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IGNITING THE IMAGINATION:
TENACIOUSLY BUILDING A CHARACTER

By

Lois Abdelmalek
M.F.A., The University of Louisville, 2018

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts

Department of Theatre Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2018

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A Thesis Approved on
March 30, 2018

by the following Thesis Committee:

Professor Rachel Carter

Dr. Russell Vandenbroucke

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, Tayta, and “My Favorite,” Curt Himmelberger for their incomparable support, love, encouragement, and prayers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the entire staff and faculty in the Theatre Arts Department at the University of Louisville. You have all played a significant role in my life, and I am grateful for each and every one of you. To Dr. Baron Kelly, the director of *Our Country's Good*, for his love and passion for the craft and for students. Thank you to my Thesis Advisor, Professor Rachel Carter, for her support, insight, and guidance in this process. And thank you to my Thesis Committee for being on this journey with me. To my classmates and artists in crime, Ross Joel Shenker, Mia Donata Rocchio, and Sidney Edwards, thank you for your love and support on this great adventure.

Thank you to my family who has sacrificed so much to ensure that I get the best education. I am forever grateful. And thank you to “My Favorite”, Curt Himmelberger. You are a man of deep strength, compassion, and you are fearless. You inject our lives with laughter and you are wildly talented. Thank you for being my biggest support, and for adventuring with me. Being married to you is my most favorite thing.

Thank you to Cameron Knight, whose mentorship sustained me. To Stanton Davis and Grant Mudge, for their love and support.

Most importantly, I thank God for doing “immeasurably more than all I could have asked or imagined...” - Ephesians 3:20-21. May my life be a testament to your great love.

ABSTRACT

IGNITING THE IMAGINATION: TENACIOUSLY BUILDING A CHARACTER

Lois Abdelmalek

March 30, 2018

As an actor, my goal is to achieve full transformation to perform any character. During my final year of graduate school, I auditioned and received the roles of Liz Morden and Lieutenant Faddy in *Our Country's Good*. I had been exposed to several acting methods in graduate school; however, I questioned if I had a solid technique to rely on.

My thesis role was an opportunity to become self-aware of my process. Through imagination, I explored the historical circumstances, the text, and physical and voice work. I became conscious as never before how my creation of a character demands trusting my imagination and myself. Whereas before I only used imagination intuitively, I now recognize that igniting and nourishing this part is essential to me as an actor. I discovered that I had shaped my own acting approach and embraced my strengths, which left me feeling empowered as a theatre artist.

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INTRODUCTION

“Art is a product of the imagination...” – Constantin Stanislavski

I entered the University of Louisville MFA program with the hopes of leaving with a solid acting technique, a method I could use to prepare and apply to a performance for any role. The University of Louisville Master of Fine Arts in Performance program focuses on exposing students to various acting methods. A professor once described it as giving an actor many tools for their toolbox, meaning that an actor has many options to employ depending on the performance and the character. However, as I approached my thesis role, I felt that I possessed several essential tools, but not a solid process or technique.

In the third year of the MFA program, each graduate student performs a thesis role. I auditioned for the play *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker and was double cast as Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy. The play is based on the novel *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally, which portrays the first convict fleet that arrives in Australia. Based on the lives of real people, the play takes place in the 1780s and depicts the lives of the convicts and the Royal Marines who first came to Australia. I was excited to take on this role because I knew it was going to be challenging. It

required dialect work, playing two diametrically opposed characters, and was rooted in a culture that was completely different from my own. My deepest desire was full transformation. Though I will discuss the process for both roles, my focus in this paper will primarily be on Liz Morden. Liz is the more central character in *Our Country's Good*, so I will spend the majority of my paper on her.

I knew I possessed several attributes that I intuitively exercised when building a character, which were manifested in my thesis role as well. In order to share fully about my thesis experience, it is important to share a little bit about who I am and where I came from, as this information directly applies to where I am now. Acting is a profession that requires us to intimately know ourselves, our strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots, and so I have to begin with the instrument I am working with . . . myself.

My Story

I am the child of immigrants who came to the United States because of religious persecution in their home country. I grew up in an artistic bi-lingual home, both my parents were singers and sang at church, and I was always read to as a young child and encouraged to explore my imagination. By the age of two and a half, I was singing and dramatizing Bible stories that my father read to me. My mother would say I got bored with children's songs and wanted to sing what they were singing, so at two years old, I sang adult worship songs my parents taught me. I loved singing and I loved stories. There are several recordings of me re-telling a Bible story my dad taught me, like Noah's Ark, but I would act out and dramatize the entire thing. My imagination took flight and

my parents always told me that no one taught me that. I share this to say that I believe the arts chose me, I did not choose them. It is how I was wired and created. It was how I engaged with the world and understood it. It was how I saw and connected to story. Stories seeped into my bones and blood, enraptured me, and fueled my already wild imagination. I fell in love with storytelling. At the time, I did not realize that my dramatizing of stories was in fact acting.

Arts and storytelling continued to influence me during my formative years. At a young age, I became aware of our economic status in the school system and I was embarrassed and ashamed of it. There was a clear distinction between where I was living and coming from, and where my classmates were living and coming from. My shyness in school threw me more into books, music, and the arts in general. I also sang in the church choir and my cousins and I would write Christian faith-based plays and perform them at church. The arts gave me a voice and extended my language where my own language failed me.

Middle school and high school were difficult because I had a fervor for the arts, but my family could not afford any private singing lessons, piano lessons, or otherwise. However, I got more involved in high school and did musicals, plays, and sang in the school choir. I was still a little reserved, but I loved the arts and always wanted to be around music and theatre.

I was accepted into The Pennsylvania State University, but I decided to only minor in theatre because I wanted a major with better job prospects so that I could support my family. I was encouraged several times by various professors to consider being a theatre major and although my heart was already pulled in that direction, I wanted

to help my family in whatever way I could. A struggle during my college experience was that there were very few minorities in the Theatre Department and all of the students had been trained in some kind of dance, music, and voice lessons since birth, or so it seemed. I felt very self-conscious as a woman of color whose only experience was my own wild imagination, love and passion for singing, music, and acting, and writing my own plays as a child. I felt lacking and that I did not know the proper “techniques” or any technique for that matter. This made me fall back into pursuing theatre as only a minor.

During this time, I began to seek opportunities outside the classroom that would combine my passion for theatre along with my passion for social justice and service. I spent my summers volunteering at a behavioral camp and taught acting to inner-city kids. These children did not sign up for the program but were placed in the camp by case workers because they came from abusive homes and dysfunctional families. My job was to teach them theatre games and exercises, but mostly, to just love on them. It was here that I realized I could use art, specifically theatre to serve, to help, and to encourage and empower. After college, I founded and directed a non-profit called ThirdPlace, which was aimed at mobilizing twenty/thirty somethings to service both locally and globally. I ran ThirdPlace while continuing to perform in theatres, commercials, and film. However, I wanted to further my education and invest in my craft by auditioning for MFA programs in theatre as I realized this was my passion and I could no longer avoid fully pursuing it.

I decided to come to The University of Louisville, because its theatre department is dedicated to using theatre for social change and it is the only program in the country that offered a certificate in African American Theatre. The certificate was the main

reason I chose The University of Louisville, and one of my goals for graduate school was to leave with an acting process that I could directly apply to character creation. Although I did not feel I had a strong technique, I did know that I was entering graduate school with the strengths of vulnerability, curiosity, and imagination.

Vulnerability

Some actors have barriers exploring vulnerability, curiosity, and imagination, but I find them essential for acting and for life. OxfordDictionaries.com defines vulnerability as, “the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.” One of the barriers to vulnerability is that we live in a world where vulnerability is seen as weak. Culturally, vulnerability is not something that is praised. Our culture values independence and pulling ourselves from the bootstraps. It is almost counter-cultural to approach life through the filter of vulnerability because it puts you in a place that says, “I’m open and can be affected and will be affected.” This is something that I continually fight against, because there is strength and power to allow yourself to be touched and impacted by others and the world around you. With vulnerability, you are keeping yourself open to every aspect of life, full joy and also suffering.

Vulnerability in acting is just as important, because it keeps me open, honest, and responsive. It is full transparency. It keeps me truthful. And it keeps me connected. Dr. Brene Brown in her TEDTalk “The Power of Vulnerability,” says, “Connection is why we are here, it’s what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. This is what it’s all about”

(Brown). As an actor, vulnerability keeps me in the moment, sensitized to my surroundings, engaged and responsive to my partner, deeply connected with them and allowing them to impact and motivate what I say and how I say it, because it is always in response to them.

Vulnerability makes me acutely aware and keeps me listening profoundly to my partner(s). In turn, that kind of listening gives the other permission to open up and share. That kind of vulnerable listening grounds me in the scene and to my partner, and it makes me “read” beyond what is being said. I am listening, with an open, vulnerable heart, to what my partner is saying in words and in action. That kind of connection that stems from choosing vulnerability, in turn, is what keeps me also connected to the audience. They are able to see themselves in the story we are telling and connect with it in their own personal way. They are also able to see my flaws, as well as my desires. Vulnerability also encompasses genuineness and authenticity. Vulnerability keeps me focused on the other, what I want, and how I go about getting it without being in my head or thinking about myself. It allows me to go after my intentions full force without judgement because my eyes and intent are on my partner, not on myself.

I was able to access my vulnerability in a previous production at the University of Louisville, *Polaroid Stories* by Naomi Iizuka. I was cast as Philomel, a girl who gets raped and whose tongue is cut out, so she can no longer speak. Although that show was dark and heavy, vulnerability gave me the strength to enter in. The character is complicated because she does not have any lines, rather she sings the entire show. I exercised vulnerability by being open and responsive to my surroundings and all the characters on stage. Even if I did not have lines or direct contact with every character, I

developed my own perspective and point of view. There is an incredibly powerful scene where Orpheus sees me, no words are exchanged, but we look at each other for a long time before I run away. Vulnerability allowed me to stay in that moment, even though it was emotionally loaded, and not back down or hide. I stayed open, transparent, and raw. It took a great deal of vulnerability to enter into that character emotionally and psychologically because of the traumatic things that happened to her. I felt responsible to tell her story, and tell it well, and there was no way for me to do that if I hid or shied away from the horrific details of her life. Vulnerability enabled me to drop in and be affected by the circumstances and by others.

In *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, a comedy written by Christopher Durang, I played the character Sonia. I explored her awkwardness, self-deprecation, moodiness, and depression. There is something charming about the fact that Sonia is shocked and overwhelmed when a man pursues her. She does not know how to respond. Vulnerability connected that to my own life and places where I felt uncomfortable and shy and did not know how to respond.

Curiosity

In addition to vulnerability, I also entered graduate school with an insatiable curiosity. OxfordDictionaries.com defines curiosity as, “a strong desire to know or learn something.” I have always been an inquisitive person with a strong desire to learn. I have also had an interest in a myriad of areas and topics and loved learning about new subjects, but particularly love learning about people and their stories. Listening for me is

closely tied to curiosity because listening keeps me lingering longer. It does not allow me to be satisfied with surface understanding, but inspires me to ask questions, ponder, and dig deeper.

Curiosity is important because of the element of free play. In free play, there is no judgment in the freedom of expression and exploration, everything is a free for all. It is playing with abandon. Some of the barriers I have observed in actor training settings is that play is something that somehow gets forgotten in our efforts to be “serious about the work”, but in doing so we stifle curiosity and kill imagination. For me, it is imperative to keep that sense of play, of discovery, of exploration, and of liveliness alive. Play is something I strive to bring into my work but have noticed that in graduate school that sense of “play” can get lost in our effort to “work.” I have to fight for that wild sense of play. In rehearsals, I want to keep looking at things from every angle and try it out.

Curiosity is what ignites play and imagination for me, especially in acting. I am fascinated and get lost in the world of the play. I find myself asking questions, not just about my character’s life, but the world in which my character lives. I ask questions about status, power, and control. For example, I may imagine what kind of toys, if any, my character would have owned, who were my character’s friends, and what the street I grew up on looked like. These are just some examples of the questions that open up my mind and imagination and help usher me into the world of the play. I remain connected and curious about other characters. I imagine life before the play started and imagine and roleplay life after the play has ended. There is an eagerness and inquisitiveness that comes with curiosity that keeps me digging for more, and not being satisfied with status quo. I have a great sense of interest in my character and in the life of the play, and in the

story because ultimately, my character is a piece of a larger puzzle, a larger story. My observation and awareness keep charging my curiosity, which in turn, charges my imagination and keeps me connected to the story at hand. As an actor, I am a storyteller, and my job is to tell the story as honestly and truthfully as I can. But curiosity is dead if there is not a reckless sense of abandon in play, and therefore imagination is also stifled if I kill off curiosity and play.

When playing Philomel in *Polaroid Stories*, I asked myself, “Who was her family? What was her story? How did she end up on the streets?” There is hardly any information on Philomel. The playwright does not even tell you what songs she is singing. For example, in the scene titled “Philomel’s Story,” the stage directions state, “PHILOMEL is singing in the darkness, an ancient song filled with nostalgia and longing” (Iizuka 18). I would spend hours listening to music and working by myself, then I would bring in new songs for every rehearsal, as the director and I were curious to see what would happen with the character and the tone of the play, depending on what song was chosen. One day, when I was rehearsing by myself, I found myself asking if perhaps Philomel has her own language. Or perhaps English is not her first language. I finally brought in an Arabic children’s song and recomposed it so that it still sounded like a more haunting version of the nursery rhyme. I used the same Arabic words but changed the musical composition entirely. The director loved it and we put it in the show. This is an example of how my curiosity got me asking questions like, “Why do we assume Philomel is white American?”

In *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, Sonia talks so much about nature, the outdoors, and wild turkeys. Her love for nature makes her frequently gaze outside the

window. I became curious as to how to paint the landscape outside with specificity. It is not that I did not know what turkeys looked like or orchard trees, but I wanted to see exactly what Sonia was seeing when she looked out the window. I did not want it to be a general idea of these images, but a specific layout in my mind's eye when I looked outside the window, when I described these wild turkeys I love, and when I was talking about nature and the blue heron. I started finding pictures and putting them in my journal. It took me a long time to find the perfect set of cherry orchards that I had imagined and "saw" in my mind. I was also curious to figure out how to capture English actress Maggie Smith's voice, since Sonia imitates her in the play. I listened to a ton of Maggie Smith on videos, so I could capture her vocal inflections and vocal quality. The idea in the play is not that Sonia does this perfect imitation, she is just having fun, but as the actor, I was curious and excited to get some of Maggie Smith's nuance.

Imagination

Knowing that I naturally used curiosity and vulnerability in my acting process was an important realization as I began my thesis role and searched for an acting technique. In fact, I realized that curiosity and vulnerability actually were springboards into my use of imagination. Merriam-Webster.com defines imagination as, "the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality; A creative ability." Imagination is where I am moving intuitively, creating, and letting my impulses lead the way. I will often get images or

pictures associated with the story and inspired by the text. These images will spring to life for me based on what it is I am working on.

Connection to images is something that I have always had. I would read stories or poetry and have specific images that would come to mind that were inspired by the text and connected to it. I would read books and get pictures in my mind and they would stay with me for a long time. These visualizations are key to my imagination and to connecting me to the world I am playing in. For example, I got the image of a volcano for Liz Morden and it was something I explored throughout the rehearsal process. This picture of a volcano that is always bubbling, rooted and cemented, but can also explode and cannot be controlled. Imagination lets me play hard and create the space between for the characters that I play and the stories I am in. It gives me nuance, specificity, freedom, fun, and life as I imagine and build the world of these characters I get to create.

