length the significance of Victor Hugo's play, *Hernani*." Victor Hugo. Paris. Riot. Death of classicism. Birth of romanticism (Fechter 12). Another example is, "What was the function of the trickster figure in Roman comedy?" The most

important role in Roman comedy was the trickster figure...often played by the intriguing slave. It was he who cunningly engineered the deceptions, the lies, the impersonations, and comic confusions so central in this genre” (13). A final example is: “Is there a point in the play Hamlet where Hamlet’s feigned madness becomes real madness? If so, when? If not, why not? If both, explain at length and if neither re-read question. And if still confused, scream” (15). All of these segments opened or caused a diversion in a scene and therefore their meaning was very important to the psyche of my character.

My first step was analyzing what these questions meant and the importance of where they were located in the script. The first question about the significance of Victor Hugo’s play *Hernani* opened Scene Two. *Hernani*, a play written in the nineteenth century, sparked the theatrical shift from classicism to romanticism. It caused a huge riot between stout neoclassicists and revolutionary romantics since it “deliberately violated many of the rules that the advocates of neoclassicism sought to retain” such as breaking Aristotle’s unities, altering the verse and vernacular appropriate for tragedies, including death and violence in the staging, and incorporating comedy in the piece (Brockett 339). This piece set to reconstruct the tight restrictions imposed on genres at this time and revolutionize the arts following the Revolution of 1830 in France (339). I believe this question opened Scene Two by introducing two notorious characters (Julie and Hedda) by two revolutionary playwrights, and how introducing them to a contemporary playwright would result in the collision of two worlds where violence would ensue.

Beth asks the second question as a diversion when she hears voices in her head. She asks the question about the function of the trickster figure in Roman Comedy as she is attempting to drown out the interrogation by Hedda and Julie. This question is

obviously representative of the scheming plans Hedda and Julie have in store for Beth. This is not their first victim, but they have not had success with the other pawns they have played. This question also foreshadows the theme of reality versus non-reality and encourages audiences to question which state the scenes take place in and which characters belong to which world.

And finally, Beth poses the last question about King Lear's madness. I believe this question sets up the whole premise of fact versus fiction. It also serves as a direct commentary on Beth's deteriorating mental state and asks whether her feigned madness has become real madness.

All of these questions serve as thematic points throughout the play. Therefore, it was important for me to dissect the script to uncover the importance of questions and references and the order in which they occur in the script. It was also beneficial to analyze the script to discover which themes I found most important and how I could utilize aesthetic, political, and social theatre to uncover these themes.

The second step in my process was finding research on the two major themes of graduate student mental health and femaleness, and deciding how I wanted to apply that research in my performance. The play begins with Beth under an extreme amount of stress due to this being her third and final chance at taking her Ph.D. comprehensive examinations. Her stress level increases throughout the play, which eventually leads to her mental breakdown. Since her mental state contributes to her arc in the play and the choices she makes, it was pertinent for me to research graduate student stress and mental health.

This was also one of the issues that attracted me to performing this play for this

audience. I wanted to be well-educated on this issue as it is widespread in higher education. Through my research I found that graduate student stress is caused by many factors, and specifically those that distinguish the graduate school experience from the undergraduate experience. Some of these factors are being in a competitive environment with your peers, always seeking faculty approval, being isolated in your study, not being active in any social clubs, the pressure of finding an innovative research topic, financial restraints, and the lack of structure in higher education (Fogg, Fullick, and Grad Resources). Piper Fogg, in the article “Grad-School Blues,” explores the psychological effects on students who attend graduate school. Fogg says:

Graduate school is gaining a reputation as an incubator for anxiety and depression. At the University of California at Berkeley, 67 percent of graduate students said they had felt hopeless at least once in the last year; 54 percent felt so depressed they had a hard time functioning; and nearly 10 percent said they had considered suicide, a 2004 survey found.

(Fogg, “Grad-School Blues”).

The economy also contributes to mental health side effects for graduate students. With the poor economic state and dwindling job opportunities, graduate students are faced with additional pressures and stress to stand out in their field. Graduate school can be a very isolating experience. With the main priority being school, it is easy to lose perspective and believe that school is the single most important thing in a student’s life, causing anxiety and stress with no chance of an outlet. Graduate school is structured in a way where students are autonomous in their

learning and where the lack of structure can lead to a lot of confusion, self-doubt, and an overwhelming lack of confidence. Self and peer analysis is also highly encouraged in graduate school, but when that analysis turns destructive it can cause rivalries within a small department and additional self-doubt and stress (Fogg, Fullick, and Grad Resources).

