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# The Way I Breathe: An Actor's Portfolio

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# The Way I Breathe: An Actor's Portfolio

A Major Qualifying Project Report  
Submitted to the Faculty  
of the  
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Science  
in Humanities and Arts: Drama/Theatre  
By:

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Anika Jeanette Blodgett  
Date: March 2011

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Susan Vick, Advising

## **Abstract**

This Major Qualifying Project is a portfolio that documents the skills gained by an aspiring actress in pursuit of a Bachelor's Degree in Humanities and Arts with a concentration in Drama/Theatre from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. This portfolio contains proof of the student's attainment of theatrical knowledge through theory learned in the classroom and through practice gained on the stage. This portfolio further offers reflections on the philosophy and nature of the beautiful art that is acting.

## Executive Summary

How can we measure the success of an artist? How can we determine if someone is competent in their artistic medium? How can we measure the level of artistic enlightenment that someone has achieved?

This is a difficult and perhaps impossible task. But as a person that is truly passionate about the art of acting, I'd like to think that I am at least on my way to achieving the types of artistic competence that I admire greatly and use as my inspirational compass. Upon prospective completion of a Degree in Humanities and Arts with a concentration in Drama/Theatre from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, I hope to prove in this artistic portfolio that I have obtained the necessary skills at WPI to continue my peregrination to a higher level of proficiency in acting.

Coming from an artistic family, I have spent countless hours over many years of my life before college with involvement in assorted forms of performing arts including various styles of dancing, vocal training, acting workshops, and many different performances. Acting, and performing arts in general, became an immediate and everlasting passion of mine that will never waver.

Upon entering WPI as a double-major in theatre, I learned more about the art of dramatic performance than I could have ever imagined. Both through a formal classroom setting, and through heavy participation in many shows, I have achieved WPI's motto with regards to theatre: *Lehr und Kunst*, or Theory and Practice. I gained the theoretical knowledge behind a dramatic work and its production, and I gained the experience of putting theatre onto the stage.

Through acting in many productions, often as a lead role, I have developed useful skills in terms of character development and interpretation. I am able to read a script and formulate my own

methods of portraying one of its characters in a believable manner based on the character's background, interactions, thought processes, personality, and motivations.

During my time at WPI, I have studied dramatic works and theatrical or motion picture performances intensely through either direct involvement with a production, academic requirement, or leisure activities. As a result, I have gained my own personal set of theories regarding the art of acting and theatre as a whole. While they may not be widely accepted or known, they are theories that help to explain my immense passion for acting, and to justify the decisions I make when practicing the art.

Is this portfolio enough to justify honoring me the title of a successful actress? Unfortunately, it is not at all. But it does prove that I have set the initial foundations for the furthering of my artistic learning experience that will continue throughout my schooling career and throughout my life. If this project shows nothing else, it shows that I am deeply and irrevocably in love with the art of acting.

## Acknowledgements

I have heard it said a dozen times: Theatre is a collaborative effort. I would not be the person I am without theatre, nor would my experience in theatre be what it would without the partnership and advice of many of my respected theatre friends.

I would like to thank Susan Vick for her tireless work not only towards the completion of this portfolio, but towards the furtherance of my education as an aspiring actress. I appreciate that she has spent countless years bringing such a strong and professional theatre organization to WPI.

I would like to thank Erica Stone for her timely and prudent guidance and assistance, which is always a reassuring thing during a stressful process.

Finally, I would like to thank every single member of WPI's Masque. You have all created an organization that will always have a sound place in my memory and in my heart. To my fellow thespians: without all of you, I truly don't think I would be this happy.

# Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Executive Summary .....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
<b>1 The Roots of My Passion .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.2 Where My Passion Began .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2 How My Passion Flourished .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 The Process: From Auditions to Strike .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3 WPI and Theatre .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1 Theory – Beginning with the Basics .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1.1 Through the Theatre Environment .....	11
3.1.2 Through Theatre Courses.....	13
<b>3.2 Practice – The Characters that Will Always Be With Me.....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.2.1 Bower Bird or Crazies in Love.....	15
3.2.2 Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead .....	19
3.2.3 Guys and Dolls.....	24
3.2.4 The Crucible.....	31
3.2.5 Six Characters in Search of An Author.....	37
3.2.6 The Laramie Project .....	41
3.2.8 Characters Come and Go But Never Stay Far.....	43
3.2.9 A Collaborative Effort.....	46
3.2.10 Beyond Campus.....	47
<b>4 From Lifeless Lines to a Credible Character.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.1 The Crucial Role of Creating the Character.....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.1.1 Much Ado About Nothing .....	50
4.1.2 A Streetcar Named Desire.....	54
4.1.3 The Goat or Who Is Sylvia? .....	56
<b>5 My Theory of Acting.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>5.1 Art and Science as One .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>5.2 The Character, the Actor, and Life .....</b>	<b>60</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Where It May All Go From Here</b> .....	63
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	64
<b>8</b>	<b>Appendices</b> .....	64
	<b>8.1 Literature review</b> .....	64
	8.1.1 Analysis of Dramatic and Literary Works .....	65
	8.1.2 Analysis of Acting and Performance .....	83
	8.1.3 Theatre Production Design .....	89
	8.2.4 Dramaturgical Analyses.....	100
	8.1.5 Analysis of Science and Literature .....	105
	<b>8.2 Playlist</b> .....	110
	<b>8.3 Completed Theatre Course Requirements</b> .....	113
	<b>8.4 Resume</b> .....	113
	8.4.1 Acting Resume .....	114
	8.4.2 Biochemistry Resume.....	115
	8.4.3 Detailed Resume .....	116
	8.4.4 Biography .....	118
	<b>8.5 Work Log</b> .....	118
	<b>8.6 WPI Theatre Involvement</b> .....	121
	<b>8.7 Bibliography</b> .....	123



# 1 The Roots of My Passion

Pablo Picasso wrote, “Art is a lie, that leads to the truth.” I believe this quote contains the root of my passion not only for the art of acting, but for performing arts as a whole. Perhaps it is due to my fascination with the concept of human emotion: that quality which truly sets our species apart from most other life forms. Or perhaps it is due to the personal overabundance of this quality that lives within my consciousness. But whatever the reason, I have always felt the need to explore this mysterious and intriguing aspect of our species.

How is it that we’ve conditioned our individual bodies to react so immediately and so intensely to certain situations that occur? How are our emotions connected to our individual realities and environments? Of what, exactly, do emotions consist? Why do they vary so vastly from person to person? From where did our sense of morals come? How far can you push these emotions until they break the barriers in which we believe they are contained?

The answers to these questions are avidly sought by biologists, quantum physicists, psychiatrists, anthropologists and theologians alike, at this point to no concrete and proven avail. But can one only find the answers to these questions through science and logic?

After contemplating Picasso’s quote, I argue that art can be a sufficient substitute for such logic. What better way to study the emotional world of others than to *become* that person as accurately as possible? How tempting is the practice of using the concept of a “lie” to reach new and unexplored perspectives and to transfer them to others? How irresistible is the opportunity to become someone that you are not, even for a short time?

Whether I examine it with the aforementioned logic, or whether I attribute it to some unfathomable ardor that cannot be explained with words, my passion for acting is something that I cannot ignore: I require acting in order to be complete as a person.

I strive to understand this delicate and powerful art as fully as I possibly can. I strive to obtain the skills I need to become fully competent with this art form. I hope to obtain enlightenment through it. I hope to gain personal growth and enrichment through it.

I hope to find the truth, and to lead others to its light.

## **2.2 Where My Passion Began**

I've entertained the idea that my love for acting is simply a result of genetic probability and environmental influence. My family, while rather unconventional, primarily consists of serious and zealous artists.

Before my father died, I always remember him as a spiritual and artistic soul to his very core. He instilled in me an appreciation and respect for literature, and the vast variations in perspective, morals, and concepts that the art provided hidden underneath intricate plots. He instilled in me an intense love of music, for genres ranging from classical to folk to Broadway to opera. He showed me at an early age that music was an art that was capable of triggering a shocking array of emotions and reactions in a listener, and that expressing this effect was completely natural and wonderful. He taught me that art does not exist solely to entertain, but to enrich one's soul. Thus, I am an aspiring singer.

My mother fell in love with classical ballet when she was a young adult, and did not hesitate to encourage that love of dancing to emerge from within me. Ballet was my very first passion in life; I believe that in turn inspired my love of acting. My mother's very ways of living and methods of thinking

and justifying life have always been very artistic; this has always provided a very interesting contrast to the logical way my father usually explained things. Regardless, my mother taught me that emotion could also be expressed and spread through physical movement , words, and visuals. Thus, I am an aspiring dancer.

My two older brothers have also embraced this artistic environment in which they, too, were raised. My oldest brother goes to college to study classical guitar, and I could not imagine his life if it were not filled to the brim with music and deep thought. My other brother has spent a great deal of time studying visual art, and the final products of his efforts are nothing short of breath-taking.

I believe it was a combination of all of these influences that finally formed my love of performance art. I grew up on stage, expressing myself and the art I was studying through physical movement and through song. It was easy to translate this expression through movement and through song into expression through words and physicality. It felt natural to crave art and to long to utilize it as a medium of self-expression. Through art, I found out a great deal about myself. It became one of the factors of life that made life worth living.

Thus, I am an aspiring actress.

Thus, I am an aspiring artist.

## **1.2 How My Passion Flourished**

I was immersed in the performing arts from a very young age. My first experience with the stage, of course, was through dancing. I performed with the Performing Arts School of Worcester, now Ballet Arts Worcester, under the direction of Jennifer Agbay. I studied many forms of dance, including ballet, modern, jazz, hip hop, character and choreography, very intensely. I performed in the studios rendition of *The Nutcracker* for fourteen years, as well as various annual galas and ballets. A great

amount of acting was required to portray characters in these productions; although it was a very different type of acting from that which I now study, as it involved no words, but only movement.



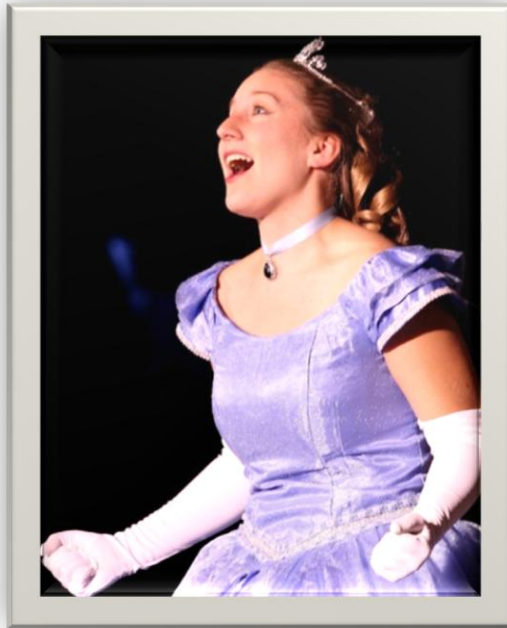
My career in classical ballet was a huge contributing factor to my love of acting.

I studied all three aspects of musical theatre through the Watchusett Theatre Company summer programs in my pre-teen years. There, I was trained in vocals, dancing, stage presence, acting skills, improvisation and various types of art. The program undoubtedly instilled in me my love of musicals.