Vulnerability and curiosity deepen my imagination because they enable me to listen deeply to the things said or not said between the lines, and they give me the courage to bare all. During my private rehearsal sessions throughout my university productions, I tried many different things to help discover and create the characters I was playing. Several did not work, some I did not use, yet all were beneficial to get me to the place of where I landed. There is value in the process. It is not just about the product. It is in this process that my imagination comes to life because I have the freedom to try new things, re-imagine, visualize, and create. In what I call free play, I am living and breathing process. I am experimenting. I am breaking rules. I am stretching my imagination and pushing against the boundaries. Living in a place of vulnerability and

curiosity keeps me open to all kinds of discoveries. It keeps my imagination sharp and firing at all cylinders.

Whether in my private rehearsal sessions or in rehearsals for a production, I often make note of observations or discoveries that I made and reflect on them. I have vivid images that have come out of my private work session, or “scratching sessions” as Twyla Tharp calls it, that are connected to all the characters that I have played at the University of Louisville (Tharp 95). Imagination heightens my awareness and keeps me thinking outside of the box. It makes me flip things over, look at it from a different point of view, and turn it upside down.

In one of my scratch sessions for *Philomel*, I kept thinking about her loss and wondering about what she longed for. Throughout the play, *Philomel* comes in and picks up random pieces of trash on the stage or comes in holding random items she has found. One day, I asked the director if one of these trash pieces could be a small polaroid. This was an idea that had come to mind and I wanted to play around with it. I wanted to come in and practice holding an old, small picture in my scene with *Orpheus*. This seemed like a small detail, but for me I kept imagining her loss and loneliness connected to her family. At first, I imagined that the photo was a picture of her mom and dad, and then I imagined a picture of a random family that she is hoping for and longing to be adopted by. I wanted to personalize what this character is drawn to and chooses to pick up in the trash pile. I felt that she would have been drawn to that item if she found it in the trash or on the ground. Through this process, I just went with my instinct and decided the importance of the photograph to my character. In the scene with *Orpheus*, I then drop the picture that I had been holding out of fear and run away.

Having a deep connection to an object was something that I was doing before I even knew that was an acting thing. I would later find out at HB Studio in New York City about Uta Hagen's Object Work. Having that item connected me deeper and helped me created a back story. Without a lot of information on Philomel, I had to imaginatively color in everything between the lines. And I drew a few lines of my own when literally no lines were given.

For Sonia, in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, I got the image of a thirteen-year-old girl stuck in a fifty-year-old body in terms of love and relationships. Sonia is so awkward and uncomfortable when Joe calls to ask her out, she literally does not know what to do. To raise the stakes of that situation even more, I decided that this is the first time she has ever been pursued. It felt like an awkward teenage love story; although Sonia is not in her teens, she is emotionally a teenager. And having this small image, helped me to figure out her awkwardness and why she is overwhelmed. I found it to be a beautiful moment actually.

In my private rehearsal sessions, I was running my phone monologue and had this "ah-ha" moment of "what would it be like if she was eating something while on the phone?" I made the decision that no one ever calls for me, so I continued eating chips as Cassandra, the maid, answers the telephone. I am not expecting the phone call to be for me, nor would I ever think it would be a man wanting to ask me out. The director gave actors freedom to make discoveries and we kept this "bit" in the show. I share that as another example of how imagination keeps me exploring and unearthing new information. I am obsessed with figuring out these characters, what makes them tick, and understanding the world they live in. Imagination is what brings characters from the

page to three dimensional fully embodied people. It is what connects me to the characters I play.

Through the journey of creating my thesis role, I realized I already had a strong personal, artistic grounding in terms of my life experiences, vulnerability, and curiosity, and how that fed my imagination and informed my building of a character. I had exposure to various acting methods throughout my time in college and graduate school, including Stanislavsky, Strasburg, Linklater, and Alexander. I also studied at the HB Studio of New York researching Uta Hagen's technique, which strengthened and grounded my imagination and gave it more specificity. I will further discuss the Hagen technique in Chapter Two. It was during the training for the actors of the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival that I was first exposed to Fitzmaurice voice work and Laban. As I began my thesis role, I shaped and implemented parts of these various methodologies and realized that I had developed my own process as an actor to create a character.

The act of curiosity and vulnerability open up the doors into imagination, and from there, that is where I dream and create. My thesis role had the potential to allow me to make my biggest transformation as an actress, which is what I craved. I nourish my imagination by delving in and tenaciously building characters through historical research, text work, and voice and movement. This thesis is an opportunity to examine all the ways I employ imagination to create a character, and how this experience has empowered me to name and take ownership over my personal acting process.

CHAPTER ONE: IMAGINATION THROUGH HISTORICAL RESEARCH

“With a developed imagination there’s no place you can’t go.” – Sanford Meisner

Curiosity motivated my exploration into researching the historical background of Liz Morden’s world. To deepen my imagination, I wanted to get a full picture of what was going on contextually in the life of the play, *Our Country’s Good*. The historical backdrop, culture, and class structure were things that piqued my curiosity because these elements would directly impact my performance of a female criminal from 18th century England and an 18th century officer. Curiosity inspired me to dive into the historical research, which gave me more to imagine through facts, stories, mental images and feelings. I became intimately acquainted with the dynamics of that historical time period and class system. In this chapter I will specifically look at how researching life in England, life on the ship and in the colony, and elements of classism enabled me to begin to create the character of Liz Morden through the filter of imagination.

Life in London

Historically, many changes were going on in Great Britain during the time *Our Country’s Good* takes place. A useful resource was *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia’s Founding*, by Robert Hughes, which looks at the rich and complicated history

of Australia, particularly the dynamics of it being founded as a penal colony by Great Britain. Convicts and prostitutes were shipped to Australia as a means to rid their population of these criminals. According to Hughes, England in the 1780s was overpopulated, which led to massive unemployment and an increase of crime, especially among youth. Hughes writes, “This meant that the median age of Englishmen kept dropping and the labor market was saturated with the young. No mechanisms existed for the effective relief of unemployment...and English youth, rootless and urban, took to [crime] with a will” (Hughes 27). The play states that Liz was born into a very poor English family, where her father was already a thief. Liz describes her upbringing as being “born under a ha’penny planet I was. Dad’s a nibbler...” (Wertenbaker 66). Liz, like many actual poor young women in this time period, had few options other than to become thieves and prostitutes. This helped me to imagine the urgency and incredible stake that Liz would have been living under. She does not have any other options in terms of survival and livelihood.

I decided to find out more about the lifestyle of a typical girl in London who lived in poverty, so I investigated *London Labour and the London Poor* by Henry Mayhew. It is a series of four volumes that go into great detail and specifics about life on the streets in London during the 18th Century. I focused mostly on Volume IV, which describes the life of prostitutes, thieves, and beggars on the streets of London. Mayhew describes these women as such:

Many of those young girls . . . follow persons into the dark by-streets of these localities, and are apt to pick his pockets, or they rifle his person when in the bedroom with him in low coffee-houses and brothels . . . They occasionally take

watches, purses, pins, and handkerchiefs from their silly dupes who go with them into those disreputable places, and frequently are not easily traced, as many of them are migratory in their character. (359)

This description of thieving prostitutes stimulated my imagination further as I began to conceptualize Liz's lifestyle on the streets and envision her behavior with these men. I began to see Liz's life of instability as she most likely had a migratory lifestyle that relied on constant crime to stay alive. This is the kind of life she would have been living.

Henry Mayhew also documents actual conversations of women, like the fictitious Liz, who ended up in crime due to poverty and brutality. One prostitute is quoted as saying, "I have heard several girls say how they would like to get out of the life, and out of the place. From those I know, I think that cruel parents and mistresses cause many to be driven there" (Mayhew 67). This viciousness is exactly what Liz experiences from her father, who blames her for a crime he committed, and she ends up being "stripped, beaten in the streets, everyone watching" (Wertenbaker 66).

Finally, Mayhew surveyed prostitutes and even categorized prostitute thieves. In Volume IV, Mayhew goes as far as to divide London prostitution into four classes. He gives detailed descriptions of each class, which he determines by, "personal qualities, bodily and mental, of the prostitute, by the wealth and position of the person who supports her, and by the localities in which she resides and gains her ignoble livelihood" (Mayhew 355).

After reading about prostitution in London, I decided that Liz Morden fell into the lowest class of prostitution. The script describes her as the lowest of the low and I intuitively knew she would have fallen into this category. This category includes worn-

out prostitutes who, “steal when they can get the opportunity” (Mayhew 359). In the play, Liz Morden describes her upbringing and states how she became a prostitute and a thief: “So I begin to sell my mother of saints . . . He . . . shows me how to spice the swells. So. Swell has me up the wall, flashes a pocket watch, I lifts it” (Wertebaker 66).

Garnering the information that Mayhew provides about the classification of prostitutes, I was able to imagine Liz’s early life by picturing her, and sometimes myself, in certain situations. It was as if I was creating a scene from a movie in my head and could see Liz in her surroundings and know what she was feeling. I imagined that she had been prostituting for years and decided she began at a very young age. I began to imagine the streets she grew up on and the alleyways where she would meet these men. In fact, I went out and photographed a run-down home in Louisville, Kentucky that I envisioned her living and prostituting in (Appendix A). I pictured filthy clothes that she would be wearing and how she would need to steal to survive.

As an actor, it is important to make specific choices. Stella Adler, a famous acting teacher, states, “The excitement lies in your choice”; in the same vein, making explicit choices about every aspect of Liz’s life was of paramount importance to me (Adler 49). The fact that Mayhew divided prostitution and did not describe it generally, was invaluable, because it allowed me to bring specificity about what type of prostitute Liz was and how she came to be one. The historical information allowed me to imagine more of Liz’s background and her life on the streets of London.

Life on the Ship and in the Colony

After researching life in London, I began to explore and research life on the convict ship and in the colony. In *The Floating Brothel: The Extraordinary True Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ship and Its Cargo of Female Convicts* by Sian Rees, I found inspiration for how Liz would have felt on a convict ship. While this book does not detail the first fleet, it describes a female convict ship that arrived in Australia a year later. The book detailed many aspects of life on a ship, which I found to be intriguing as I tried to place myself in that situation and imagine life on a ship. Rees describes the nauseating smell of the ship as a mix of “old sand, urine, and menstrual blood” and stated that “dead rats, dead cats, compost from mounds of vegetable peelings, feces, urine, rotting fabric and decomposing sick all lay below the boards” (97-98). Typhus and scurvy also ran rampant on the convict ships as these were “the two diseases most common to crowded prisons and ships” (Rees 97). Life on the convict ship was hard, but it did not get easier in the first Australian colony. Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore* described the living conditions as such, “They all lived for five years on the bleak edge of starvation. The first crops failed” (Hughes 97). Gangs, diseases, manual labor, a harsh environment, and immense hunger were a part of Liz’s life.

The research inspired me to creatively and specifically involve all my senses. I would imagine in the first scene what was underneath the board, the lice and fleas, perhaps I am sitting in the urine and vomit of other people, and how that would make me feel nauseous and how there is nowhere to go to get rid of the stench. I would take that sensory work into the rehearsal room, imagining those smells and what that would have felt like on me. I would rely on past experiences to enable my imagination to make the

connection with Liz's experiences. I thought about times where I felt sick and specific things that gross me out, like spit. I would also create new experiences to help imagine living in Liz's life of squalor.

To get a sense of how she feels, I went a few days without showering, and added oil to my hair so that I could feel greasy and what it was like to have dirty, matted hair. I did not shave my legs or armpits for the entire run of the rehearsals and the shows. Prior to rehearsals starting, I decided to create my own costume for Liz. I found a man's white shirt that had armpit stains as well as dirt and stains on the front of the shirt and black peasant pants. I envisioned that Liz had actually stolen these pieces of clothing. I also did not wash the costume that I created for the entire rehearsal run. I would use my own makeup and cocoa powder to make myself look dirty and wore a wig during the rehearsals.

I made these choices to get closer to the life that Liz was living, a place that would be more grimy and rough than the sanitized world in which I live in. This allowed me to be in a more vulnerable place as I was stripping more of myself away, while finding more ways to connect with Liz and the world of the play. If I was unwilling to become uncomfortable and unwilling to relate to the character Liz and experience a degree of her pain, then I would not be able to perform as her character authentically and honestly. Becoming vulnerable makes me a better actress because I go from trying to perform a character to actually "being the character." I have to be willing to get gritty and dirty and fully embrace the circumstances of Liz and make those circumstances my own by placing myself imaginatively in them. All this work gave me physical sensations to work with as well; I felt grimmer wearing dirty, smelly clothing.

I extensively researched diseases, as I wanted to know how that would affect my physical body. I created a Pinterest Board with pictures of what the diseases looked like. I was curious to decide if Liz had been or was currently suffering from a disease, and I made the choice that she had typhus and scurvy. I let my impulses and imagination move me to explore aspects of these diseases and the impacts they would have on me physically and emotionally. For example, I had an impulse that Liz would have horrible teeth, based on my research of the diseases and her diet. I had imagined that she had scurvy, which can cause the gums to bleed and the teeth to fall out. I approached the director and costume designer and discussed how based on my research of diet and diseases, I would most likely be missing teeth. They agreed and allowed me to use Ben Nye Tooth Color to create missing teeth effects for the production.

Scurvy can also cause fatigue and joint pain, that on top of malnutrition and hunger, I imagined would be significant obstacles for Liz to persevere through. I explored with fatigue in Act One, Scene Eleven as I enter and then begin to just sprawl out on the floor. I was visualizing the sun and the heat being unbearable, on top of being exhausted and fatigued from manual labor. The more I took imaginative steps to enter Liz's world, the more that world opened up.

I made other choices about her character, which impacted my performances in the rehearsal space and in the production. For instance, I made the choice that she had lice and throughout the play I would scratch my head and my body. I became curious about how lice and fleas may have also brought on typhus. Typhus was rampant due to the unsanitary and crowded living conditions on the ship. It can cause rashes and little red dots all over the skin. I would pretend that I had specific typhus rashes on my body that I

had to scratch and that were infecting my skin, and that I had little red dots all over my legs from the disease. In *The Fatal Shore* Hughes corroborates that convicts in England had typhus before being sent to Australia. He writes, “By 1790, their number was rising by about one thousand a year. Not only had the problem of security become acute, but typhus was by then endemic and the prospect of general infection terrified free citizens outside” (Hughes 42).

I also was scratching my neck, elbows, and arms as I imagined what scurvy and typhus would have done to my body and skin in those specific body locations. Imagining these symptoms, having the make-up, the dirt, and the costume really changed me emotionally and physically. It made me feel so much closer to the character when my tooth was blacked out and dirty because it felt truthful. I felt less attractive, desperate, and more feral. There was a playfulness that was found and a joy in experimenting with all of these things combined.

Another example of how I used an experience to imagine a historical circumstance was trying to relate to Liz’s feelings of hunger. Early in the rehearsal process, I went most of the day without drinking water or eating any food. I wanted to get a feel, on a much smaller scale, of Liz’s hunger. I realized when I finally did eat that I had small pangs of pain; my stomach felt weird because I did not have food or water. While the pain was not substantial, it was enough for me to have a deeper awareness of that sensation and be able to imaginatively build on what it would feel like to have severe hunger and starvation. I also noticed that I had a little bit of a headache, almost borderline migraine, and I think that was due more to not having enough water than it was to food.

Experiencing fasting from food and water, not shaving, and rehearsing in a dirty and smelly outfit brought about visceral experiences in the rehearsal space. They enhanced my imagination regarding Liz's more severe experiences. While I did not feel extreme hunger and the effects of these diseases, my research which inspired imaginative exploration, gave me a small taste of what that would have been like. This taste would be comparable to a dial turned to two, which is the image that I got while working. I visualized my exploration as a dial set at 2, which allowed me to imagine what it would be like to turn that dial up to 10, which is how Liz felt. That enabled me to better imagine Liz's actual experiences, which changed how I carried myself as I became the character.