Graduate school can also appear as the place to prove yourself in your study. Therefore, there is additional pressure in higher education to create brilliant work that will justify your place in the institution. As Fullick states:

Within their programs, students face a more intense workload than in their undergraduate degrees, and they may for the first time be around students with as much academic aptitude as themselves. These factors can contribute to “imposter syndrome,” the sense that one is about to be “found out” for not really being smart enough.

(Fullick, “My Grief Lies All Within”).

This can cause extreme amounts of stress that can lead to graduate students dropping out (Fogg, Fullick, and Grad Resources).

Finally, one of the largest factors of poor graduate student mental health, as *The Artifacts* emphasizes, is destructive mentoring and the abuse of graduate students by faculty. Many students say they are overworked, underpraised, and taken advantage of by faculty members. However, since the faculty holds the pass to their graduating, very rarely do students voice their concerns to outside resources. In fact most graduate students who are experiencing some form of depression or anxiety, do not tell anyone

(Fogg, Fullick, and Grad Resources). “A recent study by the group on student suicide at 70 institutions found that 47 percent of graduate students who considered suicide in the last year did not tell anyone. And 52 percent did not seek professional help” (Fogg, “Grad-School Blues”). Therefore it is pertinent to voice these concerning factors and address solutions to decrease poor graduate student mental health statistics.

To begin, it is important to know some of the warning signs of depression. “Some warning signs and symptoms include difficulty concentrating, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, a change in sleep and eating patterns, persistent aches and pains, and a loss of interest in activities and hobbies that were once enjoyable” (Fogg, “Grad-School Blues”). If a student or colleague is experiencing these symptoms, it is important to seek professional help. All universities have mental health facilities and although these resources are free of charge at some institutions and not at others, it is pertinent to talk to someone since depression does not just go away, but instead stores and builds, leading to a possible breakdown as Beth experienced.

It is also imperative that universities not stop at merely offering mental health counseling to graduate students. Students also need support groups where they can socialize with others about the strains and pressures of graduate schools. Universities should provide other resources such as professional development workshops that teach students how to cope with stress, how to balance a budget, and the resources available on campus that can make a student’s graduate experience easier. Mentoring programs are also extremely vital in that they can provide positive mentoring experiences between faculty and students and between colleagues. This can also be a venue to express doubts, concerns, and seek out advice and encouragement from others. Finally,

the most important way that students can be helped is through knowing the warning signs of depression and anxiety and through universities spreading this information (Fogg, Fullick, and Grad Resources).

I utilized this research in my performance in multiple ways. First off, I used it as information to tap into Beth's emotional and mental state. Since she was experiencing warning signs of depression, anxiety, and was under a large amount of stress, this research was crucial in understanding the many reasons why her mental health was in such a debilitating place. Secondly, this research informed my using this as a topic to discuss and debate in a panel after the show. Poor graduate student mental health is rising and a lot of this is attributed to universities not talking about this issue enough. By using this play as the catalyst to begin a conversation and including a nurse and doctor from the UofL Counseling Center, I was able to confront the issue of graduate student mental health with professionals present.

My other main topic of research was femaleness from the nineteenth century to the present and how femaleness is represented in *The Artifacts*. Playwright of *The Artifacts*, Steven Fechter, could not have chosen more controversial female characters than Hedda Gabler and Miss Julie to appear in his play. Both Hedda and Julie have been called neurotic madwomen who exist in a constant state of boredom. Both male rivaling playwrights Ibsen and Strindberg, who possessed very different views of women's place in society, portrayed the women as oppressed and victims of their social time and setting. Ibsen wanted to see a change in the "companionship between men and women" (Jones 452). On the other hand, "the assertion at the heart of most Strindberg's plays [is] that warfare and hatred are the only possibility between the sexes, that woman is a devil in

whose hands man and all decency are powerless” (Rowland 414-15). Also noteworthy is playwright Steven Fechter’s gender as a male in writing female characters.