My high school years saw the continuation of my study of classical ballet and associated performances, participation in various local and state-wide choruses, and private vocal lessons with professional instructors. I also experienced my first meeting with bona fide acting through my appearances as Irene Molloy in Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, Gwendolen Fairfax in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and the title character in the musical *Cinderella*.



In Auburn High School's 2008 performance of *Cinderella*, the quiet young woman slaves over housework while her stepfamily relaxes.



Cinderella is later amazed at the miraculous transformation that her fairy godmother has conjured.

I had discovered the drug that is acting, and I knew then that the art would play a crucial role throughout the rest of my life.

These years also saw my internal struggle to choose a college major. While I am certainly passionate about theatre, I also harbor a deep fascination and passion for science, biochemistry in particular. Yet singing, dancing, and acting, are just as much a part of me as science, and they act as vessels through which I may express my more artistic side. After much consideration, I succumbed to my desire for both, and realized that however difficult and risky it would be, I had no choice but to pursue a double-major in biochemistry and theatre. This is the very reason that I chose WPI, which prides itself on rich and flourishing humanities as well as admirable scientific and engineering prowess. Not only can WPI provide me with exceptional training in biochemistry, both in terms of technical skill and scientific

thought processes, but it can provide a wonderful array of venerable humanities and arts to satisfy my emotional side. Honestly, I could not think of a more perfect place to hone my passions in life.

On entering WPI, I began the best period of my life to date.

## **2 The Process: From Auditions to Strike**

One of the most fundamental and essential aspects that I've gained through my involvement in WPI theatre is a solid familiarity with the structural process of a show, from the preparation for auditions to the end of strike. While this process will certainly vary according to the specific school or company working on the show, or even according to the show itself, the foundational structure is universally recognizable, and I have developed skills that will help me with the process no matter where my theatrical whims may take me.

Once a show is announced, I've found it best to read the script. This is not always possible due to availability of said script or the amount of time before auditions. At the very least, reading reviews and synopses on the script or performances of the show will give a sense of the setting, characters, mood, and themes. Understanding the general "feel" of the play will assist me through the audition process.

Knowledge of the script is a great help when selecting an audition piece. When I was in my early terms at WPI, I remember attending an audition, picking a random script right there, and more or less doing a cold reading of an irrelevant monologue. Some people do this frequently and find great success. But I've found, at least personally, that putting more care into the selection of an audition piece has yielded its rewards.

Currently, the majority of the time, I familiarize myself generally with the play for which I am auditioning. I choose an audition piece either by the same playwright, or with the same mood as the character for whom I am auditioning (I have, however, been advised not to pick a song straight from the play for which I will be auditioning). For example, when auditioning for Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*, I knew that this songwriter has a very specific musical style that is usually accompanied by a very specialized type of acting. Therefore, I chose to audition with a song from his equally eccentric musical *Company*. Conversely, when auditioning for Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, I used one of Blanche DuBois' monologues from Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. I hoped to get cast as Abigail Williams. This monologue was not by the same author, but both women are very strong-minded, dramatically opinionated, and perhaps just a little mentally unstable. Using monologues by the same playwright or in the appropriate style for the prospective show will prove to the director that I have the acting skills required for the desired role, and may put me ahead of other actors.

I have also found, although it is not necessary and sometimes considered detrimental to the audition, that memorizing my audition monologue is very personally crucial. I feel that my skills as an actor take a giant transformation as I shift from reading the words off of a piece of paper to expressing them simply from my memory. A huge part of acting involves one's hands, facial expressions, and sometimes eye contact. I feel as if I cannot put the full life and passion into a piece until I can utilize these crucial tools, and thus memorization is a simple necessity to an audition in my opinion. This necessity is something I have to live without, however, when asked to do a cold reading during an audition or a callback. In this case, it is best to ask the director for the context of the particular scene and the background and brief motivations of the character. If I haven't read the play, this is very important as without asking these things, I run the risk of completely misinterpreting the character. In these cases, it is best to read through the scene quickly, and employ the very best acting skills that a cold reading can allow.



Waiting for a cast list to be released is one of the most excruciating experiences known to me. I don't believe any more must be said on the subject.

Perhaps an even more excruciating experience is the disappointment that the list could potentially bring. Seeing my name next to my dream character is simply elating! But seeing the opposite brings a pang of sadness that in my personal experience is indescribable. The first time I failed to get cast in a show altogether, I took it as a personal insult to my talent as an actress; but I've since learned that this is not necessarily a reflection of my overall talent, but simply the details of that talent relative to the characters available and the talent of the other actors who've auditioned. Rejection is, unfortunately, a huge part of the world of theatre, and the moment I accepted that is the moment that I gained a very valuable emotional buffer within this sometimes competitive art.

An interesting middle-ground is reached when I am cast, but as a character less central than the role for which I had hoped. I have of course experienced this; and as difficult as it is, I have learned that if I really love theatre I should be grateful for any role I am granted and I should put forth my utmost dedication to support the collaborative effort of theatre.

Once cast, the first read-through is always a much-anticipated event for me. Introduction to the rest of the actors, as well as the script itself, undoubtedly brings about the sense that something great is beginning. During this rehearsal, in which all actors and the director are simply sitting at a table, I have always favored using maximum vocal acting right away, although some deem this unnecessary for this initial rehearsal. This initial rehearsal is crucial to the process of rehearsing the entire performance. It is critical for each actor to listen to the whole play at least once through, in order to have an understanding of the context of each appearance.

The subsequent rehearsals, with script in hand, serve as the rough construction of the underlying structure of the play. In my experience, most directors allow the actors to formulate their

own blocking, in the hope that it will appear more natural. Most character development is done when I have achieved the great obstacle of line memorization. Without the crutch of a script in hand, an exciting period of creation begins. Now, I can experiment with full interaction with other characters, free use of facial expression, and physical upper body movement. Here is when I may, along with the director, truly question my character's motivations and translate them into believable acting. This is the time when my part in the performance is delicately refined.

I have found that the point in the production process when props, costumes, sound effects, set pieces, and lighting are introduced unfailingly sets this refinement back temporarily. I've witnessed issues emerge as certain cues or coordinated events fail, which must be meticulously corrected. Despite minor setbacks, however, the additions of these theatrical factors are overall very useful to me, as it makes my scenes feel more real. I've found that once these imperfections are perfected, all involved with the performance attempt to keep it running precisely similar each night.

But, as we all know, theatre is an art that is always changing. Come opening night, and all nights following, sound cues will fail, props will break, lines will get confused. Fortunately, not all mistakes have a negative effect on the show: some mistakes end up enhancing the scene or further developing a character. Some mistakes fit the show so well that they end up becoming a permanent part! This is perhaps one of the most luring aspects of theatre. Live performance is not a stagnant art. Theatre is alive and growing and responsive.

Closing night brings both a feeling of relief and accomplishment, but also great sadness and despair. And although it is thought that the characters we spend months interpreting and portraying never really leave us, experiencing the conclusion of a show is like saying goodbye to a good friend, knowing that you will never see them again. This feeling is most apparent at the beginnings of strike, when the hammers and drills begin to tear apart the set, the electricians dismantle the lighting, and the

actors hand back their costumes. But theatre is an art form that is unique and effective because it is only done live; and sooner or later, one show must be put to rest so another can take its place.

### **3 WPI and Theatre**

Worcester Polytechnic Institute prides itself on its unique system of learning and its steadfast motto: *Lehr und Kunst*, which is German for “Theory and Practice.” WPI believes that it is crucial for a student to learn not only the theoretical knowledge behind their area of study, but also how to physically put to work those concepts that they strive to understand. Through WPI, my education in theatre and acting, although it is a subject very different from engineering fields, has been a perfect example of this effective method of learning.

#### **3.1 Theory – Beginning with the Basics**

A great deal of what I’ve learned through WPI theatre has been not only through a formal classroom setting, but also from simply observing the passionate and dedicated thespians that have been working diligently on theatrical endeavors around me.

##### **3.1.1 Through the Theatre Environment**

Upon entering the world of WPI theatre, one of the biggest changes in the environment I noticed compared to my high school experience was the fact that most theatre events were almost completely student-run. I was fascinated by the fact that the students here were so fervent about the

art of theatre that they needed no superficial guidance in achieving its successful execution. I knew immediately that this was the perfect environment in which to hone my knowledge of theatre.

Up until my first year at WPI, I had no idea as to the intense work that went into a show from a multitude of different positions. I had always just acted. Quite honestly, I was under the impression that acting was all there was. I believed that the set magically came into existence, that the lights hung themselves, and that the production needed no overall management. Coming to WPI, where most aspects of the theatre are student-run, I could not have been more severely awakened to the reality of the essential collaborative effort of theatre. Acting is only a small part in a show that requires stage managers, set designers, lighting designers, board operators, producers and so many more critical positions. I have gained immense respect for every single person that works on a production. Every role in the process of putting on a show is important and crucial.

My induction into Alpha Psi Omega, the National Dramatic Honor Society, during my sophomore year even further opened me to the bonds and teamwork that emerge when students come together for the laborious and beautiful task of creating a show from nothing.



My induction into Alpha Psi Omega contributed greatly to my overall knowledge of theatre.

There were deeper layers of passion within WPI's theatre than I could imagine, and I am only just beginning to fully realize the extent and value of the alliance and relationships that are at the core of a theatre company.

### **3.1.2 Through Theatre Courses**

Despite the fact that WPI is an engineering school, the humanities and arts classes that I have chosen to take were exceptionally fascinating and immensely informative. Because the degree for which I am working is actually a degree in Humanities and Arts with a concentration in drama/theatre, I was able to take a wide variety of different English and Humanities classes.

I took a class that was based on the works of Shakespeare that focused on the concept of love. This class aimed at analyzing Shakespeare's works on a very deep level using the literary tools of symbolism, allegory, and foreshadowing. From this course, I learned to "read between the lines," and to examine works of drama in a very fundamental and thematic way. These practices helped with my acting skills, as I am now able to pick apart a script to understand not only the particular character that I hope to depict, but also the essence of the play as a whole.

Of course, I took many classes that were centered around theatre itself. Some classes were based on the technical aspects of theatre. Here is where I also gained insight into the tremendous effort put into a show by all manner of production, technical and artistic positions. Subjects ranged from costume design, to set and light design, to stage managing, directing, acting, and playwriting. I learned the basics of the roles of each position, and even tried my hand at a few of them. Another course involved analyzing and critiquing modern dramatic works, and sought to instill in me even more efficient methods of interpreting dramatic texts. Another class, with similar goals, limited its play selection to

American drama. I am confident that I am capable of understanding and appreciating great works of drama.

I have taken a class that did not center on theatre, but contained a running theme of the relationship between art and science. Focusing on the way science and scientists are viewed through literature, the class involved the scrutiny of a selection of plays and novels, and helped to further develop my personal appreciation of the similarities and differences of these two concepts. This class provided me a pragmatic view not only of theatre, art, and science, but of life in general.

Section 7.2 of the Appendices documents a sample of the work achieved in these classes. Figure 7.4 of the Appendices provides an overview of the courses taken thus far to satisfy my degree in Humanities and Arts with a concentration in Drama/Theatre.