Class, Gender, and Race

The last area of historical research that most affected my process revolved around the class, gender, and race issues of the time period that were found in both London and in Australia. Peter Linebaugh, in *The London Hanged*, wrote about unequal treatment between the genders in 18th century England. Men who got in trouble for sexual indecency could be reformed, while a woman may be ruined socially forever. More specifically, Linebaugh writes about prostitutes getting in legal trouble, as opposed to the men, and lists a specific example:

She had been languishing in Newgate since October 1778. Since prostitution was criminalized by legal practice, the buyers of sexual favours had, in effect, the power of imprisonment over the sellers. Esther Hale was charged with the theft

of 10 guineas *after* she refused to accompany a recruiting sergeant to a bagnio.

(340)

The author describes these examples as “the process of criminalization,” or “blaming the victim” (Linebaugh 340). This sexism was also found in *Our Country’s Good*. The officers could sleep with the female convicts without any repercussions to their reputation or person. Captain Collins says to Lieutenant George Johnston, “We know about your compassion, not to say passion, for the women convicts, George” (Wertenbaker 27), but there is no loss of respect or power for the officers. In Act Two, Scene Seven, Dabby highlights the double standards for women when she says, “A girl will love the first man who knows how to open her legs. She’s called a whore and ends up here” (Wertenbaker 86).

This informed my choices regarding Liz Morden because as a female convict she would have had no power. Building on this historical groundwork, I instinctually knew that she was someone who was used to the justice system failing her. That heightened my cynicism towards the officers in the play and those who are in charge. It also brought this saturated sense of hopelessness into the role as I envisaged and created situations in the past, outside of her father’s betrayal, where she must have experienced abuse of power time and time again.

When it looks like the justice system is going to treat Liz unfairly, I could bring more hopelessness into the role as she must have experienced similar situations of abuse of power time and time again. Interestingly, her status is very low in terms of social structure, but she has a high status in the criminal world. This discovery allowed me to

imagine her having the kind of respect and fear that someone high up in the mafia ladder would have, but a substantial amount of disdain from the officers.

There is also a great deal of hatred from the other convicts as well. This made me delve into what it would be like to have no family or friendship and wonder what kind of loneliness she felt. Therefore, I began asking questions about her love life. Did she ever fall in love? Was there ever a man in her past whom she fell for? Was she attracted to men or women, or both? My curiosity led me back to Liz's monologue in Act Two, Scene One. There is a line where she says, "I thinks I'm in luck when I meet the swell cove. He's a bobcull. He says to me, it's not enough to sell your mossie face, Lizzie, it don't bring no shiners no more" (Wertenbaker 66). I decided that indeed this was one time where she trusted and liked a man that she describes as a "bobcull", or good-natured, and once again she is let down and betrayed. All of this allowed me to be vulnerable when I imagined how her isolation, desirability (or lack thereof), and longing for a family or camaraderie would affect her. I was curious to explore what that meant for Liz, how that backdrop would inform her choices and actions. I wanted to remain vulnerable, open, to how that might influence me in rehearsal.

Several of the books I researched mentioned there were many benefits, including food and protection, for women convicts to have sexual relations with the soldiers, including food and protection. In *The Floating Brothel*, Rees agrees that physical protection was a reason, "for the women not just to accept, but to compete for, the position of sailor's mistress" (87). This research about how women benefited from sleeping with soldiers gave me a strong, intuitive epiphany as I read the play. In Act Two, Scene One, Liz Morden describes her experience on the ship: "Jesus Christ the

hunger on the ship, sailors won't touch me: no rantum scantum, no food" (Wertenbaker 67). The play also describes her as the most violent and feared criminal. In Act Two, Scene Two, Governor Phillip says, "I had a reason for asking you to cast her as Melinda. Morden is one of the most difficult women in the colony...Lower than a slave, full of loathing, foul mouthed, desperate" (Wertenbaker 71).

I knew that Liz was violent and angry, but from the research and text in the play, I had the epiphany that she was motivated by survival. She was too diseased and ugly to get food and protection from soldiers; she had to survive however she could, like she had done her whole life. There was no way out for her, no options. This discovery made it easier for me to tap into her violence. I reflected on what happens to people when they are pushed to the brink, when the results of their decisions are life and death. What are the choices that people make when they are trapped in a corner? What would people do? What would *I* do? There is something animalistic about survival, which is exacerbated given the setting of the play. Australia is an unfamiliar land full of wild animals and harsh conditions. Liz is as wild as this new world they are inhabiting. I imagined what it means if there is something feral about her.

The research also described how the convicts had a criminal class system with some convicts demanding more respect and prestige. The criminal code was quite evident below the deck: "As in any concentration of people in a confined space, convicts in the orlop hold quickly developed their own rules and hierarchies. Gangs formed. Those who had committed vicious assaults . . . were not going to stop committing them on board ship" (Rees 100). This had profound effects on my acting process because Liz has been enmeshed in the criminal world since she was young. The convict code is what

she lives by, understands, and adheres to. Deepening my understanding about the criminal code helped me to justify some of her actions and imagine the loyalties that I have built. For example, convicts should not snitch on other convicts. She has strong ties to the criminal community and a sense of integrity when she refuses to speak, even though her life is on the line near the end of the play.

I also wanted to research race and racism in London. Even though Liz was most likely written as a white female, as a person of color portraying her, I was curious about how race and ethnicity might affect her story. I studied Jerry White's *A Great and Monstrous Thing: London in the Eighteenth Century*. White looks at eighteenth-century London, noting the chasm between the wealthy and the poor, and gives an expansive picture of life during this time. He states that he found some research of black servants in London, but that there was very little research available about how the black poor actually lived. White did mention some examples of discrimination among the black poor, including a philosophy that, "'No negro or mulatto girl' could find a home and training for service at the Asylum for Orphan Girls established in Lambeth by Sir John Fielding in 1758" (132).

In *Our Country's Good*, Liz tells the story of how she thought about killing her father and then ran away to live with her brother, but her brother did not want her (Wertenbaker 66). I made the choice that Liz was bi-racial. Specifically, I decided that her mother, who leaves, was black and that her father, whose false accusations the officers believed, was white. I imagined that Liz tried to seek help elsewhere, but then was turned away from any services or orphanages due to her skin color, so she resorted to prostitution and thievery to survive. This built on my sense of betrayal and injustice that

I already knew Liz experienced. I was also able to think of times when I was mistreated due to my ethnicity and then I dialed up those memories and feelings to get a sense of Liz's discrimination.

There was a specific time where I went to see a physician and he refused to examine me, asking questions like "what are you?", and after seeing my religious affiliation on my health form, reprimanded me for being a Christian. There was no one else in the room and I remember feeling violated, degraded, and belittled because of my ethnicity and religious practices. It was also an incredibly humiliating experience because I was so ill, and I felt exposed and susceptible. My personal life experiences influenced my creation of Liz and brought me closer to some of her struggles because I could relate to and "dial up." This entire process made me overcome with emotion when she receives justice for what I envisioned to be the first time in her life towards the end of the play. The governor believes her story instead of the accusations of a soldier, which is a redemptive and life-changing moment for Liz, as she is declared a worthwhile citizen and then she declares to work hard in her endeavors. I made the choice that this was the first time anyone has ever believed her and stood up for her, and in turn the stakes were higher, and I experienced a profound relief.

From this historical backdrop, I found the world of Liz. She has had an incredibly harsh life and has become hardened and brutal. She is full of loathing and is not liked by the rest of the women convicts. Liz is hated and is full of hate. She had a traumatic childhood, was never educated, and was shipped to Australia for being a thieving prostitute. She has had to survive by whatever means was necessary, which for her, involved crime and violence. She is from a system where she is of a lower class due to

her gender, her position as a criminal, and her race. Curiosity opened the door to the historical research, vulnerability allowed me to experience Liz's world, and imagination and allowed me to start to fully transform into the character of Liz. The historical research of life in London, life on the ship and in the colony, and class and gender dynamics bolstered my imagination to begin to color-in the aspects of Liz Morden's life and world.

CHAPTER TWO: IMAGINATION THROUGH TEXT

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” – Walt Disney

Having funneled my historical research through the lens of imagination, my next step was to funnel the text of *Our Country’s Good* through that same lens. This play was my primary source as the actor and had determined all the areas of historical research I had pursued. Because I was responsible for bringing the playwright’s character to life, the text was the foundation that rooted all of my decisions as an actor. I also referred to *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally. *The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar is the play the convicts put on in *Our Country’s Good*, therefore it was another source I referenced. I then filtered these texts through imagination to better transform myself into the characters, Liz Morden and Second Lieutenant William Faddy. I will refer to this process as extending the text, as I made decisions about the character beyond what the text stated, specifically by using techniques from Uta Hagen, Dr. Baron Kelly, and some of my own.

Text and Imagination

To begin my character analysis, I combed through *Our Country's Good* to see how Liz is described. I wrote down every single thing that any character said about Liz and everything she said about herself. For example, before Liz even makes an appearance in the play, Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark states, "Major Ross ordered one of the corporals to flog with a rope Elizabeth Morden for being impertinent to Captain Campbell – The corporal did not play with her but laid it home which I was very glad to see-she has long been fishing for it" (Wertenbaker 12). I researched synonyms of "impertinent" to get a sense of her disrespectful behavior, thought about how she must have been viewed for officers to be thankful for her flogging, and looked at images of floggings to get a sense of what she went through.

A powerful image that came to mind was from the movie *Twelve Years a Slave*, as that movie depicted a very graphic scene of a slave being flogged. The cat o'nine tails or whip would open the skin and leave the body raw and bleeding. I began to imagine how painful that would be, and how her entire back would be scarred, and how that same layer of scarring is also on her heart. There were several other examples from the text that highlighted her tough demeanor, including when Harry Brewer asks, "How is Lieutenant Clark going to manage Liz Morden?" in reference to her getting a part in Ralph's play (Wertenbaker 38). And in a scene where Liz is coming up with excuses for why she wants another convict to read her the lines in the play, the character Dabby exclaims that Liz cannot read to which the stage directions states, "*She lunges at DABBY*" (Wertenbaker 42). This information helped me to channel the insecurity and defensiveness Liz has about not being able to read, and her need to save face. There is a

degree of embarrassment and vulnerability in her inability to read. She does not want anyone to know that she is illiterate.

I analyzed all of Liz's lines and wrote them all down in my journal. It was interesting to see that she does not say much and speaks in abrupt sentences throughout the first Act, but then lets it all out in Act Two. She gives a long monologue at the beginning of the second Act, where she is in jail waiting to be hanged. She summarizes the events from her childhood leading up to this moment in her life. Since she is speaking almost entirely in cant, which is the vernacular or slang that was used by criminals in this time period, there were many words that I had to define. I referenced multiples sources including the *1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* to find out what these words actually meant. It is a difficult monologue because of the use of cant and the structure of the monologue itself. For the words that lacked definitions from various sources, I made the decision that Liz also creates her own words and has several "Liz-isms." I imagined that she would be so fluent in this language, that it is easy for her to create her own lingo.

Through the monologue I learned that she was born poor ("Born under a ha'penny planet"), her dad was caught stealing and he blamed it on her ("Look, she took it. I'm stripped, beaten in the street, everyone watching."), she became a prostitute thief ("So I begin to sell my mother of saints...shows me how to spice the swells"), and began to think that Australia could offer her hope, but she was betrayed again and is going to be executed for a crime she didn't commit ("But no, Ross don't like my mug, I'm nibbed again and now it's up the ladder to rest for good.") (Wertenbaker 66-67).

It was important to note that this monologue is the first time she really “lets it rip,” and that it is spoken in the language that she is most comfortable with. In Act One, we see her struggle with George Farquhar’s language in *The Recruiting Officer* because that language is incredibly far removed from her own, as is the character she plays. That was a big discovery for me as an actor because it helped me envision the frustration she feels when practicing the play, which is juxtaposed with the ease she possesses in her monologue. She can finally speak freely, she is airing it out, she finally lets us know her thoughts, and she is in her element. Even though the monologue was a challenge for me to unlock as an actor, these words came without any effort for Liz.

I had to deeply connect and imagine the story behind all that she says so that I can tell her story truthfully. I had to personalize each word in that monologue, connect an image to each word, and tell the story. For example, the word “prig” in the monologue means to “steal.” Instead of just speaking that word, I would visualize Liz’s father as I imagined stealing his shirt, pants, shoes, and that he was left with nothing. I had a detailed image of a light tan shirt that was dirty and had some wear, along with brown pants, and brown shoes with a flap and a button. Seeing what was almost like a film strip in my mind as I spoke those words, hopefully increased comprehensibility for the audience. I imagined this might be similar to if I was performing in a non-English speaking country; the audience may not know the exact words I am saying, but I still wanted to communicate in such a way that they walk away understanding who I am and what I want. That regardless of the words, through my facial expressions, my vocal inflections, tone, and pitch, and my physicality, the audience would leave understanding the story.

I focused on figuring out all these given circumstances of the life of my character to capture the basic information given in the script, and then used imagination to fill in the rest. In *Acting Stanislavsky: A Practical Guide to Stanislavsky's Approach and Legacy*, John Gillett writes:

Stanislavski suggests we ask ourselves: ‘*If* I were in these circumstances – as *if* they were really happening, as a possible reality- what would I do? . . . ‘*If*’ then is a prompt to the imagination and action, to the inner and outer life of the actor.

It’s a very small word with a great impact, which is why Stanislavski called it the ‘*magic if*.’” (38)

“Magic If” is what catapults me into the life of the play and causes me to personalize the text. It is not “if these things were happening to so-and-so, what would they do?” It is “what would *I* do?”

Uta Hagen speaks to this personalization of the given circumstances as well. In my summer training at The Herbert Berghof (HB) Studio of New York, my instructors had us refer to our characters as “I” or “me” so that we are not distancing ourselves from the characters we play. For instance, Liz tells Ralph that she will consider being in his play. However, if I was a convict having to do tiring manual labor every day on an empty stomach, I would want to be able to miss several hours of work each week to do a play. I would want to get out of work to literally survive as the conditions of the convicts were so brutal. Therefore, I would tell Ralph I would consider being in his play to save face, but I would have a strong motivation to be in his play no matter what.

In Act Two, Scene Ten, when Liz is on trial, I did not “plan” to get emotional or cry. In fact, I had a moment in rehearsal where I tried to suppress my impulse to cry

because I did not think the director would want me to. As I was connected and listening to Ralph Clark, who was not saying much in that scene, but we were looking at each other, I was moved by his advocacy for me. My voice started to quiver, I began to breathe harder, I was shaking, and the sentences were becoming difficult to speak as I felt a tremendous amount of relief and began to cry. When the director saw me trying to hold back, he actually said “Yes! Let go”, and I gave my impulse room to breathe and respond truthfully. Even though Liz Morden is a hardened criminal, she wants to live. She wants a second chance at life. “If” that was me and I had just tasted redemption, forgiveness, justice and God for the first time, humanity, freedom, and been given a chance to live, I would be overwhelmed with emotion. I would feel immense relief, shock, gratitude, joy, bewilderment, love, and healing. Those were several of the emotions that welled up in me as I lived in those given circumstances and connected with my partners in that specific moment.

I read *The Playmaker* with hopes of learning more about the circumstances and relationships that surround the characters Liz Morden and Second Lieutenant William Faddy. While I learned a lot about the other characters from the play, *The Playmaker* does not have a character by the name of Liz Morden. Liz’s storyline has the most similarities with the character Nancy Turner, who is taken to court for stealing goods but is acquitted. Beyond major plot points, I found that Liz and Nancy are very different characters. Nancy is an attractive convict who had plenty of opportunities to be admired by the officers, while Liz is the least desirable convict; she does not have a relationship with an officer, and therefore, does not have any provision and protection. She is not an

attractive woman who has officers pursuing her romantically, so she has to survive through violence and intimidation.