All the female characters have stark differences, but *The Artifacts* explores just how common all three women are. To begin, all of these women have strong objectives that directly relate to their social setting and ultimately destroy them. Julie wants love. Pursuing that love with a lowly servant who is beneath her in status causes her demise. Hedda wants freedom. She tries to achieve freedom by controlling the men in her life and ends up destroying them. When their destruction is not carried out in a way she finds respectable, she kills herself. Beth wants respect within her academic setting from her faculty, and most importantly, from her mentor. In her search for respect, she decides the only way to gain this respect is to kill those who disrespect her. She subconsciously kills her father when he spits in her face after sexually satisfying him and murders Professor Nelson when he attempts to rape her after he learns she has burned the exam.

All three women also fit into one of the three statuses that Irigaray created. Hedda is the mother whose status is defined by her maternity, Julie is the token virgin who loses all value when she loses this virtue, and Beth is the whore who offers up her body as a commodity to be exchanged between her father and Nelson. Therefore, all three women can be seen as having value only by and through the men who control their lives and define their social role.

All three plays also fit the classification of Aristotle’s unities. The plays have unity of action, unity of place, and unity of time. The most important of these three that dictates the women’s repression is unity of place. All three women are placed in a very



specific male dominated social setting. *Hedda Gabler* takes place in her husband's parlor. Like a bird trapped within a cage, so is Hedda to this parlor, feeding off any outside information that may come in. *Miss Julie* takes place in her father's kitchen. Although her father does not appear in the play, his presence is known through his ownership and control of the home with grim consequences to what occurs within the home. *The Artifacts* takes place in a university classroom where Beth is being taken advantage of by her male mentor, who like the men in Hedda and Julie's lives, controls her fate. This classroom, like a jail cell, is institutional and cold and her release is dependent on her mentor who holds the keys out.

Lastly, all three women are similar in that there is this battle of master and being mastered mentality. These women struggle with the men in their lives for control, which turns into a roller coaster of status shifts. In order for man to rise, woman has to fall and vice versa. The women are also similarly defined in that the only way they can get what they want is through an act of violence.

In researching the similarities between these three women, I was able to easily understand why my character would confide in these women, trust these women, and eventually join them. I believe Beth's strongest relationships on stage were with Hedda, Julie, and I attribute this to the research. My research also brought up a lot of social issues that I wanted to address, not only in my performance, but also in the panel discussion. Some of the issues that I wanted to explore more fully were female oppression then and now, the selection of Hedda and Julie as the characters Beth interacts with, female stereotypes and specifically Irigaray's classification of women, female

characters being written by male playwrights, and the shift in perception of Julie and Hedda as they contradict their creator's stories.

My relationship with Julie and Hedda also aided in deciding what my character's goals were and what I wanted my performance to convey, which is step three in my acting process. As mentioned earlier, Beth wanted respect and thought she could obtain her goal by living a respectable life. In Beth's argument with Hedda, she explains why she wants this degree and how it is the impetus for her to live respectably.

Beth: Listen. I want to be here!

Hedda: Why?

Beth: To get my degree. To publish. To teach at a respectable university.

Hedda: Respectable. That word again.

Beth: I like that word.

Hedda: So did I once. And it killed me.

Beth: It's just a word.

Hedda: What happens after you're at the respectable university?

Beth: maybe I'll fall in love with a colleague. We'll marry, teach graduate seminars together, write books, and have children.

(Fechter 28-9).

Through this exchange, Beth tells Hedda what she wants and how getting her degree will help her achieve this respectable life she imagines. When Professor Nelson threatens this hope and stands in her way, she must eliminate him as an obstacle in achieving respect. When she kills him, for the first time she sees and feels respect just to realize she doesn't want it anymore.

Step four of my process is changing the audience relationship from passive to active. While I did not want to explicitly break the fourth wall and include the audience in the actual performance, I did want the audience to comment and discuss the show and the issues highlighted in the production. To achieve this, I organized a panel discussion including the director, Zan Sawyer-Dailey, the Dean of the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies, who is also the organizer of The Year of the Mentor, Dr. Beth Boehm, and both a nurse and doctor from Counseling Services, Dr. Kari Zahorik and Sandra Robertson. I found the panel to be extremely successful where audience members vocalized what struck them in the show, asked questions about the current state of graduate student mental health, and commented on gender in performance.

#### **USING AN INTER-THEORETICAL APPROACH IN *THE ARTIFACTS***

Through my first step of breaking down and analyzing the script, I was able to more fully understand the script, my character, and specify what her needs and wants were. This all resulted in a stronger connection to my character through Stanislavsky-based acting. By analyzing the script and performing dramaturgical research, I was able to tap into the emotional, mental, and physical state that Beth lived in. This strengthened

my objectives and tactics, and allowed me to create very active verbs for Beth such as to seduce, to attack, to control, and to mock, as Stanislavsky encourages.