### **3.2 Practice – The Characters that Will Always Be With Me**

WPI theatre has given me the opportunity to perform a wide variety of characters. Each of these characters has provided me with new perspectives, new challenges, new acting methods, skills in analyzing dramatic works, and insight into myself and the human condition.

### 3.2.1 Bower Bird or Crazies in Love

MW Repertory Theatre  
A-term 2008  
Written by Shannon “Haz” Harrower  
Directed by Joel Sutherland  
Produced by Cara Marcy  
Character: Katina Harley

As a frightened freshman immersed in an uncharted and unfamiliar environment, I could not have asked for a more successful and fulfilling debut into WPI theatre than I found through local playwright Haz Harrower’s *Bower Bird or Crazies in Love*. This was the piece that unearthed my passion for acting, and presented to me the breadth of alien personalities that I possessed the capability of assuming on stage.

I had the pleasure of portraying Katina Harley, a self-deprecating bachelorette seeking therapy for her desperate (and somewhat pathetic) attachment to her ex-boyfriend, who conveniently forgot to inform her of his own marriage for a few years. The plot finds its core as she falls for Aiden, a sweet man with an extraordinary case of obsessive compulsive disorder and a fierce unwillingness to commit to a relationship, and one can guess as to the magnitude of conflict that inevitably ensues. The play provides a representation of two characters that society would deem too strange and socially unacceptable; simply, they would be called “crazy.” Aiden and Katina initially attempt to hide their burdensome quirks from one another, only to have them eventually and unintentionally revealed, creating a whole new set of issues. Katina eventually realizes that, like the neurotic Bower bird, Aiden’s unusual habits fundamentally exhibit an expression of affection and a need for recognition. It is only upon acceptance of this fact that the two can live in functional co-existence. The work suggests that possessing characteristics that are considered outliers from the norm cannot be fixed or hidden, but must be embraced and accepted. That is the only way to be truly happy with oneself and others.

*Bower Bird* creates characters with traits that are brought to an almost unrealistic extreme, to the point where they serve as subdued caricatures or stock characters. I am reminded of the acting theories of Bertolt Brecht. Brecht believed that, because theatre was meant to cause an audience to leave a performance pondering the ideas with which they were presented, the audience should be periodically reminded that, when they are watching a play, that they are not in fact watching reality, but a re-creation of reality: “If the audience was to be kept from falling into a collective dream with the actors, a separation between the actor and his role was not only necessary, but needed reinforcement. Brecht is asking audiences to use their disbelief, exercise their skepticism, and resist the process of identification” (Brestoff, 148). The audience will therefore retain the knowledge that they are viewing stock characters, which will hopefully more effectively communicate the overall themes of the play.

When portraying Katina Harley, my intonations, physical mannerisms, facial expressions, and emotional reactions were over-exaggerated and “larger than life” with the intention of representing a character that is undeniably emotionally unstable.



Katina’s therapist chastises her for obtrusively breaking one of the rules that is meant to help her get over her ex. Katina no doubt saw the spray bottle multiple times throughout





After a few too many glasses of wine, Katina's histrionic tendencies begin to reveal themselves to a nervous and skeptical Aiden.



Much to her therapist's dismay and humiliation, Katina insists on demonstrating in detail the logistics of her long-awaited sexual escapades with Aiden.



Both characters unexpectedly and rashly give in to their sexual and emotional frustrations, despite having failed to sort out all communication issues.

Because the character of Katina is so unrealistically histrionic, it was sometimes difficult to find a balance between the comical aspects of her personality, and the serious, emotional ones. Despite the fact that Katina is a humorous stock character, I still had to represent her as a somewhat believable character at times when she was genuinely hurt or upset. A constant evaluation of the current situation the character is in and her assumed emotional and physical reaction, along with great focus going back and forth between comical and dramatic scenes, allowed me to effectively depict a character whose emotions vary greatly throughout the play.

Through this piece, I have gained experience in perhaps one of the most important actors' exercises I will come across in my life. One day during rehearsal, at the completion of a particular scene, director Joel Sutherland addressed me and said, "That last line. Do it differently." Despite my confusion as to the lack of any clarifying instructions, I said the line again tepidly, but with a slightly nuanced

intonation. “Do it differently again,” he said, and I continued to say the line over and over, each time with a different inflection and tone. The line suggested something different every time! To my surprise, one single line can mean so many different things depending on how an actor chooses to deliver it. One single line can say so much about a particular character, if given enough thought into its performance. And thus, I began to understand how complex and fascinating the study of acting really is.

### 3.2.2 Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead

Masque  
C-term 2009  
Written by Bert V. Royal  
Directed by Richard Pavis  
Produced by Andrew Wilkins  
Character: Trisha

If I had thought that *Bower Bird* had subjected me to performing the most uncomfortable actions on stage that I would ever experience, I certainly had no idea what was in store for me. Bert V. Royal’s *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* is not only one of the wittiest and most poignant plays that I will ever come across, but it has allowed me to morph into a character with whom I could originally find no relation or sympathy and whose actions and motivations I didn’t believe I could ever understand.

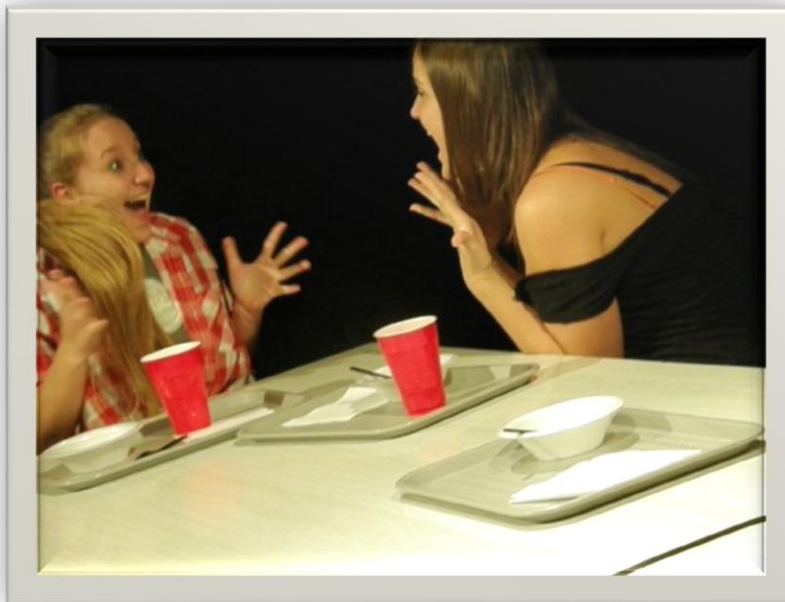
The overall plot deals with the characters of the Charlie Brown comic strip with a twist: they are grown up and very, very lost, as can be proven by one of Van’s calm proclamations: “I think I’d kind of like to be nothingness. Because at least nothing is something, right?” The play opens with the equivalent of Charlie Brown proclaiming that his dog has died of rabies, but not after viciously murdering a small yellow bird. The characters have forgotten any semblance of their values, and have taken to indulging in excessive drug and alcohol use, displaying homophobic tendencies, ridiculing those they don’t

understand, and solving their problems via a combination of violence and the aforementioned vices. Most disturbingly, however, is the fact that each character is so obsessed with being viewed in a particular “socially acceptable” way that they constantly express themselves in false ways and hide in fear behind a façade of arrogance and hatred towards those who do not follow the social “standards.” The intensity of these issues culminate when Matt, unable to cope with the deviation from the façade presented by the newly formed homosexual relationship between CB and Beethoven, breaks Beethoven’s hands after brutally verbally berating him, barring him from his passion of piano-playing, resulting in Beethoven’s suicide. This in turn shocks the rest of the characters into a deep personal introspection. I was elated to play Trisha, Royal’s equivalent of “Peppermint Patty,” a caddy, superficial alcoholic who finds joy in excessive sexual promiscuity and the verbal bashing of others over any flaw. Trisha serves as a dynamic character, a seemingly static personality that undergoes an emotional transformation throughout the play.

This play is again reminiscent of Brecht’s theories, as the characters are, quite literally, cartoons that have been personified. Therefore, the physical actions that I employed to represent Trisha were exaggerated to an unrealistic point.



Trisha fully believes that if she was only placed with the correct professor, her full chest alone would earn her an A without any effort.



Trisha and her best friend Marcy are excessively elated that they've spoken the same phrase simultaneously without premeditation.



Trisha gets uncontrollably intoxicated at a party and obtrusively calls Beethoven out with regards to his homosexuality.

The characters are so heavily stereotyped that it is downright shocking when the play takes a sudden mid-way shift into a very serious and depressing drama following Beethoven's suicide. This shift in plot called for an equally drastic shift in acting styles.



Trisha confesses to the class her repressed and sober thoughts regarding Beethoven's recent suicide.

Acting requires assuming all of the traits, mannerisms, and dealings of another person; sometimes these things can be vulgar and unfavorable. In *Dog Sees God*, I, as well as the rest of the cast, was forced to say and do things that I consider repugnant and inhumane. Although it was Trisha who ridiculed an overweight girl, who spoke of sex in a crude and careless manner, who drank in school and possessed no regard to the well-being of others, I was the person physically personifying these things. Does that make me a lesser person? Should I feel guilt for these things which I consider horrific? No. After contemplation I feel secure in the fact that theatre is partly meant to put a mirror up to the audience and force them to acknowledge horrible truths about life that are often ignored. Often in life, these terrible things are present all around, and people choose to ignore them instead of correcting them. And it takes a shocking and horrific play to inspire viewers to avoid averting their eyes from tragedy. Therefore, the dishonorable actions an actor commits on stage is simply the actor's way of

becoming a vessel through which the character may be presented to the audience, and through which the audience may be brought to enlightenment by that character.

The most valuable thing I acquired from this play would be the skills I gained in terms of character analysis. I found through direction during rehearsals and Richard Pavis' discussions on our characters that, while on the exterior they seem one-dimensional and dishonorable, they are in fact very complex characters that are merely veiling themselves in simplicity. Does Trisha sleep with many men because sex means nothing to her, or because her low self-esteem causes her to think that's the only way men will accept her? Does she ridicule overweight girls because she truly thinks they are unattractive, or because she believes it will divert her own feelings of self-deprecation? Does she truly care nothing for the emotions of others, or is she too vulnerable to let down her emotional defenses? I, personally, will never be able to answer these types of questions for certain, but they allow me to begin to form sympathy for the character. They give me my own justification for her actions and for her eventual shift in emotional state. Examining the inner workings of a character outside of what is presented in the script is a crucial exercise in creating a believable portrayal of that character.

### 3.2.3 Guys and Dolls

VOX  
A-term 2010  
Words and Lyrics by Frank Loesser  
Directed by Kristy Chambrelli  
Produced by John Delorey  
Character: Sarah Brown

I suppose I'll never again get the chance to transport back to the bustling streets of New York City in the 1950's, alive with gamblers, beggars, showgirls, drinking, nightclubs and amusement. Then again, Miss Sarah Brown, Sergeant of the Christian Missionary, will hardly stand for such blasphemy.



Portraying Sarah Brown in Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls* was quite the introduction into WPI's musical theatre world. This musical, despite an overall comic and light-hearted mood, introduces some serious and surprisingly provocative themes underneath its witty dialogue and saccharine melodies.