I came upon a journal article much later in the rehearsal process that affirmed what I had already found to be true. Val Taylor, in *Mothers of Invention: Female Characters in "Our Country's Good" and "The Playmaker,"* describes their differences in more detail. She writes, "Liz Morden is unique to *Our Country's Good*...unlike Turner...Liz is treated less in terms of sex-object than gender- and class-victim. Where Turner is a typical Vixen, Liz is more of a virago" (Taylor 335). While there was not a lot of information about Liz in *The Playmaker*, learning about the other characters did have some impact on my work as an actor. For example, Keneally writes that Harry, a former convict, took a criminal oath, which included, "[I will not] divulge the secrets of my brethren. I will not teach anyone to speak cant, nor will I disclose any of our mysteries to them" (101).

Liz grew up with a criminal father and became a crook herself. I imagined Liz taking a similar oath, which helped me determine the motivation for her character in the play as she goes until the eleventh hour refusing to testify even though she is going to be hanged. These convict codes are her moral guides and standards. Furthermore, when she does testify, it shows she is making a conscious decision to reform and not follow the criminal code any longer. I pondered this incredibly profound moment as Liz discovers more of who she is, and how the play itself has impacted and changed her. I was particularly curious about when and why Liz speaks. The convict code no longer defines who she is; she has gained a sense of dignity and self-worth through George Farquhar's comedy.

After reading *The Playmaker*, I was initially dismayed that I did not garner more circumstances of information on the character of Liz. However, I was then excited by the possibility of imagining the rest of Liz Morden's world, both internally and externally. For that, I was going to focus on parts of Uta Hagen's technique, Baron Kelly's analytical technique, and some ideas of my own.

The Uta Hagen Technique

I spent the summer before my thesis role studying at The Herbert Berghof (HB) Studio of New York. I studied the acting technique of Uta Hagen, who was a well-respected actress and prominent acting teacher. The course focused on the principles in Hagen's book *A Challenge for the Actor*. Spending the summer there ignited my imagination and her technique became one of the foundations for my own. Her technique encompasses several aspects of character development that I utilized in creating Liz Morden and William Faddy. Specifically, I used Hagen's Physical Destination, The Fourth Side, and Transference.

Physical Destination work is about the actor knowing the full life of the play. The play does not start just when the curtain goes up or at the beginning of a specific scene. It also does not end when you walk off stage when the scene is over. It is important to know what was just happening to your character before the scene starts and where your character is heading to next. I envision the moment before and the moment after of each scene I am in so that there is continuity to the story I am telling (Appendix B). It helps me to identify my state of mind. Marion McCorry, Artistic Director of The Hagen

Institute at HB Studio, described it as thinking about how “your life begins before you come out on stage. Something has just happened...you are pursuing your needs and wants” (Abdelmalek 6).

For example, in Act One, Scene Eight, Liz enters and sees Mary and Dabby rehearsing their lines. I visualized that I was hurrying back to the women's camp after hanging out with Kable and Arscott when I suddenly ran across Mary and Dabby rehearsing without me. I was not expecting to run into them, but I am angry and frustrated by the fact that they are rehearsing the play without me. I want to stay in the play because it gets me out of other work, and I am secretly starting to like it, although I would never admit that. None of that information was in the script, but the destination work galvanized me to come on with intention and gave me extra motivation for my actions in the scene. It “fattened” up my actions and helped propel me to exit the scene with purpose as well. Hagen writes, “During our last action on stage, we know from what we have come and what we are doing now, but we must also know where we are going next and what we want there as we leave the scene” (149).

For the scene with Mary and Dabby, I knew that we continued rehearsing even after I said my last line. Therefore, I did not indicate that the scene was over through any of my actions before the lights went black. I need Mary and Dabby in order to stay in this play and I visualized that after ganging up on Ketch Freeman, who is despised by us all, that we would concentrate on rehearsing our lines. I also realized that Liz would be more confident in her next official rehearsal because she had this private rehearsal and knows her lines, even if the audience did not get to witness the rest of our private rehearsal time.

Hagen's The Fourth Side exercise was something that came intuitively to me as I wanted to imagine my surroundings in each scene. The exercise refers to being able to visualize every aspect of the world around you, especially the side where the audience is seated. The set designers may help you visualize other areas of your world, but it is important as an actor not to see the audience but to continue to imagine the world you are in. I need a connection to images, which is why I need to know where I am at in the scenes and what is before me. I need to have the pictures in my mind and create the 360-degree world around me. I need to see, smell, touch, sense, and feel. Hagen writes, "To arrive at the behavior we must first imaginatively visualize all aspects of it, making everything as specific as possible...Whatever landscape you use, be sure that it is specific and includes landmark objects such as a bush or tree...The objects must be so well known to you that you can see them clearly in your mind's eye" (155). This allows a more truthful performance of a character as the actor is completely immersed in the character's world.

I imagined my surroundings and The Fourth Side in every scene I was in. A specific example was in Act One, Scene Six when all of the officers are debating about whether or not the convicts should be permitted to put on a play. The director's vision was that this scene took place in a tent. As I also played Lieutenant Faddy, I began to envision the fourth sides of the tent we were in. I placed small lamps on specific parts of the wall and found images of tents in the 18th century on Pinterest to fully grasp what a tent would have been like. I wanted to have a very clear picture in my mind's eye of the fourth side for each scene I was in.

The last exercise of Hagen that I used is Transference. As I studied the life of Liz Morden, I realized the vast differences between her life and my real life, yet I wanted to completely transform myself into her. Hagen writes, “It is unlikely that your imagination will have been powerful enough to have turned all these overwhelming facts into a sufficient reality for you to have identified with them, but it will serve you now if you slowly begin to make transferences from your own experiences in the play until they become synonymous with them” (62). She gives examples of how to apply transference, including how an actor’s obsession with sweets could transfer over to a character’s escape into alcohol.

The first aspect of Liz’s life that I focused on was her sense of betrayal. Liz has been betrayed her whole life, starting when she was a little girl with her father accusing her of a crime she did not commit. When she shows up to rehearsals and Ralph mentions that there are many days of hard work ahead of us, Liz exclaims, “Work! I’m not working. I thought we was acting” (Wertenbaker 52). I could conceive a sense of betrayal, almost as if she got tricked. Later in *Our Country’s Good*, right when she starts enjoying the process of rehearsing a play, she is betrayed by the justice system and is about to be hanged for a crime she did not commit. For me, I explored places in my own life where I felt betrayed, such as the time with a racist physician who refused to medically treat me but charged me for the visit. I used my experiences of betrayal as a source of transference, and I completed the transference by taking that feeling to make the present moment real in the play.

The process would work as follows: Before the scene, I would think of a moment where I was betrayed (like the physician moment and others) and have that example

momentarily in the back of my mind. Then during the scene, I would not continue to think about my own experiences at all, but I would be Liz and I would more easily feel her betrayal in the moment. I was not thinking about my own personal experiences of betrayal anymore; I was transferring that sense of betrayal and staying connected to the moment to moment work of the play. Transference for me was always rooted in the given circumstances of the play and Liz's story made it easy for me to tap into the unjust treatment and betrayal she has experienced all throughout her life. Exploring betrayal and transferring that was a vulnerable step because I had to go to painful places as an actor.

Dr. Kelly's Techniques

During the semester of my thesis role, I was enrolled in Dr. Baron Kelly's Shakespeare class. He had been introducing us to various new techniques and exercises that he had created to explore and discover Shakespearean text. I took the principles and concepts from this class and modified and extended them for my role. Specifically, I used his analytical techniques of the Blueprint for Analysis, paraphrasing, and physicalizing exercises that I used to create Liz Morden.

I created a Blueprint for Analysis for Liz Morden's monologue at the beginning of Act Two. This Blueprint for Analysis is an exercise that Dr. Kelly created to teach us how to delve deeper into the text and not allow it to be a surface reading or understanding. I created a table with three columns: one has the actual word in the play, one has the denotative definition, and the last column has the connotative meaning. The

denotation is the literal definition of the word that might be found in the dictionary, or the definitions I was able to find in cant. The connotation refers to the wide array of positive and negative associations that most words naturally carry with them. These associations are based on the personal experiences of the actor and will vary from one actor to the next.

The denotation and connotation work in the Blueprint for Analysis helped me understand the words that I was not aware of before. This was extremely helpful with Liz's monologue due to the immense use of cant. I looked up several words and phrases in the Vulgar Dictionary to get a full understanding, and words that I did not find, I decided that Liz made them up. For the words in my monologue that were repetitious, like "luck," I researched all the definitions of the word, not just the main one. This allowed me to consider all the shades of meaning of the word.

The Blueprint for Analysis also gave me a deeper understanding of the character's feelings in each of the lines. For example, the two-word sentence "Mum leaves." was denoted as "Birth Mother" and "Goes away" and then connoted as "my own flesh and blood" and "abandons me." Doing all that work really helped to deepen and texturize the text and monologue for myself. For me, I have to be very specific with cant and with what each word means to me. This is why the Blueprint for Analysis was so helpful as I made specific connections and images to each word.

The next part of my process was to paraphrase the text. I used my Blueprint for Analysis to write a paraphrase of the entire monologue using the denotative definitions. Then I created another paraphrase of the entire monologue, this time using the connotative definitions and considering what is emotionally underneath each sentence. I

considered the emotional attitude as I paraphrased connotatively. I then went back to the monologue and looked at the subtext. The subtext is what is underneath the lines that creates this associative meaning for the actor. I asked myself, “What is the subtext? What are the submerged meanings or feelings in the paragraph?”

The Blueprint for Analysis helped me as an actor to dig deeper and find richer meanings of words as well as creating an associative meaning for myself with that word. I found the paraphrasing extremely beneficial for me as an artist because it helped me to break the monologue down into the simplest idea and really come to the root, the germinal idea, of the entire piece. It helped me be succinct in identifying all the emotions underneath the text and what the character is really saying. I made several edits of the Blueprint for Analysis and paraphrasing and subtext work. I was constantly digging into and returning to the text. It helped me creatively find the subtext, which I found to be invaluable.

After completing the Blueprint for Analysis and paraphrasing, I transitioned from text work into the physicalizing techniques, which are the exercises taught to us by Dr. Kelly, to help shape the character of Liz. The main objective of these exercises is to “get the text into my body.” One exercise focused on paying attention to the vowels and consonants and how they made me feel. I played with the sounds. I also played with how I would say different words, like the word “luck.” The word “luck” is used in different ways, so it conjured different images, and emotions, and pictures for me. In turn, those images would affect how I delivered the word physically and verbally. I spent a lot of time playing with the word “luck” to make those discoveries and to differentiate it each time it was said. I wrote the strongest images down in my journal to remember

them for the future. I found some of those images and added them to my Pinterest board as I continued to explore other words in the monologue. None of these explorations were in my head as I was not planning or thinking about how to differentiate the word. I just spent time physicalizing the word and playing with the word and allowing it to inspire and move my body, my limbs, and my entire being. I appreciated the process of not beginning the exercise with some kind of idea or plan, but just throwing myself into the work physically and imaginatively.

The work became lively, and moving, and organic, and visceral. I let the text move in my body and my voice and let the intonations inspire my feelings and the images. It was not about imposing on the text but allowing the text to come to life through me, to give the text a particular voice, and a point-of-view. Playing around with the words carried various emotional qualities. For example, lingering on the letter “L” in “luck” would sometimes give me a sense of deep-seated bitterness and hitting the consonant “K” felt like a cutting or a killing. There were times where it felt like I was saying the complete opposite of that word. It was loaded with irony. Imagining that I meant the opposite or other colorful words for “luck” helped me to emotionally load that specific word. The word carried a story behind it and I discovered meanings underneath. It also helped me find a specific attack as “Luck” is the first word in the monologue.

Dr. Kelly also taught us an Object Work exercise, where we were instructed to bring any seven to ten items in a bag. He had us offer an object with each thought; the idea being communication and not acting. When I did this exercise with my Shakespeare monologue, I discovered that certain words became more alive. I translated and added to this exercise for my Liz monologue. Words and consonants that I had glossed over

before seemed more pronounced and vibrant. The words and consonants seemed to take on a life of their own and really informed my inner monologue. For example, the word “one” seemed much more connected to the bad luck that always follows Liz. I felt like the word was *using me*; it pushed me in this direction of being defeated and never getting a break. I had not fully unpacked the value of the word before. I had skated past it, but as I did the Object Work, the word catapulted me into the next thought and tactic. I felt the hopelessness that comes from so much defeat. It was a powerful and instinctual discovery. A variation of this technique and other exercises from Dr. Kelly will be discussed in the following chapter. I would go through the script several times a day and would have the script with me at all times. The Blueprint for Analysis and other text work kept me curious and going back to the text to continue to make new discoveries and observations. These discoveries allowed me to fully imagine the feelings of the character. I would get new ideas, images, and thoughts. It was a journey that continued to be inventive and expand.

Extending the Text

In addition to Uta Hagen and Dr. Baron Kelly’s exercises, and in some cases independent of them, I used my own imagination to extend the text. For example, I wrote out the inner monologues Liz was having on stage, which were the thoughts going through her head when she was not actually speaking. I would listen, respond in my head, and have a point of view, even if I was not actually saying those words out loud. I wanted to have the character’s train of thought at all times. I also wrote a monologue for

Liz and a monologue for Lieutenant Faddy that took place during the timeline of the play, but not from an actual scene in the play (Appendices C and D). It was a moment outside of the play that I created and developed. Lastly, I created an epilogue to the play, where I really imagined what happened in the lives of these characters once the play was over (Appendix E). I even had the actors from the play do a staged reading of it and videotaped the scene.

In my epilogue, John Wisehammer is writing a new comedic script and Sideway, Ketch, and Liz Morden are all in it. Wisehammer is still in love with Mary and we also discover that Liz is learning how to read:

“LIZ. In...a...land...far away.

WISEHAMMER. That’s very good Liz.

LIZ. Thanks. Mary’s been teaching me.

SIDEWAY. It’s very good.

LIZ. It’s not so hard once you know how to put them words together.

WISEHAMMER. Liz, do you think you could ask Mary to be in this?”

(Appendix E)

I also used my imagination to connect personally to Liz. One of my struggles in the beginning was connecting to Liz’s violence. The script describes Liz as violent, so the curiosity came in as I tried to figure out where the violence came from and what was truly underneath it. I wanted to know the “why” behind a blanket statement of just “violent.” As the actor, my job is to advocate for the characters I play and to justify their behaviors and actions, even if it does not make sense, is “wrong,” or is illogical. One day before rehearsal, I kept pondering and envisioning Liz being betrayed all her life. It was

a complete betrayal by her father, her mother leaves which is a kind of betrayal as well, and her brother does not want her. This is all from family members, not including men that have used and betrayed her time and again. I kept thinking this is a deep, deep sense of betrayal. It is to the core. It is a total rejection. Those thoughts contributed to a major “ah-ha” moment when I decided that her objective is survival. She has no one that has ever cared for or protected or provided for her. Violence is a matter of survival. It is kill or be killed. And violence is all that she has ever seen and all she has ever known.

The “ah-ha!” moment continued when I decided her objective is survival as I was closely reading the text and realized that she did not have a romantic relationship with a soldier to protect her and she is on her own. I saw her whole life through a filter of survival, and the moment I unlocked that, the vulnerability came in. What would *I* do to survive? To what extent would *I* go? Madison Cork, my first acting teacher at the University of Louisville, would encourage us in our work to not shy away from the gritty. There is something extremely vulnerable about showing the ugly side of people, and I showed Liz’s violent side as I connected with her need to survive. I continued to imagine the life of Liz and Faddy until I knew as much as I could about their backstory. For example, I decided that Lieutenant Faddy’s wife came with him to the colony and that he looks down at Ralph because his wife did not.