Also by analyzing the script and performing research, I was able to define what social and political issues I wanted to highlight in my performance. I decided to confront the issues of graduate student mental health and gender roles in my performance, both of which have social and political connotations. I based these issues not only on what I found important and what I wanted to explore, but also based on what I believed would be relatable issues of interest for my audience.

Step three of my acting process is clearly defining my goal as an actor that I want to achieve in my performance. The goal that I chose, which I thought to be most important for UofL as a whole (and more specifically for the theatre department at UofL), was to make a social commentary on the effects of bad mentoring and the current state of graduate student mental health. I believe through my choosing a play that candidly comments on this issue, through my extensive research on the mental health side effects of graduate school, and through organizing a panel of specialists to discuss this issue, I achieved this goal. I chose an issue that is both political and social in nature and that is in need of addressing and changing.

In step four of my acting process, I re-defined my relationship with the audience as not only an actor but also as a panel organizer who wanted to encourage discussion on these topics of concern. The panel encouraged audience members to comment on the production, pose questions to panelists, and discuss issues of concern that were raised in the production such as gender and mental health side effects. I believe the panel gave

audience members an outlet to be heard and spread awareness of the current state of mentoring at UofL. This changed the spectator's behavior from passive to active and theatre was used as a forum to discuss how we can alter these issues that are affecting our community. Through both producing and acting in my thesis role, I was able to cement my acting process and utilize aesthetic, social, and political theatre as powerful agents to influence a transformation within the academic community.

### **REFINING MY PROCESS FROM REHEARSAL TO PERFORMANCE**

Throughout the entire rehearsal process, Zan asked all the actors for feedback and opinions, and challenged some of the choices we made. I think this type of direction that is inclusive, invites different perspectives, and questions choices made, is valuable in aesthetic, political, and social theatre. All too common it is the case in aesthetic theatre that actors simply perform the director's vision of the character, rather than making individual artistic choices to create their own vision of the character. I believe that is regression for any actor, and that imitating doesn't allow for growth. Before rehearsals started, Zan wanted to know my opinions on Beth and asked me to create a character arc and share this with her.

The arc begins when Beth is given her comprehensive exams from Professor Nelson. She then tries to get out of her exams by naming off reasons such as a death in her family, her lack of sleep, and finally by trying to seduce Professor Nelson. She is unsuccessful in this attempt. Then enter Hedda and Julie.

At first, Beth wants them to leave and then quickly changes her tactic to get their help. Through her exchange with Julie and Hedda, Beth stands up for her idea of

freedom, which is making her own choices and living a respectable life in academia. When Julie and Hedda dismiss the possibility of this, Beth asks how she can join them. When Julie answers the only way is death, Beth first refuses to die and then plays a joke on them convincing them that she will kill herself.

It is after she hears Hedda and Julie's stories about the men in their lives, that triggers her to tell them about her father. The climax of the play comes when Julie and Hedda confront Beth about killing her father. Beth comes to this realization, burns her exam, and has a mental breakdown where she eventually kills Professor Nelson. The arc ends with Beth joining Hedda and Julie and asking the audience the question, "But... Who will love me?" (68).

Zan liked my choices for the arc and posed a question: "Did this situation with her father really happen or was this just another hallucination of hers?" I found this question to be stimulating, but as an actor practicing Stanislavsky-based acting in putting myself in this character's situation, I had to whole-heartedly believe that the situation did in fact occur. With Zan's concept of the play being reality vs. non-reality, she really wanted Beth to be constantly searching for what is real and what is not. I showed this in my performance by trying to ignore the voices, denying Hedda and Julie's existence, and going as far as I could with Professor Nelson to test whether this was in fact reality.

Zan also wanted to see Beth's fight for control with Professor Nelson. She wanted it to have a rollercoaster effect of one of us being on top and then quickly changing. It was a lot of fun in rehearsals playing with this battle of status filled with sexual tension, academic prowess, and both of our strong needs for each other for very different reasons.

This battle continued with Beth and Hedda. Beth and Hedda were in a constant state of disagreement and it wasn't until Beth saw herself in Hedda that she opened up to her and allowed Hedda to take control.