As he avidly avoids the pleas of his anxious fiancé of fourteen years, Nathan Detroit, the most well-known crap game holder around, hurries to find cash for a new game location. He believes he finds his solution in a heavy bet with Sky Masterson, a man notorious for gambling exorbitantly on strange situations. Unfortunately, the bet requires Sky to convince the skeptical Miss Sarah to go on a date with him to Cuba. The four characters fall in love and experience all manner of tribulations before settling into a predictably happy ending.

Despite this rather trite plot line, *Guys and Dolls* explores some interesting issues, especially when it comes to the relationship between genders. Throughout the story, Sarah and Miss Adelaide (Nathan's fiancée) periodically complain that their men's lives are unstructured and unacceptable for marriage. Sarah proclaims that she has her ideal man completely preconceived in the song, "I'll Know," while Miss Adelaide expresses that she is convinced that all of her troubles stem from Nathan's inability to commit in "Adelaide's Lament." Meanwhile, the men of the show communicate that a man loses his personality and becomes obsequious when he's "mixed up" with a woman in the song "Guys and Dolls." The women even plainly state that they intend to marry their men and subsequently change everything about them in "Marry the Man Today." The women seem to carry through with their own plans and prove the men correct upon the conclusion of the show. The two couples are happily married, but Nathan and Sky have given up their lives of gambling to become a newspaper salesman and missionary, respectively. This "battle of the sexes" regarding personal sacrifice and uneven emotional power that is at the core of *Guys and Dolls* is a subject that is prevalent even with today's modern couples.

Sarah Brown is another character whose motivations required great contemplation on my part. She begins the play with a very concrete and unwavering mindset and, through an uncertain path, she

forms a drastically different point of view. Because she seems to juggle between the desire to gravitate towards Sky and his unknown world of gambling, and to stay true to her militantly planned out lifestyle, it was sometimes unclear as to how she would react to a certain situation. For example, when Sky first communicates with her, he tends to dominate the conversation, even correcting Sarah when she misspeaks. Would Sarah seem upset by this, simply taken aback, or even impressed that he chose to defy her? The script seems to suggest that Sarah begins to fall for Sky as he convinces her that one's true love should come as a surprise, opposing her very pre-designed notions of relationships. So, when he suddenly kisses her, should she be flustered, confused or downright furious? When she agrees to accompany him to Cuba simply because he promised her a dire favor, should she act complacent or irritated during the trip? When Sarah is sure that Sky has been using her to further himself in the gambling world, should Sarah become furious or heart-broken at the sound of his name? These are questions that I felt were far too open to interpretation.

After several discussions with the production's dramaturg, I developed my own interpretation of an emotional timeline for Sarah Brown that would serve as a guideline for her reactions throughout the show.

Initially, she is steadfast in her lifestyle of missionary work and stringent order. When Sky comes along, he immediately challenges her views, which intrigues her more than angers her. But she won't show this just yet; she hides it beneath a façade of sternness and indifference. His kiss, which indeed catches her off guard, finally knocks her perceptions off balance. While she keeps her guards intact, she is officially torn. When Sarah inadvertently becomes uncontrollably intoxicated in Havana, she allows her true emotions to surface. She flirts with Sky and makes no attempt to mask the fact that she is in love with him, and that he makes her feel like a better person ("If I Were a Bell"). She immediately professes her newfound love to Sky openly. Later, when Sky upsets her, she is truly hurt and forlorn, but reverts back to her pretense of apathy. This strong emotion leaks through at times, until

she converses with Adelaide and she and Sky get married and all is cheerful again. Creating my own internal monologue for the character of Sarah Brown allowed me to react appropriately to the situations in which she finds herself.



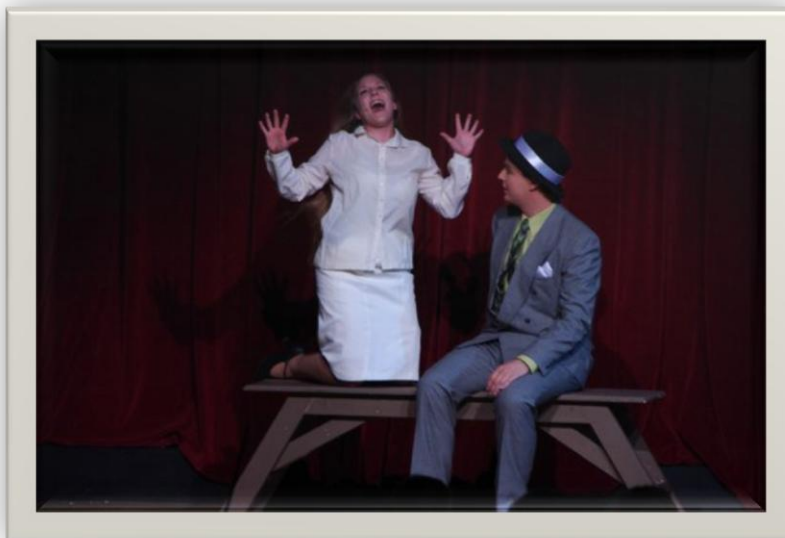
Missionary Sergeant Sarah Brown fervently preaches her faith to the wild, raucous, gambling passerby's of New York.



As Sky shares with Sarah his starkly contrasting views on love, Sarah looks on with incredulous skepticism.



Sarah's militant lifestyle is thrown off balance by the bold Sky Masterson. His surprising kiss sets their shaky romance in motion.



Sarah finally lets her defenses down with the help of inebriation, proclaiming to Sky and the world that she is in love.



After a truly chaotic (and slightly dangerous) night in the lively clubs of Havana, Sky and Sarah finally admit their love for one another.



After an event that suggested that Sky had been using Sarah, her godfather Arvide attempts to convince her that despite current circumstances, Sky is the man for her.



Sarah and Miss Adelaide resolve to marry their rogue men, but plan to mold them into ideal husbands shortly afterwards.



Whether one can argue that the men's "positive" transformations reflect too much power on the women's part, the four main characters conclude the show as happily married couples.

### 3.2.4 The Crucible

Masque  
B-term 2009  
Written by Arthur Miller  
Directed by Steven Vessella  
Produced by Rick Desilets  
Character: Abigail Williams

It is an understatement to say that it was an honor to perform in one of Arthur Miller's most famous and influential dramatic works. *The Crucible* is a dark and intense story of intolerance, jealousy, revenge, and deceit. Set in an early Puritan society in seventeenth century, the play documents the workings of a culture where religion and law are one. A stark dichotomy of "good" or "evil" was so prevalent in the culture of the play's world that it dictated the entire governmental and social structure of the town. When Abigail Williams, a girl with no social prowess and a jealous grudge against her love's wife, decides to take advantage of the town's precarious and dangerous balance, all havoc breaks loose.

After being accused of conducting light witchcraft in the woods one night, Abigail begins to spin an increasingly elaborate tale to get herself out of trouble. She soon realizes that there is power to be found in such lies, and proceeds to accuse a great number of townspeople of conducting witchcraft. She uses this tactic against John Proctor's wife, in the hope that he will come to her upon the removal of his wife. Her lies create hysteria, resulting not only in the death of dozens of townspeople and John Proctor's wife, but of John Proctor himself. The tale warns of a society that is overly pious and reliant on personal reputation and honor.

Abigail is perhaps the most enjoyable character I have had the pleasure of performing. She is the very essence of an evil character. Her motivations are driven by what appears to be nothing but revenge and vindictiveness. She is the embodiment of a villain, which is the type of character that helps to make a play's messages quite clear.

While Abigail is undeniably malevolent, her exact motivations were lost to me when rehearsals first began. It must take some very strong emotions to commit the types of crimes that Abigail was responsible for, but what circumstances or states of mind would drive a person to such things? There are several theories that I experimented with in my attempts to portray Abigail.

Abigail is uneducated and of a lower class than her town feels is acceptable for social respect. She is an orphan, and obviously never received a proper upbringing. It is possible that the character is simply ignorant and unaware of the results of her rash actions, much like a young child who has not yet learned the concept of cause and effect. I neglected that theory, however, as it would have presented the character as weak and not malicious. Abigail's crimes may have solely been the result of her jealousy regarding John Proctor's neglect to pay attention to her after their affair. Her actions may have only meant to send Proctor's wife to jail. But if this were the case, Abigail would have stopped her treachery after this goal was achieved. Abigail's motivations could have been driven completely by her desire for power over the society, which certainly seems plausible. On a different note, it is possible that she possessed no interest in any of the aforementioned goals, but created havoc out of curiosity, purposely setting everything off balance simply to see what would happen. Such a nonchalant motivation for a truly horrible crime seemed the most terrible and appealing of the theories with which I was working. In portraying Abigail, I attempted to draw inspiration from all of these proposed motivations. I truly felt evil through the play which, strangely, was a very rewarding experience.





As a room full of Salem's inhabitants panic about the recent rumors of witchcraft, Abigail remains unaffected. She offered the rumors falsely, and now calmly ponders her next vindictive move as the town disintegrates into calamity around her.



Abigail retaliates as John Proctor, the man after whom she lusts, resists her manipulative charms, despite the fact that the desire for his affection was the main impetus of her evil actions.



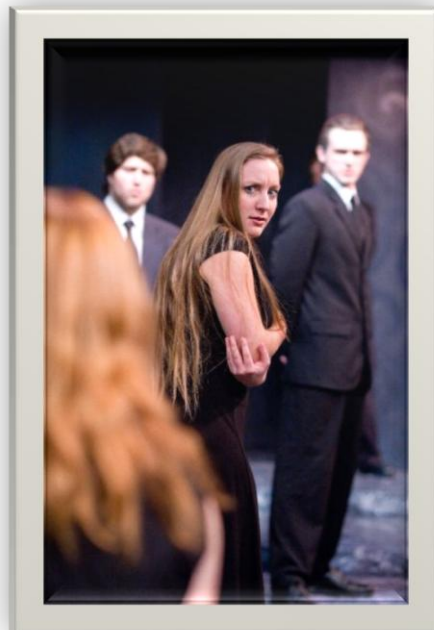
After realizing how great an effect her lies could have upon Salem, Abigail cleverly begins to feign visions of God that provide her with “incriminating” information.



Sensing that those around her are fooled by her performance, Abigail heightens her scheming act and declares that her visions have betrayed various townspeople and their association with the devil.



During the trial regarding her accusations of John Proctor, Abigail sits with her brainwashed minions and seethes as the judge questions her honor. She is always angry when her plan does not carry out.



Sensing that her story is losing credibility in court, and unwilling to admit defeat after her carefully contrived plan, Abigail feigns another devilish attack, willing her cohorts to play along.



After another dedicated and manipulative performance, Abigail has broken the confidence of those that has spoken against her. She is once again vindicated in her deceit.