I also looked into personality assessments for Liz. I have taken and studied the DISC assessment, which Personality Profile Solutions LLC states is, “a non-judgmental tool used for discussion of people’s behavioral differences,” and it assesses a person’s dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness (Discprofile.com). I decided that Liz has a ‘D’ personality, which means that she is focused on accomplishing results

and her goals without regard for other people. While some of this labeling is evident from the text, it was helpful to look deeper into her personality and see how she is wired. For example, a 'D' personality often "may fear being seen as vulnerable or being taken advantage of" (Discprofile.com). Liz is not seen as weak and has a high standing in the convict world because of how tough she is; she will not be taken advantage of or show vulnerability.

Images were also important to me throughout this process. I got the image that Liz's heart was barred; it is imprisoned. Yes, she is angry, but the other side of anger is love. I found this fascinating, because she is in prison and by the end of the play the bars are removed physically and figuratively. By the end of the play Liz is vulnerable enough to actually show and admit that she likes theatre and she likes the play. When Sideways says he is going to start a theatre company, she is the first to jump up in front of everyone and say that she would be in his company. "I'll be in your company, Mr. Sideway" (Wertenbaker 103). We see how theatre changed her and she found a love and humanity that was not there before. She has also found community and friendship. The image of the heart being imprisoned slowly changed throughout the play as one bar at a time is removed.

I started my process of creating the character Liz by researching the historical background and time period of the play. Then I learned as much as I could about the characters from the text, and then extended the text through my imagination. Throughout this process I unquestionably relied on my curiosity to keep exploring and my vulnerability to connect with the harder parts of Liz's life. My robust imagination expanded the life of the play and of these characters and gave me a greater sense of

intimacy with Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy. However, I still wanted to completely transform into the characters of Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy, so my final process was to use imagination to explore the voice and movement of my characters.

CHAPTER THREE: IMAGINATION THROUGH VOICE AND MOVEMENT

“I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

– Albert Einstein

Along with the historical research through imagination, and text through imagination, I began my vocal and physical work on the play through the paradigm of imagination. I wanted to completely transform into the characters Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy and also have those two characters appear distinct from each other. A unique challenge to this role was trying to convey and play someone who is rough and violent, as Liz Morden is, even though I am a petite actress. I did not want my performance to be a caricature, but an honest transformation. Although I did not have a clear process to follow to achieve vocal and physical transformation, I desperately wanted to fully embody these characters. The text became the springboard into my vocal and physical exploration. Using the text, I started to implement animal work, physical exercises, voice and dialect work, and my own imagination work.

Animal Work

Liz Morden's first line of dialogue is "I understand you want me in your play, Lieutenant. Is that it? I'll look at it and let you know" (Wertenbaker 24). She comes on stage, says her line, snatches the book out of Ralph's hand and exits. Reading this, an image of a rhinoceros butting its head and an image of a boxer ready to fight came to mind. I began experimenting with the slight head movements of a rhinoceros and the shoulder stance of a boxer. These choices began to transform my portrayal of Liz.

That same week, I came across a coloring book at a doctor's office. My curiosity led me to look for images of animals inside this large coloring book to see how the animals were drawn and which characteristics were exaggerated (Appendix F). In fact, I came upon an image of a cheetah laying lazily in a tree, which made me think of the character Shitty Meg. I began thinking about the entire world of the play as I ripped out several images from the coloring book so that I could continue to make connections to Liz. There was a particular image of an alligator, which I would not have normally thought of to represent the character Liz, that captured my attention. I thought about the viciousness of the alligator and the sense of preying and how Liz may not be saying much in some scenes but that she would be ready to snap at any moment.

As I saw how studying animals began to affect my private rehearsals and work sessions, I decided to visit the Louisville Zoo to do further research and an animal study. My curiosity and impulse are what led me to begin this animal work. I purposely did not consult any books or read any theories on animal studies because I wanted to continue to guard and keep that sense of curiosity and heightened impulse work alive by going to the Louisville Zoo without any agenda or expectations. I was curious about how an actual

rhinoceros moved, and I did not want to see it on video, but in person. I wanted to let this time be whatever it needed to be and to let it be organic.

When I got to the Louisville Zoo, I immediately went to observe the rhinoceros (Appendix G). I noticed that the rhinoceros has a lot of weight in its feet, legs, and ankles; this made me think of what Dr. Kelly had said earlier that week when I showed him what I was working on. He had said to think of Liz having ankle weights, and now seeing the weight in the ankles of the rhinoceros made so much sense. Watching the rhinoceros, I also felt like there was a deep sadness within that animal, a physical heaviness, but also an emotional heaviness as well. Something about watching this particular rhinoceros made me feel that although he was big and strong and could take care of himself, he was alone and isolated and there was a desperation and sadness about him. There was nothing around him and there were no other rhinos. His movements were slow and heavy and circular because there was not a tremendous amount of space, so he kept pacing around slowly circling, sniffing the ground, and looking for food.

I began to connect the rhinoceros to Liz. The image I got was that this is like Liz looking for companionship and friendship. She is strong, and she is scary, but she is also lonely. She does not have any companionship and no real friends. There has to be an emotional heaviness to that. I began to imagine the slow, sluggish, tired heaviness and weight in my ankles and feet, and legs I saw in the rhinoceros. I kept thinking about how the hot heat and dry weather in Australia would add to feeling more sluggish, especially when you are hungry and thirsty. Liz works in these hot conditions, but there is also not enough food, so the work is harder and takes much longer. These were some of the things I began to reflect on and incorporate into my portrayal of Liz.

I went and observed other animals, but I spent the most time observing the gorilla, which was an animal I was already considering for Liz based on my coloring book exercise (Appendix G). I saw a large gorilla and what struck me the most was the immense size of its hands and the weight in its fingers. This is an image I kept in mind for Liz. It was so striking because I do not normally think of weight in my fingers. I began to imagine the conditions of her hands after scrubbing the decks in the ship. I imagined that her hands and knuckles and fingers are big and swollen from her fighting all the time and from hard work and labor digging into the earth. Her nails and fingers would not be in good shape and would be filthy. Perhaps her fingers may have even been broken at one time from fighting. My curiosity was piqued by watching this gorilla move and new ideas and questions flooded my mind. There was something about the largeness of those gorilla fingers that also made me feel like Liz is ready to fight and she would be positioned and poised to brawl at any time. But though there is weight to its fingers and hands, the gorilla can also move with speed. I knew Liz would fight dirty, with both weight and speed in her hands. Her whole body would be involved; she would kick, scratch, and bite.

I also noticed the mouth movements of the gorilla and tried incorporating that into my Liz private rehearsal work. I practiced sticking out my jaw and bottom lip and incorporating that movement with my dialect work. I would try new ideas and keep the ones that felt more honest in my body as I referenced the text and worked in the rehearsal room, keeping myself open to my partners and allowing that to also feed, inspire, and change my physicality.

The final gorilla inspiration came from how the gorilla's large arms were connected to its back. I had been practicing Liz walking around leading with her chest, but I had been cutting off my back. In rehearsal one day, our Alexander Technique teacher, Professor Rachel Carter, had told me that I was taking a stance of puffing and holding, but that it would actually look more imposing with more width coming from my back. I remembered the gorilla and how even though it was leading with the chest, the arms were connected to the back and there was a width to the back and chest because of that connection. He was moving freely with a large back and arms able to swing at a moment's notice. The moment I incorporated that image of arms coming from my back and thinking my Alexander "back back", I felt much stronger. There was width in my back and in my chest and I could feel the weight, yet readiness, in my arms and fingers. This galvanized my stance and walk with the character Liz.

Before visiting the zoo, I had not had any inspiration to physicalize Lieutenant Faddy. As I walked past an exhibit, I saw a giraffe find a leaf and take a long time to chew it (Appendix G). I immediately thought of Faddy! It was a gut response, but I knew right away that was who Faddy was. The movement of the giraffe's mouth made me think of how Faddy believes he is better than everyone else and holds his head high. I saw a sense of haughtiness in Faddy and the giraffe, as the giraffe is literally looking down at everyone. Later on, these images would also inspire Faddy's speech and movements. I made his speech more clipped and pronounced as I thought of his prideful position. This haughtiness began to influence the rest of his actions, from his walk to how he held his drinking glass with his pinky extended. And like the giraffe would turn

his head slowly, Faddy also began to have a slow head tilt. I decided that Faddy leads with the head.

This animal study was powerful because it added so much to the character. The text was still the foundation; however, the text gave me few clues into William Faddy's character other than he did not like Ralph Clark. I created the backstory that Faddy and Ralph were after the same promotion as they were both Second Lieutenants. From the giraffe work Faddy's physical movements began to take on a life of their own.

Lieutenant William Faddy not only looked down on the convicts, but he looked down and judged Ralph. There was an air of being high and mighty that I was able to capture from doing the animal study and connecting it to the text and to Faddy.

These animal studies morphed into human studies as I observed people around me or in media and was influenced by those images. I went to a park and began people watching to look specifically for "Liz's walk." I saw a man walking whose legs seemed so heavy, and I journaled that his walk was the essence I wanted to bring to the character. I also observed a homeless man whose teeth were missing, and his clothes sodden with dirt. It gave me a picture of how filthy Liz would have been being in that boat and working outside in Australia. I saw a woman sitting with her legs spread open, which I decided is how Liz most likely sat. I also observed a man chewing very loudly and noisily standing in line. I am not sure if he knew how loud he was or if he just did not care, but I decided to steal his vocal and mouth movements during my scene where Liz imagines being so rich that she would eat herself sick. I also watched Charlize Theron in *Monster* and scenes from *Orange is the New Black* to observe the movements of hardened criminals. Viola Davis said, "You have to be an observer and thief of life"

(BAFTAGuru). During this process, I continued to observe life and allow it to inspire my work. I remained constantly open to my surroundings and my imagination capitalized on the inspiration that was all around me. I would experiment and play with various physical movements and vocal qualities and kept bringing in different choices for every rehearsal.

After I had done all of my animal work, I went to Moni Yakim and Muriel Broadman's *Creating a Character: A Physical Approach to Acting* and looked at what they say about animal work. Yakim and Broadman say, "The study of animals enables you to act and react in new ways. Through your Exploration of different animals you will enrich and expand your physical and emotional world" (119). What was fascinating to me was what they said about bringing the physical life to the life of the character because I had already been doing that prior to even reading about it. There was something instinctual about it for me. They continue, "Remember that the point is to bring the physical life you have developed through your exploration of an animal and your subsequent contribution into a human situation" (Yakim and Broadman 141). As I connected the animal work to the given circumstances of the play, I found the physicality to become easier and more truthful. Experimenting with various animals, and piecing their mannerisms together, helped me to find a more vibrant life to Liz and Faddy. Being aware of the stakes in each scene and the circumstances I am in enabled me to morph and shape these physical explorations. The animal exercises allowed me to get out of my head and into my body.

Combining Dr. Kelly's Exercises with Laban Efforts

I continued my physical explorations by utilizing Dr. Kelly's physical exercises. Throughout the year in our Shakespeare class, Dr. Kelly had been teaching us a few physical exercises he created to help the actor get activated, or what he describes as being viscerally engaged. I took all of those exercises and applied them to my thesis work for Liz Morden. I had a private session with Dr. Kelly who had me repeat the Object Work exercise that was referenced in the previous chapter. We worked on my monologue in Act Two, Scene One. This monologue has a lot of words the audience would not understand, so it was important for me to be able to speak the monologue in such a way that the audience would hear Liz's life story and her pain.

Dr. Kelly had me bring in seven to ten objects and throw them around the room. Then like a tour guide, I picked up and drew attention to one object at a time as I performed my monologue. As I picked up the random items and said my monologue, I felt like it was activated because I was able to move around the room and use the space. I also felt like I was communicating and honestly telling the story. I saw and experienced the story in my mind's eye as I was saying the monologue. I was re-living that moment of when my father betrayed me and the moments after. I started having intention, and attitude, and urgency. Dr. Kelly remarked how he saw more of the hate and loathing of this woman because she had been misused and mistreated. This physical exercise was valuable as it brought out my intentions and point of view behind each word. Ironically, for my actual performance my character was going to be in chains and standing still. However, I was able to speak the words with the same intentions I had discovered that

day, which still had its intended effect of making the monologue more comprehensible for the audience. It was alive and organic and visceral.

I took aspects of Dr. Kelly's physical exercises, such as the Object Work exercise mentioned above, and combined it with Laban's Efforts. *Actor Training the Laban Way* describes Laban Movement Analysis as, "a theoretical framework for observing movement . . . Effort describes the manifestation of moment-to-moment impulses that relate to feelings or emotions" (Adrian 8). The eight efforts are punch, slash, dab, flick, press, wring, glide, and float. Some of those are direct and some are indirect in direction, some are quick or sustained in speed, some are heavy or light in weight, and some are bound or free in flow.

I would explore with the efforts on my own and in rehearsals because they facilitated my physical and emotional connection to the text. For example, in Act One, Scene Eight, I catch Mary Brenham and Dabby Bryant learning their lines without me. I come out and say, "You can't do the play without me. I'm in it!" (Wertenbaker 41). I would play around with different efforts in rehearsal like press or punch. When I came on and pressed that line, I literally felt like I was emotionally cornering Dabby and Mary. It felt like I was crushing them with my words and ready to pounce on them physically if they did not do what I demanded. When I played with punch, I felt like it was much more abrupt and swift and emotional. I felt like I was literally punching Mary in the gut and just standing over her waiting for her to collect herself and begin teaching me the lines. Punch felt like quick bursts of anger and I would eventually cool off, while press felt more prolonged and persistent. I was not going to relent until they gave me what I

wanted. That specific line was connected to those efforts for me because the confrontational line lent itself that way.

Like a detective, I was constantly looking for clues from the text that would give me hints to the emotional life of the character and combining the Laban Effort that connects to that text. Punch and press are a directed energy; they are demanding. I am bullying or demanding that Mary teach me the lines. I would never, for instance, choose to play that line with float as the effort, which is indirect and light, because that is not what that text or the given circumstances dictate. The choices are always in line with the text, the inner life of the character, and the given circumstances. Laban Efforts extend the physical language beyond the habitual physical habits, and the explorations I did on my own and in rehearsals allotted me ways of moving that I would not have discovered otherwise.

What I like the most about the Laban work is that it is directly tied to my work on the text. The text inspires my Laban Effort choices. I also added my own variations to the Laban Efforts by playing with extremes. For example, I played with that same line of text, “You can’t do the play without me. I’m in it!” (Wertebaker 41) at 300 percent. Then I dialed it down to 200 percent, 100 percent, 50 percent, 25 percent, and so on. Within each effort I found the gradations and that spectrum gave me the opportunity to break down each effort even further, which in turn enabled me to make more discoveries. For instance, I experimented with this spectrum within each line of text. I would come on and press at 100 percent with “You can’t do the play with me” and then turn it up to 300 percent on “I’m in it!” Or vice versa. These were the things that I personally added

to this work so that I could continue to play and stay curious. I tried this with my Liz monologue and all her other lines, playing with the efforts and playing with extremes.

In my monologue in Act Two, Scene One, I also utilized all the Laban Efforts and incorporated the extremes, and then dialed it down. I tried as much as possible to actually incorporate all the efforts in the monologue when I was rehearsing by myself, and let my impulses lead me into choosing various efforts to play with in the monologue. I would dab, “You could nob it here, Lizzie, I thinks...” (Wertenbaker 67) because my impulse was that I truly thought life might change here for me and that I could have a new beginning. I then would try that line with varying extremes and then I would work with another effort, like float, and see what discoveries I made.

Jean Newlove in *Laban for Actors and Dancers* says, “Slight changes of effort and/or direction can produce the most subtle differences in expression and meaning” (13). I found that to be extremely true especially when I integrated levels and extremes within each effort (e.g.: 300 percent versus 25 percent). Taking just one line in the monologue, like “You could nob it here, Lizzie, I thinks...” (Wertenbaker 67) and playing with it at 300 percent versus 100 percent gave it a completely different meaning even though I was still just working with the Laban Effort of dab.