### **EVALUATING SUCCESSES/FAILURES IN MY PERFORMANCE**

In performing Beth, I had a lot of concerns as an actor that I voiced to Zan. Since my character is in such a frenzied state throughout the play, I wanted to be careful not to “play crazy.” If the audience saw Beth as crazy the entire time they would not have seen the stimulators that caused her deteriorating mental health state. Those stimulators were the key social and political elements that I wanted to address in my performance such as gender roles and bad mentoring. Also, Beth rejected Hedda and Julie's ideas a lot and played the obstacle. By constantly dismissing and negating them, I did not want to come off as a bratty teenager. By being constantly dismissive, audience members would feel unsympathetic to the trials and hardships that Beth was experiencing. The whole point in my performance was for the audience to feel something for my character and want to address and acknowledge the issues surrounding and leading to her mental breakdown. This way, as in social theatre, a dialogue could be formed on how to change the issues in need of transformation.

In retrospect, I think I tackled some of these obstacles and let some of the obstacles tackle me. I do not think I “played crazy” throughout the play, but instead believe I had a clear arc of the state of my character's mental health that gave the audience clear insight into what my character was going through and why. My largest challenge was not playing Beth as a young woman filled with angst. In this play there

was a fine line between a high sense of urgency and anger. I believe sometimes I achieved that and sometimes I did not. I believe the audience did care enough about my character to want to address the issues she was engulfed in. However, I think I could have more successfully turned her anger or angst into other emotions such as fear, desperation, or anxiety, and made the character a more multi-faceted and true representation of a graduate student under pressure. This is one thing I would have done differently in my performance to strengthen my aesthetic acting that would have led to perhaps a more engaging political and social tie for audience members to the piece.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LESSONS LEARNED/CONCLUSION**

The biggest learning lesson of my thesis was learning how to produce my own show. There is something so satisfying about fighting to do work that you want to do and then making it happen. Through organizing the creative team, casting the show, being awarded grants to fund the show, creating marketing materials to publicize the show, and organizing a panel discussion on an issue I find very alarming and important to discuss, I achieved way more than I ever thought was possible. I was more proud of my accomplishments in producing the show than in anything else and believe I brought attention to an issue prevalent in academia and in the UofL Theatre Department.

I will use all of the amazing skills I learned from this show to produce future works that I feel strongly about. It is one thing to want to highlight issues within your work as an actor. The next step, and what I learned from this process, is how to achieve it on your own and become your own entrepreneur in producing and creating theatre that aims to correct social dilemmas. In the future, I want to continue producing both written plays and devised works that use aesthetic, social, and political theatre to re-define the relationship between actor and audience. I hope to always create an active audience for my pieces and address issues of concern.

## REFERENCES

- Babbage, Frances. "Augusto Boal And The Theatre Of The Oppressed." *Actor Training*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Alison Hodge. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-actors*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Brockett, Oscar G., and Franklin J. Hildy. "Theatre in Europe and the United States during the Early Nineteenth Century." *History of the Theatre*. 8th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. 338-39. Print.
- Carnicke, Sharon Marie. "Stanislavsky's System: Pathways For The Actor." *Actor Training*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Alison Hodge. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Counsell, Colin, and Laurie Wolf. *Performance Analysis: an Introductory Coursebook*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Fechter, Steven. *The Artifacts*. New York, 1989.
- Fogg, Piper. "Grad-School Blues." *Grad-School Blues*. The Chronicle of Higher Education, 20 Feb. 2009. Web. 16 Oct. 2012. <<http://chronicle.com/article/Grad-School-Blues/29566/>>.
- Fullick, Melonie. "My Grief Lies All Within." *University Affairs*. N.p., 14 Dec. 2011. Web. 30 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.universityaffairs.ca/speculative-diction/my-grief-lies-all-within-phd-students-depression-attribution/>>.