The concept of examining a character's rudimentary motivations is reminiscent of the Meisner method of acting. On the methods of Meisner, Richard Brestoff writes:

Meisner likens the emotional life of the character to a river, and the text, he says, rides on top of it like a canoe. If we carry this analogy further, we might say that the banks of the river, the boundaries that determine the river's direction, are the circumstances. This image makes clear that dialogue must come from feeling and circumstance. When emotion is truly flowing between actors on the stage, everyone involved, including the audience, can feel the "undercurrent." (Brestoff, 135)

Examining the true motivations of the character allows the actor to choose reactions that are genuine and believable, and help to solidly convince the audience of the message that is being presented. This is a valuable skill that I have taken away from WPI's successful performance of *The Crucible*.

### 3.2.5 Six Characters in Search of An Author

Masque  
B-term 2011  
Written by Luigi Pirandello, Adapted by Ben Laverriere  
Directed by Joel Sutherland  
Produced by Tristan Spoor  
Character: The Mother

Theatre, at least in my personal opinion, is meant to challenge our views, cause us to ponder our own lives and beliefs, and to set our realities just a bit off balance. So what an honor it is to perform in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*! This is the first play in which I have been involved that has so blatantly shattered the fourth wall between imagination and reality. To me, it has brought theatre even closer to its audience than the physical confinement of the Little Theatre ever could. It has brought theatre into the very lives of the people who observe it.

This play was unlike any I had seen before. It combined supernaturalism, symbolism, wisdom, and philosophy in a truly moving way, and it is certainly a play that will stay close to my heart.

Beginning as if the audience were sitting in on a theatre company's normal nightly rehearsal, the play begins as six mysterious figures appear in front of the actors, willing the director to adopt and perform their dark story. As incredulity mounts, questions regarding the lines between fantasy and reality emerge, as well as debates of whether the actor or the character is truer and more alive. As the actors succumb and become immersed in the tragic story in which the characters are forever trapped, the family's horror mounts in a terrible climax and they disappear, leaving the company wondering what is real and what is imaginary anymore.

Having a decent amount of experience in playing different types of characters, the role of "The Mother" in Pirandello's masterpiece was not perhaps among the most exciting roles in my acting experience; but it was certainly one of my most important.

In terms of the play itself, The Mother is the personification of grief, sadness, and motherhood. She cares so deeply for her children, that her lugubrious exterior reflecting the tragedy that has befallen them is the extent of her character. While an unpleasant concept, The Mother represents an inevitable part of life, with which every audience member who witnesses an actor's performance of her character will be able to identify and sympathize.

In terms of my own life, The Mother has given me perspective on my own family. Growing up in a familial environment that is startlingly similar to that of the characters', I've never really attempted to view the tragic events of my own family from my mother's eyes. Instead, I, like each of the characters, sought comfort in blaming others for day-to-day misfortunes. But a mother must not only feel her own grief, but that of each member of the family. I've never realized what a burden that must be. Effectively assuming the correct interpretation of The Mother required thought into the situations, emotions, and thoughts of the character, as well as very important direction by Joel Sutherland through a deep and intellectual discussion of the play as a whole, and each of the character's roles within it.



Although meager, ashamed, and severely depressed, "The Mother" adores her children and becomes defensive when the actors laugh at them and insult their existence.



As her oldest daughter carelessly patronizes her, “The Mother” clings hopelessly onto her infant child, the only member of her family that does not resent her for their tragic lives.



Ashamed of herself and the current state of her family, “The Mother” cannot stand to have her veil removed and her face revealed.



“The Mother” lives in constant pain and torment, and must be forced to experience her daughter’s sexual assault over and over forever.

This was a play in which drawing from my own emotional experiences helped greatly in expressing real emotions on stage. On this subject, Lee Strasburg wrote:

The human being who acts is the human being who lives. That is a terrifying circumstance. Essentially the actor acts a fiction, a dream; in life the stimuli to which we respond are always real. The actor must constantly respond to stimuli that are imaginary. And yet this must happen not only just as it happens in life, but actually more fully and more expressively. Although the actor can do things in life quite easily, when he has to do the same things on the stage under fictitious conditions he has difficulty because he is not equipped as a human being merely to playact at imitating life. He must somehow believe. He must somehow be able to convince himself of the rightness of what he is doing in order to do things fully on the stage (Cole, et. al, 625).



While it is perhaps not personally healthy, thinking about my own family's similar troubles helped immensely in achieving the level of blatant sorrow that is necessary when depicting "The Mother." I have certainly found, especially through *Six Characters in Search of An Author*, that while attempting to immerse oneself in the background and thoughts of the character is an admirable skill, sometimes utilizing parallel personal experiences is just as effective.

### 3.2.6 The Laramie Project

Masque

C-term 2011

Written by Moise Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project

Directed by Megan Faulkner

Produced by Ben Laverriere

Character: Rebecca Hillicker and Romaine Patterson

The Tectonic Theatre Company's *The Laramie Project* provided me an experience which I had previously never encountered. Based on real interviews with inhabitants of Laramie, Wyoming, after a young man was brutally beaten to death for being gay, the show consisted mostly of a series of monologues portraying over seventy different characters.

The challenge provided by this show was quite obvious. One actor in the show is meant to portray multiple characters whose personalities vary widely from one another. Not only did I have to grasp multiple separate personas, but I had to switch back and forth between the characters quite rapidly while still maintaining no cross between them.

The two main characters that I was assigned were substantially diverse. Rebecca Hillicker, a passionate college drama teacher who is always seeking ways to improve the experiences of her students, is reserved and level-headed. Conversely, Romaine Patterson, a twenty-one-year-old lesbian and aspiring rock star, will obtrusively defend her friends against all confrontation.



Rebecca Hillicker is passionate but rational and possesses a reserved personality as well as some radical ideas.



Conversely, Romaine Patterson is outspoken and confident, willing to take on personal confrontation to defend her friend Matthew.

These two characters were fascinating to play, as they both provide insight into how the people of Laramie dealt with Matthew's death, but the ways in which the two women went about it are starkly contrasting. *The Laramie Project* has allowed me to gain the skill of portraying multiple characters successfully, and of transitioning between them without any deficit to the characters.

### 3.2.8 Characters Come and Go But Never Stay Far

I have had the pleasure of playing many diverse characters through my time thus far in WPI theatre. Each has brought a new skill set to my knowledge of acting, and each will always have a sound place within my memories of undergraduate theatre.

New Voices 27 brought me *A Letter Unsent*, a poignant play by local playwright Tofer Carlson. Here, I played a thoughtful waitress, grieving over the death of her best friend as she indulges in bitter-sweet flashbacks through their lives together.

In the summer of 2008, I played one of my favorite characters in *Book of Liz*, a comedy by David Sedaris. I played *Elizabeth Donderstock*, a naïve and kind woman from an Amish community who is thrust into a modern day society in search of a better life. It was interesting to portray a character to whom the everyday workings of our modern lives seemed shocking and blasphemous.

New Voices 28 gave me another of my most cherished roles. In a short play, *Get me to the Church on Time* by Michael Ciaraldi, I played an obnoxiously overbearing bride who has been kidnapped and held hostage by her friends before her wedding. Ironically, her fiancée is tied up in the next room as well. The two bicker and fight their way out of imprisonment and into wedded bliss, learning a valuable lesson of cooperation along the way.

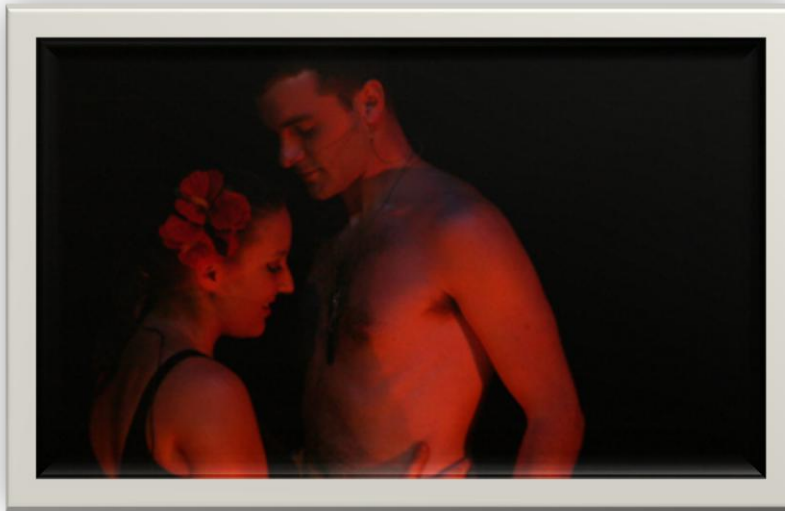
VOX's 2009 winter cabaret featured selections from the musical *Chicago*, in which I was cast in *The Cell Block Tango* as "Lipshitz."



The six “Merry Murderesses” justify the reasons behind the cold-blooded murders of their husbands.

Angry that her husband has gone off on an artistic journey to “discover himself” only to cheat on her multiple times along the way, Lisa decides she can take her own artistic license in killing him. As evil, murderous characters are among my favorite, this short yet intense role was very enjoyable.

Playing Liat in VOX’s *South Pacific* was another role that provided a very unique experience and a new set of skills. The character doesn’t speak English, and instead expresses herself through dancing only. Because the simple tool of words and intonation were unavailable, I had to rely solely on facial expression and body language to portray the feelings of the character.



Liat and Lt. Cable fall in love, despite a language barrier and intense racial prejudices.

This situation forced me to project my internal thoughts solely through physicality, which is a skill that helps greatly while acting any part.

I've always loved over-the-top roles, and acting out the song "Over the Moon" from *Rent* in VOX 2011 cabaret was an exceptional experience. The piece was less of a song, and more of a melodramatic performance art piece that required a lot of acting. Of all of my performances, this piece probably required the most outrageous physicality and wildly varying vocal dynamics. At this point in the musical, the character is attempting to prove a bold point to her superiors in a riotous fashion. Therefore, character development was simply a matter of being as over-dramatic as possible. Here is another instance where acting sometimes requires going above and beyond credibility.

These characters are only a few that I have studied and worked with for transient periods of time, but who have given me experiences and skills that I will use throughout my acting career.

### 3.2.9 A Collaborative Effort

My knowledge of theatre has grown not only through acting, but also through experiencing many other roles that are crucial to the execution of a production. Not only did I gain new comprehension, but I gained an intense respect and appreciation for every bit of effort that contributes to a show.

I've never quite valued the organization of a show until I tried my hand at stage managing for *Screw This Noise* in New Voices 27. It was a short play only about twenty minutes long, but I was shocked by the great effort a stage manager must put in for even so brief an amount of stage time. When I added up all the various duties, such as scheduling, calling actors, sending emails, booking space, taking line notes, etc., I found a very involved production role. I can't say that stage managing is where my passion lies, but it was a priceless experience that gave me new perspective on the roles in theatre.

I took on a very new role to me as scenic designer for MW Repertory Theatre's *Rabbit Hole* during C term of 2010. Again, this role entailed more work and skills than I could have possibly imagined. The ability to design the dressings of this set, which was a simple middle-class living room, introduced another means of theatrical expression. While it will never become my passion, it provided even more insight into the world of technical theatre.

If there is one role in that art of theatre that stands a chance to rival my love of acting, it is directing. I remember once asking a veteran director exactly how I will know when I'm ready to direct a show. She replied, "You are sure you're ready to direct the moment after you read a script, and you think, 'I don't want to be one of those characters, I want to be *all* of them!'" Directing is a rare gift as it allows one almost complete control over the artistic vision of the play. That control is a wonderful thing.