I also took Dr. Kelly’s Object Work and combined it with Laban Efforts. For example, I isolated myself in the Tool Room backstage before each show, so I could focus and concentrate, and I then laid out my own things on the floor, put my handcuffs on, and moved each item and used the Laban Efforts at the same time to rehearse my monologue. I would pick up an item and slash while also offering it and telling the story. There was not a lot of space in that Tool Room, but I continued to move items from the

floor to the shelf and vice versa while communicating the story, really seeing the story and imagining the images before me as I share it and trying various Laban Efforts throughout the entire process.

As I began the monologue with “Luck?” I would press that while moving an object or slash that while picking something and offering it up. This made me think and move in different ways as I experimented with weight and how the character moves and also focused on imagining the story and letting it unfold. The energy radically changed from effort to effort and with the Object Work; it was different every time. This is something that I love because I never want the work to become stagnant. I want to continue to stretch and find new layers every single time. I want to be a live wire in rehearsals and on that stage where everything is stemming from spontaneity.

I found the combination of Object Work and Laban Efforts to be the most useful to me because it expanded my sense of curiosity, play, vulnerability, and imagination as no rehearsals or performances were ever the same. Each time it was vibrant and based on impulse. In the wings, before the top of Act Two, I would punch, press, and slash with handcuffs on. I used the efforts and imagined the story, and sometimes I even pretended to offer up an object as I really told the story. Then I would go right on stage, stand still on my mark, and tell the story. I would plant my eyes on a specific square on the stained-glass window at the back of the house and communicate the story to it. Each night, I found more nuances and layers, such as in “mum leaves”, the pain and resentment in the fact that my mom left me. Or “But here, the governor says new life”, that perhaps things will finally be different for me here and I begin to believe that I, “could nob it here, Lizzie” and that it will be better, but of course bad luck follows me wherever I go.

“Bobcull gov, this niffynaffy play”, all flowed easy because it was connected to “nobing” it here. It was also tied to my objective as well; it is not just survival, but Liz needs to start fresh, to start over, to being anew.

I also did an exercise focusing on how emotion lives in the body. Dr. Kelly calls it Emotional Sequencing. In class, we worked with emotions like love, catastrophe, and despair. We let the words fill the soles of our feet, fill our legs, and fill all the way up to the neck and head. On the count of three, we could move and interact with the chair and the space and the prop. Then we did the same thing with a line of text. As I did this exercise again at home for Liz, I discovered that violence and despair were closely related. Violence felt like my whole body was boiling. Despair was heavy and sad, but also lashing out and quick to strike because she has to survive. She is in a desperate situation and needs to fend for herself. Dr. Kelly had also given us these actions, like “close the door”, and then he added a quality to it like “close the door mischievously”, “close the door in anger”, or “close the door forcefully” and then he had us say a line of text. I took that exercise and experimented with Act Two, Scene Ten, “The Question of Liz” scene. I imagined closing the door gently on my line, “Your Excellency” (Wertenbaker 100) and I had an incredible emotional release.

That was a different kind of vulnerability, that Liz, this hardened criminal is also a human being who wants to live. Crying in that scene came from relief, came from imagining someone in my life finally sticking up for me, and came from the shock of how my story turned out. I imagined that this was the first time anyone advocated for her, that the justice system served her, that she tasted God. That experience shook me to

the core because it was completely on impulse and extremely visceral. I had that physical sensation and memory in my body and was able to take that into every performance.

Finally, I combined Laban Efforts and Object Work for my monologue. With Laban, I would wring, slash, press, and push. I would continually experiment using the Laban Effort with Psychological Gesture, emotional qualities, and trying them with text. I would combine that with Object Work, offering the object, really giving it away, which was truthful and transparent communication. There were images that popped out of the text for me as I would work, like in Act One, Scene Eleven, Liz says, “You’re not the only one with new wrinkles in your arse Dabby Bryant,” and I imagined I was literally scratching her face with my words.

Having a specific image and picturing what my words were actually doing, and connecting it to that line of text, sharpened my intention. It gave my intentions or tactics a refined and specific quality. I was playing my action with more focus and it was laser sharp. It was the same experience in Act One, Scene Eight when Liz is talking to Ketch Freeman and says, “Better than dancing the Paddington frisk in your arms – noser!” I would imagine that I am digging at or stabbing at him with my words. I used imagination and images throughout the process and linked images to the text and to my actions. This allowed me to convey my point-of-view, like intense dislike, much more vividly than if I were just to say the line.

Dialect and Voice Work

While I played with Laban Efforts, Object Work, and Emotional Sequencing, I also combined that with my dialect and voice work. To begin dialect work, Rachel Carter, our dialect coach, gave the actors a dialect guide for Received Pronunciation (RP), a guide for cockney dialects, and an IPA “cheat sheet.” Lieutenant Faddy had an RP dialect, since it was a standard British dialect representing higher society. Liz Morden had a cockney dialect, which represented the working and poorer class of London. These were two dialects I had not mastered previously, so I worked hard to accomplish this feat.

First, I took the guides and went through the entire script marking dialect changes in the words of my characters’ dialogue. For example, in RP, “r” sounds that are preceded by a vowel are dropped and the vowel is elongated. Therefore, when Lieutenant Faddy states, “Second Lieutenant Clark change society!” I would cross out the “r” in Clark in my script to remind myself to drop that sound when I spoke (Wertenbaker 28). In cockney, the “th” sound shifts to an “f” sound, so I marked that in the word “throats” in Liz’s line “I wouldn’t talk of throats if I was you, Mr. Hangman Ketch Freeman” (Wertenbaker 42). I would constantly make vocal changes in my script and reference all my dialect notations throughout the entire rehearsal and run of the show. These dialect notes helped me to not only remember some of the unusual changes, like Lieutenant is pronounced “Leftenant”, but it made it so that I could switch from one dialect to the next with clear distinction.

However, switching dialects quickly presented a bigger challenge. For instance, I performed as Liz Morden in Act One, Scene Five and then immediately entered Act One, Scene Six as Lieutenant William Faddy. It was a quick scene change and I had to

instantaneously change my physicality and my dialect from Liz Morden to Lieutenant William Faddy. Therefore, I had to become very comfortable with the two dialects. They had to feel second nature to me.

I went through the script and wrote down every single line for both Second Lieutenant William Faddy and Liz Morden. In addition to working with Professor Carter, and completing my own daily dialect study, I also listened to hours upon hours of British and cockney interviews and TV shows to better hear the accents. I would rehearse saying those words out loud while also listening to clips that Professor Carter had sent us in order to listen to the dialect, imitate the sounds, and study the vocal placement. I also watched clips from *East Enders*, which is a UK soap opera, *My Fair Lady*, and interviews with Adele and Michael Caine.

I was specifically listening for the dialect and trying to get that placement in my mouth. I practiced saying words either from the iTunes clip or from the video clips that I watched. I would take it back to the script and say my own lines. I would also stand up and say my lines and get on my feet, so the dialect was also connected to movement. When I was on my feet, I would sometimes put my hands right next to my ears for the cockney dialect, so it would help me to indicate the back of my mouth and I could make sure that the placement of the voice was there. I also made sure to let the sound be forward, so it is back of the mouth and forward and not getting caught in the throat, which the cockney accent has a tendency to do. For Faddy, I kept experimenting with the giraffe, with the haughtiness and loftiness and I would also experiment with the words being clipped and sharp and clean. I would imagine length in my neck and leading with my head. Listening to the dialects helped me to get the feel of the dialect in my mouth

and in my body. There is a rhythm to both the cockney and RP that I was able to grasp as I listened to these exemplars.

The dialects also fed the characterization of my characters. For instance, because RP is more clipped, it felt more proper than the cockney dialect. This contributed to my characterization of Faddy, who was becoming more and more snooty and haughty. Playing with the sounds and how sharp and cut-off they are, helped me to access Faddy's short-temperedness. He is agitated by Ralph Clark, and I felt that the dialect carries that attitude with it when playing with placement and vocal quality. The image of the giraffe moving its mouth in disdain accompanied my dialect investigations. It was being married with the physical work; the physical would inform the vocal, and the vocal would inform the physical. The cockney accent sounds looser and less formal, which contributed to how I was playing Liz, sloppier and the epitome of informal. I would hit the consonants, draw things out, and used the dialect to make me sound harsher. I used the dialect to send me more into a sneer or to dig at people.

A major discovery I had was that when I was not concerned about the accent or dialect work during rehearsals, it was very strong. Earlier when I thought about the dialect work while rehearsing, I would get tripped up on the pronunciation. When I focused on playing, telling the story, on what I was trying to communicate, and what I was trying to do, the accent and dialect work came naturally. This emphasis on curiosity, play, and intention is what also carried over into my voice work. All of this work was sifted through imagination and fastened to vulnerability and curiosity. This was a microcosm of every stage of my thesis role. When I focused on trying to do the logical technique, like perfecting a dialect, I could falter. But when I let my imagination run

wild the transformation would happen naturally, like the dialect being strong when I focused on my character's intentions. This also carried over into my voice work.

Alexander Technique, Linklater, and Fitzmaurice

Along with the dialect work, I integrated the Alexander Technique, Linklater, and Fitzmaurice in my voice work and vocal warm-ups. In *Body Learning*, Michael Gelb states, "The Alexander Technique eludes precise definition because it involves a new experience – the experience of gradually freeing oneself from the domination of fixed habits" (1). I focused on Alexander's principles of direction, inhibition, and use.

Directions are our thoughts. It is using our thoughts to release and let go of tension in the body or tension that we are holding in our breath. In my time studying at HB Studio in New York City, our Alexander teacher, Martha Bernard described some of these patterns of holding as restrictive to truthfulness. She said, "You want to have the freedom for choice and options, so you can play characters truthfully. You want to be releasing into vitality. It is not relaxing, which is passive and that is not what we are looking for. We are checking in and freeing and releasing. I am using my thought. That puts you in the present moment in your body. It allows you to connect to yourself and others truthfully."

What was most profound to me was understanding my directions and thoughts as intentions. Throughout my rehearsal process I would connect my Alexander directions to intention. My directions were tied to what I was doing to the other and what I needed. I did not want to be thinking all about the Alexander Technique in my scenes, rather I wanted to fully be in the scene. But I could check in and free and release, which gave me

more physical range and freedom, and I could direct with intention. Giving myself just a quick moment to check in and free and release also allowed me not to move out of habit, but to inhibit, and make a different choice.

Alexander's inhibition is just that slight pause, a moment where you stop, breathe, and give yourself an alternative choice instead of your habitual choices. I wanted to not move out of habit but have good use. Alexander's use is how you do what you do. In *The Actor's Secret*, Betsy Polatin states that it "is not talking about alignment or body positions, but about "use": how we use our whole body, mind, and spirit to do what we do.... Your use includes how you hold your body, how you breathe, and how you sense your internal state" (4). The question I had to ask myself was, how do I maintain good use with a character who is intense, forceful, and violent? For Liz, it would be easy to hold tension when using the body and voice, especially in scenes where she is aggressive or volatile. Instead, I needed to inhibit, think my intentions and how I wanted to use the words and then allow the intentions to speak into how she moves and acts. I found time and time again, the clearer my intentions, the better Alexander use I used, and the more convincing and truthful performance I put on.

I combined the Alexander Technique constructive rest (a specific practice of lying on the floor to release tension), along with two voice techniques, Linklater and Fitzmaurice, to create a regular daily vocal warm up. I would begin in semi-supine and do the Alexander constructive rest, thinking my Alexander directions, sigh and yawn, add text, get up off the floor and continue the text work. The dialect work was always incorporated in my warm-ups. Even in constructive rest, I would think intentions with directions. I would then do the Linklater progression that was taught to us by Dru Pilmer,

my first-year voice teacher, and the Fitzmaurice tremor work I learned at HB Studio by Theresa McElwee, to warm-up vocally for at least an hour each day.

Linklater is about physical awareness and relaxation combined with step-by-step voice exercises to awaken your subconscious and widen your range. Kristin Linklater in *Freeing the Natural Voice* says, “If the voice is limited by habit and tension, it will limit the transmission of the imagination” (9). A goal of mine was to lose my habits and tensions. McElwee describes Fitzmaurice tremor work as such: “It involves deconstruction and reconstruction of breath and voice to achieve what is called unmanaged breath, which re-calibrates the breath.” Breath work was a large part of my warm-ups.

Although Alexander and Fitzmaurice do not directly utilize image work, I incorporated images into these techniques. Linklater tends to use more images, but I added more images and personalized them. For example, when I would do the Linklater resonators for chest, mouth, and front teeth, I would imagine the pent-up frustration Liz had from years of being misused and abused in the chest resonator work particularly. I would tilt my head back and “Ha-a-ah ha-a-ah ha-a-ah” with the pain, resentment and bitterness from childhood. With Alexander I would think of groundedness connected to the heaviness and weight of a volcano always inside of Liz. I would think that although Liz has this volcano in her chest, this rage that is always bubbling, the volcano also has a deep rock bed, or roots. It is grounded and has weight. This image of a volcano was what had come to mind for me in the earliest stages of working on my own. When I did the Fitzmaurice tremor work, like in the dying cockroach position, where your legs are in

the air and arms are also in the air, I would imagine Liz's struggles and what she is trying to break away from and what chains she is trying to break off.

The voice and dialect work were always connected to physical work, text, and the emotional life of my character. In fact, I would sometimes warm-up in character so that images that I had in my Alexander constructive rest, Linklater progression, and Fitzmaurice tremor work were connected to Liz. I would also keep warming up backstage in between scenes. I used the Straw Exercises that I learned at HB Studio from Theresa McElwee, which helps to lessen vocal fatigue or vocal fry, while in character in between scenes. You put a straw in your mouth and breathe, then add sound, all while vocalizing through the straw. Straw phonation warm-ups were included in every single warm-up before, during, and after each show. I sometimes used it to fuel my frustration because it limits my speaking, all I can do is breathe or make sounds through the straw. I imagined the pent-up frustration Liz felt in not being heard or believed.

All of my movement, voice, and dialect work was filtered through the lens of imagination and was never a linear process. The voice and dialect work influenced my physicality, and my physicality and movement work influenced my voice and dialect work. They were not mutually exclusive. My imagination work from the historical research and the text also affected my physicality. As I wore a shabby costume and wig and stopped shaving my armpits and legs, I not only experienced a degree of what it would be like to walk in Liz's shoes, but also found her carelessness with regards to her physical appearance as well as her lack of concern. I put oil in my hair to get the feeling of matted and unwashed hair, went a day without eating to get a sense of hunger, and sat in a laundry basket and a bathtub to visualize what it would be like to be stuck on a boat

for eight months. Throughout these exercises, I continued to weave the dialects and physicalities together.

My curiosity gave me motivation to want to explore voice and movement, my vulnerability allowed me to empathize and jump in, and my imagination allowed me to transform into Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy. Gradually throughout the rehearsals and into the performances, the historical research, text, and voice and movement work all started working together until I was no longer performing on stage, but I was Liz Morden.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

“Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last, you create what you will.” – George Bernard Shaw

After the curtain finally closed on my last performance of *Our Country's Good*, I was able to reflect fully on my artistic journey. I had started this adventure hoping to completely transform into the characters of Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy, yet I did not believe that I had an acting process I could follow to achieve that result. Throughout this experience, however, I came to three major realizations. First, curiosity and vulnerability opened up the doors into imagination throughout my journey and I had always possessed those qualities. I became mindful, as never before, of how releasing my imagination is essential to my creation of a character. The next realization was that I do have a solid acting approach, which is building a character through the framework of imagination. Finally, this approach can be replicated for future characters that I have the opportunity to create.