- Grad Resources. "43% of Graduate Students Experience Stress Beyond Ability to Handle." *UWIRE PR*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2011. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.  
<<http://uwirepr.com/2011/03/29/43-of-graduate-students-experience-stress-beyond-ability-to-handle/>>.
- Jones, David R. "The Virtues of "Hedda Gabler"." *Educational Theatre Journal*. 29.4 (1977): 447-462. Print.
- Junction Avenue Theatre Company, The. *Tooth and Nail*. South Africa, 1994.
- Kirby, Michael. "On Political Theatre." *The Drama Review: TDR* 19.2 (1975): 129-35. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 May 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144954>>.
- Lyras, A., E. Kotziamani, K. Alexandrou, and E. Votsis. *Sport for Development: From Theory to Practice*. Nicosia, Cyprus, October 2010. Print.
- Mee, Charles L. "A Perfect Wedding." Web. 29 Jan. 2013.  
< <http://www.charlesmee.org/perfect-wedding.shtml>>.
- "Meet Emma Goldman." *The Emma Goldman Papers (DL SunSITE)*. UC Regents, 19 Sept. 2002. Web. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/goldman/>>.
- Rowland, Richard. "Miss Julie." *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*. 6.4 (1952): 414-420. Print.
- Schechner, Richard. "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed." *The*

*Kenyon Review* 3.4 (Autumn, 1981): 83-113. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 May 2012.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4335238>>.

Schininà, Guglielmo. "Here We Are: Social Theatre and Some Open Questions about Its Developments." *TDR (1988-)* 48.3 (Autumn, 2004): 17-31. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 May 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488568>>.

Scholten, Rachel. Web. 04 Feb. 2013.

< [http://adelanteky.org/Adelante\\_Hispanic\\_Achievers/About\\_Us.html](http://adelanteky.org/Adelante_Hispanic_Achievers/About_Us.html)>.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1996. Print.

Thompson, James, and Richard Schechner. "Why "Social Theatre"?" *TDR* 48.3 (Autumn, 2004): 11-16. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 May 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488567>>.

Thomson, Peter. "Brecht and Actor Training: On Whose Behalf Do We Act?" Actor Training. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Alison Hodge. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Wagner, Jane. *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. Print.

Worthen, W. B. *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft409nb32w/>.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### **Cara E. McHugh**

1731 Edenside Ave. #R3

Louisville, KY 40204

Telephone: (901) 413- 6111

Email: [caraemchugh@gmail.com](mailto:caraemchugh@gmail.com)

March 2013

### **EDUCATION**

#### **University of Louisville**

Louisville, Kentucky

Degree: Masters of Fine Arts

Expected Graduation Date: May 2013

G.P.A. 3.9/4.00

Thesis: "An Inter-Theoretical Approach to Acting." Supervisor: Dr. Amy Steiger.

Committee: Dr. Alexis Lyras, Michael Hottois.

#### **Murray State University**

Murray, Kentucky

Degree: Bachelor of Arts

Graduation Date: May 2009

Dual Major: Political Science and Theatre

Magna Cum Laude

Overall G.P.A. 3.75/ 4.00

### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

#### ***University of Louisville***

#### ***School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies***

#### **Graduate Research Assistant**

June 2010- Present

- Manage all social media outlets for graduate students (Facebook, Blogs, Emails).
- Aid in organizing doctoral hooding ceremonies and in visitation/recruitment activities.
- Collect and analyze data to improve graduate recruitment and increase graduate retention rates.
- Create marketing tools such as videos, handbooks, posters, fliers, and mass emails.
- Advertise and communicate upcoming Professional Development workshops to students.

#### ***Law Office of Ricky A. Lamkin***

Murray, Kentucky

#### **Legal Secretary**

September 2009- June 2010

- Draft all pleadings, motions, briefs, discoveries, and a variety of correspondence.
- Perform legal research on a variety of civil suits, personal injury cases and criminal cases.
- Manage calendars and coordinate all hearings, appointments and depositions.
- Accountable for general office management.

***Law Office of Ricky A. Lamkin***  
**Administrative Assistant**

Murray, Kentucky  
March 2007- May 2009

- Prepare a variety of exhibits, interrogatories, court correspondence and pleadings.
- Organize office, library, conference rooms, and all clientele files.
- Communicate with all clients regarding cases.
- Responsible for billing and budgeting of all case files and office accounts.