My first endeavor as a director was for *The Secret of Water* by Richard Pavis. As part of the New Voices 28 festival, I saw this as an opportunity to begin to learn the workings of a director. Although I was very nervous and not completely confident, I forged ahead. It turned out to be an enlightening

experience. Watching a play morph from unsure lines in a rehearsal room to a believable scene on a dressed set, and having a hand in that transformation, is the essence of theatre. Being able to influence the set, blocking, and acting to present specific ideas to the audience is an extension of the power I feel while acting. From that point, I would always search for the opportunity to direct.

That opportunity came during the summer of 2010 when I agreed to co-direct *Dark Play* as the Sunburns production. I fell in love with directing even further when provided with a full-length play. Here, I could formulate the details of the entire set, lighting design, sound design, costumes, and cast. After my duties as director were over and out of my control, sitting in the audience and watching the final performances brought a feeling of utter accomplishment.

While I will never love any part of theatre more than acting, directing is a role that provides me with an alternate and equally powerful artistic fulfillment.

Through WPI theatre, I have not only gained skills and knowledge, but the invaluable realization that theatre is one of the only arts in which you must rely on others for its successful completion.

Theatre is a collaborative art.

### **3.2.10 Beyond Campus**

I was thrilled to extend my theatrical experiences to areas beyond WPI when I was offered a job choreographing and performing in Worcester County Light Opera Company's musical *Company*. Saying that this prospect was intimidating would be an understatement, as the actors were much older than me and extraordinarily talented. I was asked individually to perform a scene, a song in three-part harmony, and a number that consisted entirely of a self-choreographed dance. Working alongside actors that had such extensive experience was both daunting and incredible. Choreographing was difficult, as the actors possessed no previous dance experience. Yet at the conclusion of the show, I felt that both

my performance and my choreography were advanced enough to fit the sophistication of the show as a whole.



My character, Kathy, in a piece that I had choreographed for WCLOC's *Company*.

About a year afterward, I was asked to return to WCLOC to choreograph the musical *Spelling Bee*, which is an outwardly funny yet subtle commentary on the way parents raise their children.





"Spellers" in WCLOC's *Spelling Bee*, for which I provided choreography.

Working with Worcester County Light Opera not only gave me even more experience with acting, singing, dancing, and choreography, but allowed me to work with very talented performers that managed to keep theatre in their lives despite full-time jobs. Therefore, I gained not only theatrical experience, but advice in terms of the role of theatre in my life.

#### **4 From Lifeless Lines to a Credible Character**

There are those that believe that once a character is created, he is alive and thriving and cannot be vanquished or forgotten. This may be true, but there is an exhilaration associated with witnessing the transformation of a character as their black-and-white written lines and stage directions gain intonation, then color, then personality, then interaction, then flesh, then life.

## 4.1 The Crucial Role of Creating the Character

On acting, Oscar Wilde wrote, “I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.” The essence of theatre involves modeling real life and offering the audience an artistically rendered reflection of their everyday lives, more often than not accompanied by a bit of commentary. Not only must the situations and spectacle remain at least vaguely reminiscent of an audience’s experiences, but so must the characters. The characters are the most influential vectors through which the purpose of the play may be presented, and thus portraying them in a convincing manner is of utmost importance to the art of theatre.

The ability to depict a multitude of varying characters effectively and impressively is an essential tool for the aspiring actor. It is therefore vital that the actor prepares their own personal methods to truly understand the thought processes, motivations, and essence of a given character in the hope that they may provide the audience with a compelling and effectual depiction. Here, I will demonstrate my ability to accomplish this feat, utilizing characters that represent a wide period of theatrical history, as well as a broad spectrum of dramatic genres.

### 4.1.1 Much Ado About Nothing

Written by William Shakespeare  
Sixteenth Century, Comedy  
Character: Beatrice

William Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* is a lighthearted comedy that carries with it a deep undertone of social commentary. Set in Messina in the sixteenth century, the play deals with both honor and deceit, and how actions associated with both may not produce the results that one would instinctually predict.

Beatrice's story is only a small subset of the whole plotline, but it captures every aspect of the work in some form. Unwilling to allow her true emotions to surface, Beatrice participates in a constant war of witty insults with Benedick, a man she was rumored to once love. The two cleverly exchange jibes, never acquiescing to subtle hints from the other or wise advice from observers. It is not until Beatrice's and Benedick's friends and family decide they've had enough of the pointless evasion of the stubborn couple from one another that this plotline begins. Knowing full well that each truly loves the other, several characters plan to fool the unsuspecting couple into a romance. Beatrice's cousin, aware that Beatrice is eavesdropping, loudly proclaims that Benedick is in love with Beatrice. Similarly, Benedick's friends let it slip to him that Beatrice is infatuated with him. This is all it takes for the couple to dismiss their shallow pride and admit their mutual affection.

Beatrice has certainly shown up before in Shakespeare's work. *Much Ado about Nothing* presents much commentary about the roles of women in a relationship and how they are viewed by men and by society as a whole. The characters Hero and Beatrice not only symbolize a typical and atypical model of a woman, but also a typical and atypical approach to relationships. Hero is a "stereotypical" representation of the "ideal" woman figure of the time. She is beautiful, quiet, submissive and seemingly devoid of personal opinion. Claudio's attraction to her is based on these ideal qualities. She is characterized by qualities that deem her inferior to men. On the contrary, Beatrice is what is known in Shakespearean terms as a "shrew." She is loud, arrogant, outspoken, highly opinionated and generally a maverick. She is thought to have little potential of becoming a wife due to her excessive pride and ceaseless habit of challenging and even insulting men. Her wit and bold manners are uncommon among women of the age. Not only do Hero and Beatrice represent two very different types of women, but also suggest that their prospective relationships will follow very different paths: Hero's common and orthodox, and Beatrice's fairly unconventional.

However crass and arrogant Beatrice may appear through her words, the work ultimately suggests that these qualities are not meant to be negative. Beatrice indeed contradicts the expected behavior of a woman within that society, but it is only because she is waiting for a man that serves as her intellectual equal. She will not settle for any man that courts her based on his fondness for her physical attributes. She holds out until she finds a man that truly intrigues her and matches her personality. When that man seemingly shows no interest, Beatrice reverts to her guise of coldness and unconcern towards him. These internal workings must be understood in order to successfully portray Beatrice on stage. If given this role, it is the impetus and background that I would use to affectively represent this character.

I would need to assume a multilayered set of emotions at all times, at least during the beginning parts of Beatrice's story. The outer layer would consist of Beatrice's insensitive and witty responses to Benedick and to the general social order which she witnesses. In Benedick's presence, her countenance would reflect little emotion, perhaps excluding disdain, and she would remain relatively unaffected by any manner of words directed to her. But Beatrice is not in fact cold-hearted and unfeeling. She is simply vulnerable and feels that she is unable to express her emotions without destroying the persona that she has carefully constructed for the rest of the world. At the times when Beatrice is alone with the audience, I would allow a glimmer of this aspect of her individuality to show through. It is important to portray the fact that Beatrice is indeed suffering from Benedick's hurtful words and constant emotional denial. It would make the abrupt emotional union of the couple far more credible when it eventually happens.

I would depict Beatrice's discovery of the fact that Benedick is indeed infatuated with her in the most relieving of ways. She has suppressed her love for him for what appears to be a great amount of time, and the realization that she must not longer suppress it should appear as a great

relief. This would be the point where her façade cracks open at its foundation; and while Beatrice remains strong and confident, she will act softer around the edges and less spiteful to the world and to Benedick in particular.

This shift in Beatrice's countenance and actions is most apparent after her cousin, Hero, has been wrongfully and tragically shamed, and I would portray it as such. Her fervent passion and love for others is quite apparent, and would be reflected in the tone of her voice and her physical mannerisms. This climaxes as she orders her new love, Benedick, to kill the man that has shamed Hero. I would be sure to make clear the stark contrast between the coldness and apathy of Beatrice pre-Benedick, and the still tough but passionately caring Beatrice after the stress of her pretense has been lifted.

When the catastrophic plotline involving Hero has been happily resolved, I would settle Beatrice back into her uniquely bold, yet now sweeter and more vulnerable mannerisms, as she and Benedick explore their newfound relationship and discover its boundaries and expanses.

Analyzing the background of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the nature of the social class of that time period and of that particular society, would be crucial to my interpretation of the character of Beatrice. Without it, her motivations would be an uneducated guess at best. Representing this character would be a useful practice in portraying multiple emotions at once, and in discovering a balance between the expression of both at any particular point in the story.

#### 4.1.2 A Streetcar Named Desire

Written by Tennessee Williams  
Mid-Twentieth Century, Tragedy  
Character: Blanche DuBois

One's imagination may be the source of great works of art, amusing fantasies, or life's most daring aspirations. Yet it may also serve as a desperate contrivance used to hide from the harsh realities of a hopeless life. In his enduring play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams examines the tragic downfall of a woman originally considered "socially elite," and her pathetic attempts to evade her inexorable misfortunes. The task of portraying the complex character of Blanche DuBois is a challenge that any actress would be honored to attempt.

After losing her young husband, luxurious Southern home and massive fortune, Blanche travels to New Orleans to visit her sister Stella in a low-class neighborhood. Blanche's immediate and intense condescension of Stella's lifestyle earns her the immediate disdain of Stella's crude husband, Stanley. Blanche continues to put on airs of sophistication and arrogance, convinced that she is beautiful and elite, and that a handsome millionaire is soon to rescue her from her transient calamities. But in reality, her vivid imagination only serves to delude Blanche from the fact that she is a poor, aging alcoholic who depends on men and sex to feel worthy. Blanche holds up her fanciful defenses fervently until Stanley finally breaks her down, sending her out of his life and into the uncontrollable and permanent depths of her fantasy-coated insanity.

Blanche DuBois would indeed be a fascinating character to interpret. She is deeply complex, to the point that the dichotomy of her personality reaches the opposite extremes of the emotional spectrum. Blanche is a character who is, herself, an actress. Her realistic state is one of hopelessness and

despair; and yet she buries is beneath a cover of grandeur, excessive confidence, and an almost unrealistically dramatic personality.

To reasonably depict Blanche's outward illusion, I would attempt to employ the same imaginary mindset that I feel she must employ in order to appear so sane. I would endeavor to feel as if I've forced myself to believe that I live a perfect life of wealth, wisdom, and unwavering sexual attraction. I would react to Stella and Stanley as if *they* are the ones that are deluded and worthless. Even as Blanche commits the very deplorable actions that have led to her downfall, she must carry on with normality, finding some internally satisfying way of justifying her sins to herself.

This emotional dichotomy within Blanche is not as simple to depict as that within Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Beatrice's emotional mask is a much lighter kind of defense, one that is simply meant to avoid a difficult romantic confrontation. But Blanche's guise is a last-ditch effort to hold on to the last scraps of her crumbling life. Her haughty exterior must not betray the vulnerability and sadness within her soul. Without the solidness of her ploy, it would be difficult for the audience to believe that she is capable of maintaining her alter-ego in her own mind, even if she does a terrible job of convincing those around her. I would sustain Blanche's adamant exterior against all other character's attempts to break it down. I would perhaps only allow it to falter noticeably as Stanley rapes her, finally stripping her of the last shreds of her emotional sanity. Even then, as she is escorted away as a mentally unstable patient, I would re-assemble her fantasy-driven complacency. But now her elegant exterior would be painted with a subtle yet undeniable wash of emotional blankness, as she finally drowns in her fantasies and succumbs to the horrors of her reality.