Vulnerability, Curiosity, and Imagination

In order to get a cohesive picture of Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy, I began by doing significant historical research and filtered that research through my

imagination. I wanted to understand the time and place in which the characters lived and how class, gender, and socio-economic status impacted each character. My curiosity kept me on this “archeological dig” to study 18th century London and the accounts of actual criminals and soldiers who were part of the first fleet to Australia. Vulnerability pushed me to search for a deeper understanding of Liz and Faddy, to advocate for them, and to love them. As the actor, I need to be their biggest fan. Vulnerability made me courageous enough to be seen as these two characters and not judge myself in the search for understanding them. It kept me open to everything, to understand who these people are and to find the humanity and truth even within the uncomfortable. My imagination allowed me to fill in the spaces between, experience the world how they experienced the world, and understand the given circumstances of the characters. The use of images and imagery were a big component of triggering my imagination.

I interacted with Wertenbaker’s play *Our Country’s Good* through the filter of imagination. This included a close examination of the text, poetic devices, punctuation, and decoding cant. I extended the text by creating monologues, highlighting private moments for Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy outside of the script. I also wrote an epilogue and had members of the cast perform it and videotaped that scene. Uta Hagen’s Technique sharpened my curiosity to allow me to ask questions beyond what was given on the page. I created inner monologues for moments where I was not speaking in scenes that kept me open and vulnerable to receiving from my partners and responding, even though the inner dialogue was never audible. Vulnerability kept me emotionally present, even when it was ugly or messy, and it made me a better listener because it allowed me to read between the lines of what my scene partners were giving

me. I broadened some of Dr. Kelly's Analytical Techniques and Uta Hagen's Technique by adding images, pictures, and visualizations to give my imagination flight. My imagination personalized and made the work my own, which in turn left me feeling empowered in the process. I instinctually moved and allowed myself to be led by impulses inspired by the text. In this process, I devised and tailor-made an imaginative approach to the text.

My voice and physical work was also executed through the framework of imagination. I created my own animal study combining coloring book images and observing animals at the Louisville zoo. I took my own photographs and video footage of animals. I combined the voice work of Linklater, Fitzmaurice, and the Alexander Technique along with Laban, Dr. Kelly's physical exercises, and my own exercises. I expanded, changed, and added to the Laban work and Dr. Kelly's physical exercises. I focused the dialect work and Alexander Technique work through imagery work by connecting the Alexander directions to my intentions, and picturing what my words were doing to the other people onstage. I would constantly go through the script and make vocal changes and write down images or thoughts as they came up in my rehearsal journal.

The use of images and visualization was also incredibly prevalent in this stage of my work. I spent a substantial amount of time doing sensory exercises, like sitting in the bathtub in the dark and imagining what it would be like to be with people on a crowded boat filled with brine, urine, feces, vomit, lice, fleas, and the awful smells. I experimented and allowed my curiosity to instinctually lead me to try a multitude of ideas.

Vulnerability allowed me to take risks and to keep searching for truth, for the humanity of each character, regardless of their rough edges. Vulnerability allowed me to be emotionally available, always open to being affected by the other actors.

Vulnerability kept me raw and gave the courage to lean into the traumatic experiences of Liz Morden. Imagination transcended this process by lifting the text off the page and giving it life. My imagination allowed me to create three-dimensional, honest human beings; human beings that were hurt, caused hurt in others, were deeply flawed, and yet relatable.

I wanted to do the research and do all the homework, so that I could then throw it away, or put it aside once I entered the rehearsal space. I never wanted the research to get in the way of the moment to moment work and listening and responding to my partners. I trusted that all the work was there, and then I went into the rehearsal space and played hard. Vulnerability, curiosity, and imagination kept me open to my partners, as I was willing to be affected and not fixed on any choices. My choices came out of what was happening in each moment because I was intently listening with my whole being, not just with my ears. Meryl Streep in *The Theatre of War*, a documentary about Tony Kushner's adaptation of *Mother Courage* that was staged by the Public Theatre at The Delacorte Theater, states this process beautifully. She states, "I never let anyone see process, process is clunky . . . Process looks like bad acting. Process is not anything you should let anybody see . . . it's not what you want to show people" (19:29 Walter).

Similarly, I wanted to have a process in place and explore what that might be for *Our Country's Good* and these particular characters, but that process is not what I want people to see. My goal was for people to see actual human beings, maybe even aspects

of themselves on that stage. In the rehearsal space and during performances, I wanted to be the “interpreter” of these people’s stories. I always feel a great responsibility to tell the story of any character I create well. I want the audience to see three dimensional, fully-alive beings on stage with skin on, with guts, and with an active inner life.

I was obsessed with “figuring out” what made these characters tick and what made them behave this way. In fact, I would have dreams about *Our Country’s Good* throughout the rehearsal and run of the show, and even after the show had closed. My imagination was kindled, and it seeped into my dreams and subconscious. I did have a routine for every night after the performance, which was the moment I took my make-up off, I was leaving those characters behind. In contrast, putting make-up on each night signified my putting on these characters. After the show had closed, I also had to use my imagination work to “let go of Liz and Faddy.” I began to wear nicer clothing for several weeks after closing night to get me out of Liz’s world. In addition to the costume I created for Liz to rehearse in on my own and in rehearsals, I had also been intentionally dressing down and wearing grubby clothing outside of the rehearsal space for the entire rehearsal and run of *Our Country’s Good*. That small shift in wearing nicer clothes was a way to leave Liz’s world behind.

Work Habits

A significant component of my process also included my work habits as an artist. In previous productions, I created a schedule of my daily work sessions and would use that time to experiment, explore, and stay curious. I was very diligent in how I managed

my personal rehearsals, which included vocal and physical warm-ups and explorations as well as script work.

Some of the work principles and creative processes are inspired by Twyla Tharp's book *The Creative Habit*. Tharp shares from her years of experience as a dancer and choreographer about some of her creative strategies and habits. The book looks at ways to stay creative and develop and strengthen your creativity as an artist. Although her background is dance, the book is applicable to any artist who desires to create and find ways to sharpen their creativity. I utilized and expounded on some of these habits in the development of creation. Primarily what resonated with me was what she calls "scratch sessions", which I equated to my private rehearsal work time. These scratch sessions are a time to try out different ideas. I love ideas! I love thinking up new things and creating. She says, "When you're scratching for an idea, you don't need to think ahead. You have to trust the unconscious rush and let it hurtle forward unedited and unencumbered" (Tharp 107). I viewed all of my private rehearsal time as such, a time to run with an idea, try new things, explore, investigate, and stay curious. I never called it a scratch session before, but I have always exercised an imaginative and investigative spirit in my private work. It is my time to try new ideas, fail, try again, and keep exploring.

Staying spiritually fit is just as paramount as staying mentally, physically, and psychologically fit. Starting at a place of spiritual reflection, relaxation, or actor neutral, would then lead me to my vocal warm-ups and physical exercises that I created. Each role requires different demands and therefore I tailor my voice and physical warm-ups, as well as spiritual time, accordingly. There are significant benefits found in meditation and prayer that have carried over into many acting practices. For example, yoga is often used

in movement classes to guide students into meditation, focus, and relaxation. I personally include prayer, the practice of gratitude, and worship as part of my spiritual practice.

Sometimes I incorporate them into yoga, and sometimes I separate them.

The Bible is my primary source for spiritual guidance and I would daily reflect on scripture to get my mind and heart in tune. It re-frames my mindset, allows me to embrace my own short-comings, accept and extend grace, and cultivate an attitude of gratitude. I varied my time by reading the Psalms and other books of the Bible, as well as reading some devotionals. One devotional on my phone, *Called to Create* by Jordan Raynor, inspired me to think deeper on what it means for “creating to be a service to others and God” (Raynor n.p.). Contemplating on what it means to create with purpose and as a service to others was compelling as it framed my thesis process as a great blessing and opportunity. *Our Country’s Good* was especially poignant due to our current cultural climate. The play was such a gift to participate in because the story is socially conscious and a beautiful piece of art about the power of theatre.

Framework of a House

Part of my imagination practice involves a pioneering spirit of trying new things and letting go of things that might not be working. My time at the University of Louisville, and particularly my thesis process, became my personal research into developing an approach to acting. As I closely examined the role of imagination in my thesis role, I realized I indeed have an acting process. Specifically, the image that I have in mind is building the framework of a house. I am laying the foundation and building

the infrastructure as I create and become the character, whoever they may be. I can now use the method I created for this specific role as I prepare and perform future roles.

Stating that I possess an acting process was very empowering in itself. There is something powerful in naming it, in calling it out. We speak things into being, for better or worse. Words are extremely powerful and there is something liberating in speaking something and giving it life. It gave me ownership as I stood and claimed my truth.

Ever since I was an undergraduate, I was unsure about my technique and downplayed my natural strengths of bringing curiosity, vulnerability, and imagination to a role. Even at the beginning of the final year of my MFA in Acting program, I was still yearning for an acting technique to claim as my own. Through my journey in *Our Country's Good*, I realized that I did have my own method and that I can use this method I created to perform future roles. By the end, I felt empowered in the process of embracing, releasing, and igniting my imagination. This approach is by no means set in stone, but rather the springboard into a lifetime of artistic creating and developing.

Similar to laying the foundation for a house, the first stage of my acting approach is to use historical research to imagine the world of the character. As with Liz and Faddy, in future roles I will focus on historical research and specific themes. For *Our Country's Good* I focused on class, gender, race, but future roles might call for research into any number of other cultural issues that may impact the play and the role that I am playing. I can also reference books that may have inspired the play or books that might speak directly to an issue. For example, if I were to play a new mom in a play, I might read books about childbirth and so on.

The next stage of building a house is to examine the blueprint and gather all the materials, which in this analogy is my second step of using text work to create the character. I will continue to build on Uta Hagen's Technique and Dr. Baron Kelly's Analytical Techniques through using a Blueprint for Analysis, which includes finding the denotation, connotation, and germinal idea of every word and line my character speaks. I will also paraphrase my character's lines, find the subtext, note the poetic devices used, and define all the words as needed. I will continue to add images, pictures, drawing, and creating a Pinterest board to help me get a visual sense of the environment, my character, or anything that inspires me. Connection to images and having a clear painting or mental picture in my mind is paramount in my imaginative mission. Through this process, I will use imagination to internalize and personalize my discoveries from the text.

Determining the character's physicality and voice is the next stage of my approach, which is like building the scaffolding of a house. I used text-inspired images and my imagination to "get Liz in my body," and I built on these discoveries by doing an animal study at the zoo. This step will continue into my future roles. And similar to how I found inspiration for physicalizing Liz through watching Charlize Theron's performance in *Monster* and watching some of *Orange is the New Black*, I will seek out creative inspirations to help me imagine how my next character moves. I enjoyed imagining how Liz would move and feel by creating my own costume and experimenting with different harsh environments, and I am excited to relate to the character in the next play, whatever experiences they may be. I also did dialect work for both of these characters. But even if my next character does not have a different dialect, I can experience with the nuances, pitch, and tone of his or her voice. It will continue to be

important to make vocal notes throughout my script, use my Alexander directions and connect them to imagery, and find inspiration from various sources. I will continue to use a hybrid of Linklater, Fitzmaurice, and Alexander and connect that to imagery, text, and character creation.

Completing the walls and roof of the house is analogous to then taking all the historical and text research and combining physical and voice work to continue to create the character. For Liz, I took my voice and movement discoveries and incorporated them into the lines of the text. I used several of Dr. Kelly's physicalizing exercises, including Chair Work, the Ball of Repulsion/Excitement, Object Work, and Emotional Sequencing: a hybrid of Laban and Psychological Gesture with emotional qualities. This is an exciting time in this process as the character is coming alive.

Filling the interior of the house to make it a home is the same as using imagination to fill the interior of the actor and the exterior of the world; it is moving out of your characters emotions and seeing what the character would be seeing. For Liz, I extended the text by creating my own monologues, creating her entire backstory, and creating additional scenes and an epilogue of the play. I pulled from my own life experiences, including events where I experienced similar emotions to Liz. I focused on Stanislavsky's given circumstances and Uta Hagen's destination work, Fourth Side, and a great deal of sensory work. I would try any and all ideas, come in with choices in both my private work sessions and rehearsals, and I would stay curious, vulnerable, and imaginative. Imagination has been exercised through every stage of the approach and is the most important part of my approach.

The Lens of Imagination

In the Introduction, I talked about how the arts chose me, I did not choose it. It is how I was intricately woven. It is also how I see, understand, empathize, and discern my place in the world. It is my channel for engaging in social justice and compassion, service, and how I extend hope to a broken world. Art is my language. As an artist, I see and imagine what may not yet exist; I am a visionary and a cultural architect. My walk into authenticity and vulnerability has now given me the agency and power to say that, mine has been a journey where I can confidently and comfortably say, “The Arts chose me, and I’m choosing it.” Daily.

I believe that in order to embody a myriad of characters truthfully, the imagination has to be awakened. Transformation from character to character is a product of a lively imagination as we endeavor to speak that character’s truth. Imagination allows me to create worlds and begin to place myself in them. It brings the text to life, lifts the words off of the page, and fills in the space between the text...the nuance, the connection, and the unspoken moments.

I approached my work on *Our Country’s Good* like a detective and was constantly digging for more clues, looking in every corner for a deeper understanding of the world and my place in it. I was constantly thinking about the characters, envisioning their lives, and allowed everything around me and my everyday life to inspire me. I took the environment, people, neighborhoods, and even buildings and let that stimulate my imagination for *Our Country’s Good*. Filtering everything through the lens of

imagination, I was able to create characters that were dynamic and robust. Vulnerability and curiosity enthused my imagination and made it rich and vibrant.

Before being cast as Liz Morden, I did not believe that I had a specific acting technique that I could rely on as an actor. Upon reflecting on my productions at the University of Louisville, and specifically with how I created the characters Liz Morden and Lieutenant William Faddy, I realized that I do have a solid approach to acting. During all the productions I have been in at the University of Louisville, I have used imagination throughout the entire process of creating a character. I realized that I do historical research regarding the role and play, text work, and physical and voice work – all through the filter of imagination. I became conscious as never before how my creation of a character demands the nourishment of my imagination. While before I only did it intuitively, I now acknowledge and embrace that igniting and releasing my imagination is imperative for me as an actor. This has been how I have always leaned, but now it is affirmed that it is mandatory for me and my process. What I discovered was that I had shaped my own acting approach through imagery and imagination. Building a framework of and with imagination and being able to name that process has also left me feeling empowered as an artist. Using imagination from page to stage is my acting approach, and one that I will be able to use for the next character I have the opportunity to create.

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APPENDIX A: Pictures of a House

APPENDIX B: Liz and Faddy Scenes

(Destination and Imagination Work)

Act One, Scene One: Page 7. - on the ship.

Moment before (throwing up over the side, sick). I was seasick at the beginning of the journey.

Act One, Scene Five: Page 24. – outdoors. “I understand you want me in your play, Lieutenant.”

(Coming in from planting seeds, my job).

Act One, Scene Six: Pages 25 – 34. - Faddy scenes are inside the tent.

(Moment before I’m arguing with Johnston about how the play is a terrible idea. I’m trying to convince him to see it my way and vote against it.)

Act One, Scene Eight: Pages 41 – 43. – outside. “You can’t do the play without me.”

(I’m coming from hanging out with Kable and Arscott. Coming from the men’s camp. I’m hearing about their plan to escape.)

Act One, Scene Eleven: Pages 52 – 65. – outside. “Welcome to town cousin Silvia”

Act Two, Scene One: Pages 66 – 69. – prison. What time of day is it? “Luck?”

(I have been in prison about one month. Moment before is Wisehammer just asked me how I got here. Maybe he says, “You’re in luck the Lieutenant is trying to get you out.”)

Act Two, Scene Five: Pages 76 – 80. – outside. “Come, Sir”

(I have been in prison for three months. I have had people come in and read me my lines. My moment before is that they just got me from prison for rehearsal.)

Act Two, Scene Six: Pages 80 – 84. – prison, by myself. “Mr. Brewer”

(Late at night. I have been in prison for three months. Moment before is it’s really late at night and I haven’t slept knowing that I’m going to be hanged any day now.)