**AWARDS/HONORS**

**University of Louisville**

- Awarded with a Dean's Citation for Academic Excellence (2013)
- Named Outstanding Student of the Year in the Theatre Arts Department by Arts & Sciences (2013)
- Awarded with a Graduate Assistantship with the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (2010-2013)
- Awarded with the 2011 Outstanding Community Engagement Award for participation in the Louisville I.D.E.A.L.S. group

**Murray State University**

- President of Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honors Fraternity (2008- 2009)
- Honored with the Mary Kay Wright Scholarship (2008)
- Honored with the Breazeale- Broughton Scholarship (2008)
- Honored with the Waterfield Scholarship (2007 & 2008)
- Membership Chair for Campus Activities Board (2006- 2008)
- Social Chair for Sock N' Buskin (2006- 2008)
- Published in *Chrysalis Undergraduate Research Journal* (2008)
- Selected as a Miss MSU contestant (2008)
- Selected as a Summer Orientation Leader for Murray State University (2007)

**ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS**

**University of Louisville**

- Member of the 2012-2013 Graduate Teaching Academy
- Participated in the Graduate Student Peer Mentoring Program (2012-2013)
- Member of the Louisville I.D.E.A.L.S. group (2010-2012)

**Murray State University**

- Active member of the Murray State Theatre and Dance Department (2005- 2009)
- Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority (2005- 2009)
- Pre- Law Students Association (2008- 2009)
- Campus Activities Board (2005- 2008)
- Freshman Council (2005- 2006)
- Sock N' Buskin (2005- 2009)
- Prince of Cats Shakespeare Company (2005- 2009)
- Elizabeth College Honor Society (2005- 2009)
- Gamma Sigma Alpha Honors Fraternity (2007- 2009)
- Alpha Lambda Delta Honors Club (2005- 2009)
- Alpha Psi Omega Theatre Fraternity (2007- 2009)

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

**University of Louisville**

Awarded with a Graduate Student Union Grant (2011 & 2012)

**Murray State University**

**Publication:**

McHugh, Cara E., and Daniel Trump. "Theatre as an Instrument of Social Change: The Tooth and Nail Experience." *Chrysalis: The Murray State University Journal of Undergraduate Research* 4 (2008): 33-36. Print.

**Scholar's Week (2009)**

Performed in "The Dada Experiment"	Department of Theatre
Lissa Graham, Director	
Presented the Paper, <i>Fact vs. Fiction</i>	Political Science Department
Dr. Ann Beck, Mentor	

**Scholar's Week (2008)**

Presented Poster on <i>Tooth and Nail</i>	Department of Theatre
Jonathan Awori, Mentor	

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

<i>University of Louisville</i>	Louisville, Kentucky
<b>Acting for Non-Majors (TA 324)</b>	*May-June, 2013

- Design syllabi and class assignments.
- Facilitate ensemble exercises and discussion on student scene work and other performances.
- Evaluate student progress.
- Conduct office hours for student meetings.

<i>Encore! Youth Theatre</i>	Louisville, Kentucky
<b>Acting and Dance Teacher</b>	June-August 2011 & 2012

- Teach acting and dance classes to children ages 4-17.
- Design syllabi and lesson plans to cater to all ages.
- Co-direct a weekly full-length play.
- Aid in all administrative duties such as corresponding and communicating with parents, recruiting new students, and coordinating final performances.

<i>Adelante! Hispanic Achievers</i>	Louisville, Kentucky
<b>Creative Arts Teacher</b>	2010-2011

- Teach all areas of the arts to middle school and high school Hispanic students.
- Create syllabi for acting, dance, visual arts, music, and literature.
- Choreograph dance number that was performed at UofL.
- Direct the bilingual version of *The Brentown Musicians* that was performed at Americana Community Center.
- Teach Zumba, Cardio Kick-boxing, and playwriting classes at the Adelante! Saturday sessions.

<i>Theatre Memphis</i>	Memphis, Tennessee
<b>Acting, Dance, and Art Teacher</b>	June- August 2008 & 2009

- Instruct children ages 5-12 in acting, dance, and visual art.
- Create syllabi and lesson plans for acting, dance, and visual arts.
- Direct a short length play using the children from each summer camp.

**PROFICIENCIES**

- Proficient in all Microsoft Office Products 97-2010
- Proficient in Phoneslips and Time & Chaos
- Proficient in Final Cut 7, Final Cut Pro X, and Photoshop CS

## **REFERENCES**

Ricky A Lamkin, Esq.: Previous Employer/ Attorney at Law  
(270) 293-2933

Jonathan Awori: Assistant Professor of Theatre, Murray State University  
(270) 809- 4636

Amy Steiger: Assistant Professor of Theatre and Academic Advisor, University of Louisville  
(512) 914-6833

Dr. Paul DeMarco: Associate Dean of the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies;  
Professor of Psychology, University of Louisville  
(502) 852-6495

Dr. Alexis Lyras: Research Fellow, Conflict Resolution Program; Department of Government,  
Georgetown University  
(202) 903-3324