This character of Blanche DuBois would certainly be challenging to accurately represent, as she possesses deep layers of emotion and motivation, and inappropriately revealing the incorrect layers could render the depiction of the character unbelievable. Examining the intent and nature of the

character and the culture from which she came, as well as the danger of an avid and desperate imagination is the key to avoiding this mistake. Thus, this character would be an effective practice in the separation between what the character feels and what the character outwardly expresses.

### 4.1.3 The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?

Written by: Edward Albee  
Early Twenty-first Century, Tragicomedy  
Character: Stevie

I love theatre. It is an art of expression, exploration, emotion, and constant change. But no theatre lures me, captivates me, fascinates me quite like theatre that shocks its audiences and leaves their perceptions of their lives and themselves just a little bit shaken. Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* pushes the boundaries of comfortable theatre from all sides. Dealing quite openly and plainly with issues such as infidelity, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality, this is a play that is not easily forgotten. This piece is audacious and significant, and its bold subject matter serves as a simultaneously hilarious, outrageous, and truly thought-provoking commentary on the way our society reacts to those who commit social obscenities. In a time when our collective views and actions change rapidly, and sometimes drastically, in search of a more perfect society, Albee's play is one that puts a mirror right up to the audience's lives.

It is, at its core, a tragedy outlining the demise of Martin, a successful man with a "perfect" life; yet it is disguised as a darkly amusing comedy comprised of a series of shockingly bazaar events.

The show opens with laughter, comedy, and merriment, demonstrating the sickeningly sweet relationship between Martin and his wife, Stevie. The play takes a drastic shift relatively quickly, however, as it is revealed that Martin is in love with, and having an affair with, a goat.



The scenes following adopt a progressively darker and angrier tone, as Stevie and Martin fight to understand the tragic situation at hand. Throw in the fact that their son has just admitted to being gay and the characters spiral downward into confusion, heartbreak, and shame. This is where the audience is left at the conclusion of the play.

Playing the character of Stevie would be challenging due to the sheer unrealistic nature of the situation in which she is thrown. Stark juxtaposition in acting styles as the plot shifts, as well as very intense and real reactions, will help to make an unbelievable scenario seem a bit more credible.

In portraying Stevie, I would utilize a specific progression of juxtaposition in acting styles throughout the three scenes. This juxtaposition can be a very useful tool in emphasizing the seriousness of the issues presented, particularly between the first and second scenes. The first scene should aim to present to the audience the fact that Stevie is part of a family that may be thought of as the stereotypical poster family of the American Dream. As the play commences, I would depict Stevie in a way that would reflect that of a wealthy, sophisticated, high-class wife. Most importantly, would be stressing the “normalness” of the opening conversations between the married couple. The fact that they tease each other and display the physical exchanges of a healthy relationship provides the positive starting point from which the family deteriorates, and makes that deterioration that much more tragic. The exchange between Martin and Stevie should be exceedingly light and comical with loving undertones. Even when the issue of Martin’s relationship with the goat is initially brought out, I would keep Stevie’s conversation humorous, not only to challenge the audience into deciding whether or not to take the situation comically or not, but again to provide a definite juxtaposition with how greatly the situation will affect everyone in the family.

When the lights come up on the second scene, it is understood that Stevie and Billy have been informed of Martin’s revealed affair, and that it is in fact not a joke at all. Here is where the play begins

to turn from comedy to tragedy. Something fundamental and disturbing has upset the seemingly adamant foundation of this perfect American family.

From the very first line of this scene, my depiction of Stevie would change from light and comical to over-the-top intensely angry. Suddenly, the family has gone from a “picture-perfect” everyday situation to a conversation between Stevie and Martin that includes terrible words and shocking insults, and this shift should be made apparent. Despite the instances where evanescent jokes and breaks of intensity are found in the script, Stevie’s emotion in the scene would be raw and passionate. This is the point when symbolic issues of homosexuality and the breaking of social norms are introduced as well as questions regarding love despite physicality, and Stevie’s emotion during the scene would reflect the seriousness of such concerns.

The next scene is even more raw than the former. When we enter scene three, Stevie and Martin have had their horrendous arguments, and have more or less reached rock bottom with no solution in sight. I would portray Stevie’s emotions in a way that reflects how the family and each of its members individually have been shattered emotionally. The most shocking shift in Stevie’s exposition would be when she enters after slaughtering the goat, covered completely in the blood of the mistress that has torn her relationship apart. Here, I would depict Stevie as if the situation has finally broken her, and she has regressed to an uncivilized animal. Stevie’s final few lines would be void of emotion, which is sometimes more powerful than rage.

Albee’s play is certainly open to various forms of interpretation and analysis, but portraying Stevie would require less digging into her thoughts and past, and more imagining natural reactions to a shocking and tragic revelation.

## 5 My Theory of Acting

Over the years that I have been studying theatre, I have developed my own logic regarding the art of acting and theatre as a whole. While they may not be widely accepted or known, they are theories that help to explain my immense passion for acting, and to justify the decisions I make when practicing the art.

### 5.1 Art and Science as One

I have always harbored a deep and inexorable fascination with both art and science. Some find these concepts unarguably different. Some view them as polar opposites, two vastly different states of mind: science is logical, ordered, rigid and unfeeling while art is subjective, emotional, and unpredictable. I have heard it said that art and science represent two different ways of thinking, with science representing a pragmatic mindset and art representing a romantic one. Science and art are thought by some to be the very antithesis to one another, never adjacent and never touching. But I have always felt an obvious connection between these two seemingly contradictory concepts, a connection that I have found to be impossible to ignore. For each, I feel, has a single definite and ultimate goal at its very core: to understand life more fully and completely.

In a documentary exploring the relationship between the art of origami and the science of engineering, Vanessa Gould states, “In the end, it seems artists and scientists are not as different as we often think: both creating interpretations of the very same world around us, the world we all share.” With this theory in mind, the practices of art and science suddenly seem to have much more in common. Both seek to dissect life as deeply as possible. Science seeks to unravel life in a physical sense, in terms of physical laws, matter, electrical signals. Science examines the impossibly small molecules in

our bodies, how they bond, interact, and form complex systems that allow human beings to grow, sense, think, and feel. Art seeks the very same ends, yet it aims to examine the foundations of life on an emotional level. It hopes to evoke feeling in us, to examine how we interact with one another and what it is that makes us a sentient and emotional species that creates such complex societies and relationships. They are vastly diverse practices, but their souls are one.

Therefore, just as science is becoming increasingly common and crucial to our world, in terms of architecture, medicine, and knowledge, art too is an essential factor in our quest to fully understand our world and our lives. This is why I find myself happily torn between the science of biochemistry and the art of theatre. Life is unfathomably complex and infinitely fascinating, and I want to understand it as deeply as possible. The only hope I have for this kind of enlightenment is with science *and* art.

## 5.2 The Character, the Actor, and Life

On ancient fears regarding the art of acting, Brestoff writes, “It is as though, having put on the mask of transformation, the actor cannot remove it. The attributes and maladies of the ‘character’ migrate across some imperceptible barrier, seep into the fiber of his being and endanger both the actor’s health and sanity” (Brestoff, 1). It is interesting, and rather frightening, to think that an actor may work so diligently to adopt the essence and nature of a character, only to find that there is no longer any separation between the character from the actor. Is it possible that the boundaries that encompass the imaginary world of acting can blur the edges of reality? In Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, a “fleshed-out” character from a play states:

You say you’ve given life, you’ve created characters who are more alive than those who breathe fresh air and wear street clothes! Well perhaps they’re not as real, but they’re closer to the

truth... But who knows better than you actors that nature uses the human imagination to create an even more intense reality. (Pirandello, 21)

The art of theatre is certainly meant to mimic life, to force us to examine our own realities and find the truth that we sometimes overlook. Characters are created so that the audience may relate to them, either to their personalities or the situations in which they find themselves. This connection is intensified with an actor. An actor undoubtedly achieves emotion on stage by drawing from personal experiences that are similar to that of the character. In this case, the actor is in a sense at one with the character, and that character will live on as long as the actor remains affected by the union. Thus, I feel that the art of acting is a very introspective one, meant not only to enlighten the audience, but to help the actor gain insight into his own life as he embodies the life of another.

Conversely, theatre can immerse us in the lives of characters so different from anything we've know that it is difficult to find that connection. Pirandello once again tells us:

But don't you see that the whole trouble lies here. In words, words. Each one of us has within him a whole world of things, each man of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do.  
(Pirandello, 22)

The way humans interact, especially when that interaction spurs conflict, is one of the most intriguing subjects which theatre aims to study. I can't imagine a better way to truly begin to understand

people that are very unlike oneself. Since acting involves attempting to ponder the thoughts and motivations of another character so fully that you nearly become inseparable from the associated traits, the actor must inevitably begin to comprehend, if not admire, perspectives that were previously foreign and unattainable.

Simply having the opportunity to become someone I am not is an experience unmatched by anything I've ever known. Examining the inner workings of a murderer, or an alcoholic, or a figment of imagination frozen in time, makes for a feeling of exhilaration like nothing else. Not only does acting keep me sensitive to many multifaceted and unique personalities, but it keeps me grounded in my own perceptions and emotions.

While I have, through WPI theatre, gained the realization that acting is a very small part of a production that requires an immense amount of varied talent and dedication to be successful, I no doubt have retained the opinion that the art is crucial in its own way. Theatre is the result of a great amount of cooperation, but actors are the vehicle through which theatre is delivered to the minds and hearts of the audience. They are the very messengers of the drama; and what a wonderful experience it is to assume the identity of another, if only for a short time. The perspective gained by viewing the world through another character is invaluable; and, quite simply, the inexorable feeling of complete happiness that comes from performing in front of a live audience is something that, to me, cannot be matched by anything else in the world.

As little sense as it may seem to make, I find myself through the interpretation of others. And despite the many characters that are now always with me, when I'm on stage, I've never felt more like, well, me.

Acting is the way I breathe.

## 6 Where It May All Go From Here

I have always been the kind of person who proceeds through life according to ambitious goals. I feel that life is an opportunity that should not be one bit wasted and that everyone should follow the heart and never settle for complacency. This has been also been a source of conflict in my mind, however, as I can never seem to focus on just one long-term goal at once. Currently, I am weighing the consequences of pursuing further education in biochemistry or theatre.

I always say that science is my mind and performance is my heart. Science is one of the most fascinating subjects to me, explaining life at a fundamental and logical level. I look forward avidly to using my knowledge in this area to help the world in some way. But performing is the way I breathe. It allows me to express my creativity and passion in an indescribably satisfying way. I feel that art illuminates life on an emotional level. Although the two subjects seem completely opposite, I am confident and grateful that I feel they are both essential to my being.