Act Two, Scene Ten: Pages 98 – 100. – inside a tent. “I didn’t steal the food.”

(Been in prison for five months. I’m outside the building, shackled up.)

Act Two, Scene Eleven: Pages 101 – 109. – inside a tent before we go on stage. “Dabby could take your part.”

(Carrying costumes and props over from the main area to backstage).

APPENDIX C: Liz Monologue

But you don't know nothing about me. What you want to know anyway? I was born on Wentworth Street and when I was on my own, I lived on Lower Whitecross Street. When I was younger, if I can't sell my wares, I'd have to steal something or you're beaten by you chap. That's how I got them teeth gone. Got your eyes beaten blind from bloodshot. No one treats me like that no more. I don't keep close to no one. Not since that bobcull I met once. He like everyone else, he want to use me. Well, I'm not being used by nobody. I use myself for myself.

Yeah, I stole wipers from Nancy Collins, who needs that many anyway? I was trying to sell it and get some food. You have to act fast. Snoozie's around the corner, got 25 lashes. Up in the streets of London, begging for food, or opening my legs wide for it. That's life. Arscott and Kable know, they know life on the streets. We live by thieving, still do, by pulling flesh. Haven't got the Hanging Psalm yet.

I never take no beer no spirits-I never did. But I smoke a good bit and would the sooner have a baccy than a meal. Never knew my mum. Who knows where she is. But I sure knew my father, thatch gallows.

There's no justice for people like me, who look like me. I don't feel nothing for people and they don't feel nothing for me . . . that's the way I like it.

APPENDIX D: Faddy Monologue

Like most soldiers, I was excited for the adventure to settle in New South Wales, and to begin a beneficial colony for Britain. After all, they said, it was so close to the strategic trading centers of the Far East. That's what they said. We are so far away from any other civilization; it's maddening.

Ralph Clark. Ralph the London Ass more like it. He's a dreamer. A bloody dreamer. At night he just cries and wails. The worse was when we were on *The Friendship*. God, he yelled so much. I tried to get him demoted then and there. No one who cries while he sleeps is fit to lead the marines. I told Ralph that to Ralph's face on the boat. That London Ass proposed that we should duel. I jumped up immediately to accept, but Collins told us to calm down. He also told me to stop talking about Ralph's dreams. I said I would. But the minute we got to land, I told some convicts, and now everyone is talking about poor Ralph's dreams. Hahaha.

He makes me want to drink. I do drink. Captain Meredith and me drink a good bit. But he makes me want to drink a lot. I tell you that they are making me see the blasted play tomorrow. I am going to get so boosey, be brandy-faced, that I won't remember a single moment from that play. The colony doesn't need a play or some bloody director. They need discipline and leadership, and I'm a better man for this job. No way that London Ass can control any of these lags, and Ross knows it.

APPENDIX E: An Epilogue

SCENE TWELVE

An Epilogue

JOHN WISEHAMMER, ROBERT SIDEWAY, KETCH FREEMAN, AND LIZ MORDEN. WISEHAMMER is writing, SIDEWAY is pacing. LIZ and KETCH are looking over WISEHAMMER'S shoulder.

SIDEWAY. It's not theatrical enough. We need more-

WISEHAMMER. It's not done yet, just wait, I'm almost finished.

KETCH. So Margaret doesn't know he is lying to her?

WISEHAMMER. No. Not yet.

SIDEWAY. It's not funny enough. We want people to laugh.

WISEHAMMER. People will laugh!

LIZ. What's it about Wisehammer?

WISEHAMMER. It's about a girl who falls in love with a thief pretending to be an Officer.

LIZ. Oh, I like that!

WISEHAMMER. She thinks the world of him, but he does not deserve her. He deceives her, lies to her, makes her believe that he will take care of her. But he won't.

SIDEWAY. How's that funny?

LIZ. Just wait.

KETCH. I don't want to play him, the liar. I want to play the man with noble qualities.

LIZ. There's another man?

SIDEWAY. Yes, two men, but no comedy!

WISEHAMMER. I'm working on it, it's not done yet!

LIZ. Does she die?

WISEHAMMER. No, no she doesn't die.

LIZ. Oh. Does she kill him?

WISEHAMMER. No, no one dies.

SIDEWAY. I think she should die.

WISEHAMMER. How is that funny?

SIDEWAY. It's not. But it makes it more interesting.

KETCH. I don't want to do the killing.

WISEHAMMER. There is no killing. No one dies in this play, there is no one that's going to die.

SIDEWAY. Someone should die. How about a fight?

KETCH. I don't want to fight.

WISEHAMMER. There are no fights yet, but I guess there could be a fight between Major Gallant and Captain Price?

LIZ. Who?

WISEHAMMER. Major Gallant is the thief pretending to be noble in character to steal away Margaret and take her away from the dignified and brave Captain Price.

LIZ. Who's he, Captain Price?

WISEHAMMER. He's a Captain for virtue and honor, who's pretending to be a fisherman from Fleet Street to watch over and guard Margaret.

LIZ. The lady that wants that other swell?

WISEHAMMER. Well, she doesn't know he's a liar and thief, but when she finds out...

SIDEWAY. This is not funny!

KETCH. I like him, the decent man, that Captain Price.

WISEHAMMER. Me too!

LIZ. I got my fan.

WISEHAMMER. You won't need a fan for this.

SIDEWAY. She could need it. For the fight.

WISEHAMMER. I'm not sure about that.

LIZ. I'll use my fists.

SIDEWAY. Yeah, good idea! Much better aim!

WISEHAMMER. I'm not sure about the fight yet, besides, Liz, you'll be playing Margaret.

LIZ. So.

WISEHAMMER. She's virtuous and gentle, and so kind. She's not the fighting sort.

LIZ. Well, I'll play Captain Price then.

WISEHAMMER. What about playing Margaret's mother?

LIZ. Does she fight?

WISEHAMMER. No, these women don't fight. You can be Margaret's wealthy mother.

LIZ. Nah, I've already been a rich lady. I want to be play a man this time. Or play Margaret and use my fan again.

SIDEWAY. I was thinking I could be Margaret actually.

LIZ and WISEHAMMER. You??

SIDEWAY. I think that would be comedic.

WISEHAMMER. She's not comedic. She's, she's...lovely, innocent, gentle. She's just mislead, that's all.

SIDEWAY. Well then, I'll be the Captain Prince.

WISEHAMMER. Price. Captain Price.

SIDEWAY. Yeah, him.

WISEHAMMER. I was actually thinking I could be Captain Price.

SIDEWAY. What? But you're the writer? It doesn't make sense.

WISEHAMMER. I can write and still be in it.

KETCH. What about me? What part will I play?

WISEHAMMER. Well, I was thinking Major Gallant.

KETCH. No! I don't want to be a lying thief!

WISEHAMMER. Ok, ok, you can be Captain Price.

SIDEWAY. I'll be the lying Major...is he funny?

WISEHAMMER. Um...yeah, very funny he is.

LIZ. Wait, does that mean I'm that mother?

WISEHAMMER. No Liz, you can be Margaret. And use your fan.

LIZ. I brought it!

KETCH. You think Major Ross will allow us to put this play on Sideway?

SIDEWAY. Sure, sure. It's a comedy my boy.

WISEHAMMER. I'll have to tone it down a bit. The politics I guess.

SIDEWAY. Keep it all in my boy, keep it in!

KETCH. I hope everyone comes again. Like last time!

LIZ. Yeah. We should practice our bow.

SIDEWAY. Good idea! Stand up in a line, like before, and make sure to look at all sides.

WISEHAMMER. You think Mary will come?

KETCH. Oh course she'll come! She'll probably want to be in it.

SIDEWAY. She has a baby now, oh, maybe the baby can be in it too!

LIZ. He can't play nothing.

SIDEWAY. No, but maybe he could be on the ground holding your fan?

LIZ. Yeah, I'll need someone to hold it.

WISEHAMMER. We're not going to have a baby holding a fan in this play!

KETCH. Although that would be comedy.

WISEHAMMER. Maybe Mary can play Margaret and I can be Captain Price.

LIZ. Wait, I thought I was Margaret now.

KETCH. And you said I'm Captain Prince, the dignified man.

WISEHAMMER. What if Mary has a sister? And Captain Prince has an older, wiser, rich brother.

LIZ. Can she have a brother?

WISEHAMMER. Sure, she can have a brother?

LIZ. Good. Sideway can be the brother then and I'll be the sister.

KETCH. And I'll be the rich, wise brother.

WISEHAMMER. Sideway, how long do we have to rehearse?

SIDEWAY. Well, Governor said 2 hours every day. And we have about an hour left.

WISEHAMMER. Ok, let's look at the beginning.

SIDEWAY. But you have to write the brother, sister, and rich brother.

WISEHAMMER. I'll write more tonight, but for now, let's just see what we have. Liz, you start.

LIZ. In...a...land...far away.

WISEHAMMER. That's very good Liz.

LIZ. Thanks. Mary's been teaching me.

SIDEWAY. It's very good.

LIZ. It's not so hard once you know how to put them words together.

WISEHAMMER. Liz, do you think you could ask Mary to be in this?

LIZ. Yeah, sure.

WISEHAMMER. Do you think she'll want to be in it?

LIZ. Course she will! She's loved reading what you wrote.

SIDEWAY. Yeah, but he's changing it now, so.

LIZ. She'll like it, I'm sure.

KETCH. Yeah. You think His Excellency will let us put on another play after all? Major Ross had a fit last time.

SIDEWAY. Lieutenant Clark said His Excellency loves the idea and wants to see more theatre. He wants us to put on more plays, doesn't he Wisehammer? And besides, my company only puts on comedies, everyone will love it!

LIZ. Duckling wants to be in this show too Sideway. Can she be in your company?

SIDEWAY. Does she like comedy?

LIZ. Yeah.

SIDEWAY. Then, sure!

WISEHAMMER. We only have a short amount of time to rehearse before we all need to get back to work. Let's pick up where we left off.

LIZ. In...a...land...far away.

THE END

APPENDIX F: Coloring Book Images

APPENDIX G: Zoo Pictures

CURRICULUM VITA

Lois Abdelmalek
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EDUCATION

The University of Louisville	MFA in Performance, May 2018 Certificate in African American Theatre, May 2018
The Pennsylvania State University	BA Speech Communication, BA Admin of Justice Minor in Theatre, Minor in Sociology

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The University of Louisville

- Acting for Non-Majors- Theatre 324
Instructor (2017, 2018)
Teaching the foundations of acting to undergraduate students.
*Taught students from the JCPS PACT Program: 18 to 21-year-old students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities.
*Taught English Language Learner students.
- African American Music- Pan-African Studies 214
Teaching Assistant (2017)
Examination of African American music and its link to historical experiences of slavery, migration, urbanization, and social-political Protest.
- Enjoyment of Theatre- Theatre 207
Teaching Assistant (2015, 2016)
A survey of theatre from its origins to the present, with emphasis on dramatic literature.

Teach for America (TFA)

- Southern Vance High School, Exceptional Children (Special Education) Department
Full-time High School Remedial Teacher
TFA vision to eliminate educational inequality and close the achievement gap.

- Developed and taught language arts and math curriculum.
Created Southern Vance's drama club.

RELATED EXPERIENCE

- Assistant to the Director of Graduate Studies, The University of Louisville, 2017, 2018
- Repertory Company, The University of Louisville, 2016, 2017
Every year, a selected troupe of MFA candidates perform two plays in rotating repertory for thousands of children, teachers, and other members of our community.
- Studio Theatre Company Coordinator, 2016
Made STC a Recognized Student Organization, mentored undergraduates, organized play festival.
- Western Middle School for the Arts Volunteer, 2016
- Founder and Director of ThirdPlace
Non-profit organization connecting young professionals to authentic community, service (locally and globally), and social justice. www.thirdplacesc.org.
- Acting Teacher, Performing Arts School of Central Pennsylvania
- Viacom and Paramount Pictures Intern
Production Team for *Pop Across America*, *Blue's Clues*, pilot of *Smallville*.

TRAINING

- The Hagen Summer Intensive, HB Studio, 2017
Rigorous, 6-week workshop that probes the practical applications of Uta Hagen's technique. Classes include: Acting Technique, Scene Study, Alexander Technique, Movement and Voice.
- The Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, University of Notre Dame, 2016
Three weeks of classical training in voice, text, and movement as part of the Touring and Professional companies.

DIRECTING

- Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*, mainstage production at the University of Louisville
Assistant Director (Director: Russell Vandenbroucke).
- Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, Studio Theatre production, University of Louisville
Director.

DRAMATURGY

- Endesha Ida Mae Holland's *Miss Ida B. Wells*, University of Louisville
Dramaturg.

- KCACTF Region IV Dramaturg nominee for *Miss Ida B. Wells*.

PRESENTATIONS

- Thesis Oral Defense, The University of Louisville
“Igniting the Imagination: Tenaciously Building a Character”
- Umuryango: Rwandan Stories, The University of Louisville, 2017
In partnership with a Rwandan organization, I photographed former street children in Rwanda, started a sponsorship program, collected their stories, and then auditioned and coached UofL students for a staged reading at Ekstrom Library.
- Presentation for TA620 Performance Theory, The University of Louisville, 2017
“How to Stay Physically, Emotionally, and Spiritually Fit as an Actor”
- Presentation for TA526 Tools for a Global Theatre, The University of Louisville, 2016
“The Life and Impact of Federico Garcia Lorca”

AWARDS AND HONORS

- Equity Membership Candidate (EMC), Actor’s Equity, 2016 - present
- Graduate Teaching Assistantship, The University of Louisville, 2015 – 2018
- Outstanding Graduate/Professional Student Award, 2018
- Dramaturg nominee, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF4), 2018
- Graduate Network in Arts and Sciences (GNAS) Research Grant, 2018
- Key Student Scholarship at HB Studio, 2017
- Elevate Portland Initiative (nominated by undergraduates to teach at Elevate Portland)
 - University of Louisville’s College of Business initiative – an educational outreach program designed to lay the foundation that will inspire and track these elementary-aged kids with the hope that they see that there is life beyond Portland and that a high school degree is completely within their reach.
- Harold Adams Award, The University of Louisville 2017
 - For faculty that excels on contributing to a diverse and vibrant student life experience on campus through a unique commitment to students through their attitudes, behaviors and extraordinary involvement in the lives of students.
- Delphi U certificate, The University of Louisville, 2017
 - Faculty professional development of designing, developing, delivering, and assessing online classes.

- Dolan Family Scholarship for Theatre Arts, The University of Louisville, 2017
- Graduate Merit Scholarship, The University of Louisville, 2016
- Graduate Student Travel Grant, The University of Louisville, 2016
- Most Tenacious Teacher, Southern Vance High School.

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

*indicated United States Premiere

Our Country's Good	University of Louisville / Baron Kelly
How Water Behaves	Theatre [502] / Gil Reyes (Spring 2018)
Pericles, Prince of Tyre	Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival / Cameron Knight
The Tempest	Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival / West Hyler
King Lear	University of Louisville / Jennifer Pennington
Vanya Sonia Masha Spike	University of Louisville / Russell Vandenbroucke
The Syrian Monologues*	University of Louisville / Russell Vandenbroucke
Antigone (by Anouilh)	University of Louisville / Andrew Harris
Polaroid Stories	University of Louisville / Laura Early
Women Behind Bars*	University of Louisville / Laura Early
Improvaganda	University of Louisville / Erin Crites
Bremen Town Musicians	UofL Repertory Company / Melissa Shepherd
The Dancing Turtle	UofL Repertory Company / Geoffrey Nelson
Rumors	Boalbarb Playhouse / Jason Poorman
An Actor's Nightmare	Pennsylvania State University / Janice Pope
Chamber Music	Pennsylvania State University / Janice Pope