I have always worked very hard in an attempt to maintain a balance of these practices in my life thus far, and I see no need to stop now. Perhaps it is naïve, but I am confident that I possess enough passion and energy to retain this balance somehow in the future. So it is my new aspiration to pursue a graduate degree from an acting school in New York City, while gaining a fulfilling job in a research laboratory. Are my aspirations far too ambitious? I suppose I won't know until I try!

## 7 Conclusion

*To thine own self be true.*

Shakespeare's simple yet profound message is the ideal by which I live. I often hear of people that are lost, passionless, searching. But from a very young age, I have known exactly who I was; and for this, I am eternally grateful.

I have discovered my strengths, and accepted my weaknesses; I have embraced my passions, and found my own inimitable path to my prospective niche within the world. Science and art allow me to continue to embellish my uniqueness and prepare to impact the world for the better.

No matter where my life takes me, I am steadfast in my belief that science and art are essential to find the truth for which we all seek. They are also both essential factors in my personal happiness.

*Art is a lie that leads to the truth.*

And I hope it will lead us there soon.

## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Literature review

This is a sample of the work accomplished through literature and theatre courses which I have completed as fulfillment of the degree requirements.



## 8.1.1 Analysis of Dramatic and Literary Works

### 8.1.1.1 *The Taming of the Shrew*

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December 2008  
EN 2224 (B Term)  
Prof. Ephraim  
*The Taming of the Shrew*

Playing Roles: An Analysis of Class-Switching in *The Taming of the Shrew* and its Prologue

Many productions of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* omit the prologue which renders the story a "play-within-a-play." While the story can stand alone without the prologue, its themes are nevertheless embellished and emphasized by the introductory scenes. The prologue to *The Taming of the Shrew* sets the concept of using physical disguise as a means to temporarily transcend the insurmountable restraints of social class and comments on the role of women in marriage, both of which are themes that are present in the "play" put on for Christopher Sly. While the "joke" played upon Sly implies that social class can be temporarily manipulated, the stark contrast between Sly's true identity as a lowly tinker and his feigned position as a lord suggests that Sly would never actually be accepted as a person of great wealth, and thus one must inevitably accept his predetermined social class. These themes are closely echoed in the play with which most of *The Taming of the Shrew* is concerned.

The introduction serves partly to present the concept of temporarily manipulating one's social class. In the prologue Sly is successfully convinced that he is a lord to the point where he even acts accordingly. It is obvious that he is well aware of his lack of social prestige:

I am Christopher Sly. Call not me "honor" or "lordship." I ne'er drank sack in my life; and if you give me any conserves, give me conserves of beef. Ne'er ask me what raiment I'll wear, for I have not more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet---nay, sometimes more feet than shoes, or

such shoes as my toes look through the overleather (Intro.ii.5).

He is conscious about the fact that he does not eat or drink fancy things or own clothing in good condition. Yet once he is placed in a lord's environment, treated as if he were royalty, he is almost immediately convinced otherwise:

Am I a lord? And have I such a lady?

Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?

I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak,

I smell sweet savors, and I feel soft things.

Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,

And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly (Intro.ii.63).

Not only is his sudden revelation regarding his position in society reflected in his words, but in the way his lines are written. Before Sly's epiphany, his lines are written as prose, yet afterwards, his lines are written in verse. Generally, Shakespeare uses prose for lower class characters and verse for higher class characters. This emphasizes the Sly's dramatic change of outlook on his life, rendering it so extreme that it could almost be called a hyperbole. This suggests that while Sly believes for a time that he has experienced such a drastic transformation, attempting such a shift in social class would be ridiculous. Regardless, the Lord's practical joke succeeded, insinuating that temporary shifts in social class are possible. This theme is reflected in the play *The Taming of the Shrew* in Lucentio and his servant, as he Lucentio proposes that he assume his servant's low class, and visa versa, so that he may court Bianca: "Thou shalt be master, Tranio, in my stead,/ Keep house, and port, and servants, as I should./ I will some other be, some Florentine,/ Some Neapolitan, or meaner man of Pisa./ 'Tis hatched and shall be so" (I.i.190). While this role-switch is by no means permanent, it provides another example of a temporary yet successful social class shift. Another example is seen in Kate. Perhaps due to her dissatisfaction with her expected social class, she acts out in an attempt to defy such restraints: "Why, and I trust I may go

too, may I not?/ What, shall I be appointed hours,/ As though, belike, I knew not what to take,/ And what to leave? Ha!" (I.i.102). She is unwilling to accept that she is expected to obey when told when to come and where to go, and thus acts the way a woman from a lower class might act. Both the introduction and the play itself consist of characters who transiently defy their expected social class. Yet as the introduction hints, these shifts will be short lived.

The introduction contains an obvious allusion to the way women were treated at the time. There is certainly an intimation that women were meant to serve their husbands as if they were a mere arrangement meant for personal benefit. Both the submissive nature with which women were expected to act and the "lordly" way men reigned over them are reflected in an exchange between Sly and a Page whom he believes to be his wife. Sly asks: "Are you my wife, and will not call me husband?/ My men should call me "lord"; I am your goodman" (Intro.ii.97). The Page (pretending to be Sly's wife) responds: "My husband and my lord, my lord and husband,/ A am your wife in all obedience" (Intro.ii.99). When Sly inquires as to the way the Page addresses him, the Page exclaims that a husband is also a woman's lord and sole ruler, and she must always obey him. Also, very soon after Sly discovers that he has a wife, he orders her to sleep with him: "'Tis much. Servants, leave me and her alone./ Madam, undress you and come now to bed" (Intro.ii.108). This tells us that Sly sees a wife simply as a means to achieve personal pleasure. This theme is mirrored as Petruchio reveals his motivations for agreeing to marry the shrewish Kate: "Hortensio, peace! Thou know'st not gold's effect./ Tell me her father's name and 'tis enough;/ For I will board her, though she chide as loud/ As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack" (I.ii.87). Petruchio finds no interest in Kate's personality. In fact, he finds it very displeasing. But it matters not to him---she would come with a large dowry, and that is Petruchio's main impetus for finding a wife. This shocking ideal is not resolved in the introduction, nor does it come to any certain closure in the play, as Kate eventually submits to the command of her husband: "And dart not scornful glances from those eyes/ To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor" (V.ii.141). Similarly to the Page's

lines, Kate expresses that a woman's husband is her ruler. Whether or not Kate's revelation is genuine, both the introduction and the play contain men who treat women inferiorly, and women who must accept this ideal as inevitable.

Despite the many amusing identity switches that take place in *The Taming of the Shrew* and its prologue, the situations turn out to be just that---comical and unrealistic. The act of making Sly believe that he is a lord is meant to be nothing but a joke fabricated by the Lord:

Sirs, I will practice on this drunken man.  
What think you, if he were conveyed to bed,  
Wrapped in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,  
A most delicious banquet by his bed,  
And brave attendants near him when he wakes,  
Would not the beggar forget himself? (Intro.i.32).

The extent of the joke suggests that Sly would have no chance of being accepted in the feigned social class, foreshadowing the fact that neither Lucentio nor Kate would last long in their simulated social classes. It is obvious that Sly will eventually return to his expected class. Comparably, Lucentio reveals himself before marrying Bianca, and Kate (rather suddenly) accepts her role as an obedient wife: "Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,/ And place your hands below your husband's foot,/ In token of which duty, if he please,/ My hand is ready; may it do him ease" (V.ii.181). It is arguable whether or not Kate actually believes that she and all other women should be completely submissive to their husbands, but nevertheless, she has decided to accept the social role to which the majority of the characters in the play have been attempting to conform her. The improbable situation presented by Sly's class shift in the introduction predicts the eventual return to normalcy of the characters in the play who attempt to defy preordained social order.

The reason for which Christopher Sly's frame narrative does not come to closure at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* is still highly debated. Because the introduction only served to set concepts that would be utilized in the play, perhaps the play spoke for itself, therefore rendering the completion of the frame narrative fruitless. A completion of the story may also have brought back to the audience's attention that fact that the main goings-on in the story were in fact a play put on my actors, which may have made the serious themes seem less real. Indeed, as an alternate ending in another version of the play called *Taming of A Shrew*, the completion of the story suggests that the "taming" of Kate and generally the returning of all people to their expected class is an unreal idea. In the alternate version, Sly describes the play as a "dream":

Will she? I know now how to tame a shrew.  
I dreamed upon it all this night till now,  
And thou hast waked me out of the best dream  
That ever I had in my life. But I'll to my  
Wife presently and tame her too,  
And if she anger me (p.153.180).

Thus the inclusion of a completed frame narrative would have undervalued the theme present in the play.

The beginning of the frame narrative story in *The Taming of the Shrew* serves to introduce the themes of class shifting and roles of women. The utter ridiculousness of Sly's social transformation, however, proposes that class shifts are evanescent and the idea of the inferior role of women cannot be surmounted.

### *8.1.1.2 Dog Sees God*

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#### Dog Sees God: Insidious or Inspiring?

Richard Schechner published his beliefs that the art of theatre aims at a combination of a specific set of goals regarding the message with which an audience leaves after witnessing a dramatic work. One of these was “to deal with the sacred or demonic.” This can be experienced vividly through the shocking and poignant scenes of *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* by Bert V. Royal. Drugs, homosexuality, depression, alcoholism, identity crisis, and suicide are the “demons” which the play highlights and even utilizes comically. Although one may be averse to the play as it portrays such serious things seemingly lightly and its subject matter is undeniably morbid, the very conclusion of the play justifies all of its apparent sins, and leaves the observant viewer with a hopeful and uplifting mindset.

One could certainly justify disliking the play because, despite its numerous darkly comedic lines, the overall plot deals with the characters of the Charlie Brown comic strip with a twist: they are grown up and very, very lost. The play deals with deplorable characters that have taken to indulging in excessive drug and alcohol use, homophobic tendencies, ridiculing those they don’t understand, and solving their problems via a combination of violence and the aforementioned vices.

But these grotesque situations have purpose. They put a mirror up to the audience and force them to acknowledge these horrible truths that are often ignored in life. The play could even be described as a stereotypical representation of high school social life. And viewers turn away in disgust? Yes, because often in life, these terrible things are present all around, and people chose to ignore them

instead of correcting them. And it takes a shocking and horrific play to inspire viewers to avoid averting their eyes from tragedy.

The highly unfavorable situations of the play are also used to inspire hopefulness. Despite the constant ridiculing of his closest friends, CB realizes how imprisoned he is by the social standards impressed upon him, and facilitates and pursues his relationship with the ostracized Beethoven. And when Beethoven commits suicide due to all the social stress, CB rightfully blames the shallowness and pointless hatred of each of his friends for the tragic outcome. CB's sister seems to have understood the necessity to break free from expected identity, expressed not only through the fact that she entered each scene dressed in an entirely new fashion, but through her performance art piece, during which she expresses her allegorical desire to break out of her cocoon not as a butterfly, but as a platypus.

As disturbing as the play is, it does its job of "dealing with the demonic," and turning the demonic into hope. The play is justified as CB realizes that, "...you're the product of someone's imagination and you can't think for yourself because you're really just like some creation and that somewhere there's people laughing every time you fall..." One would hope that with this realization, however upsetting, will allow him and his sister to inspire others to reject their social norms and pursue the things that make them happy. This hopefulness is confirmed when CB receives a letter from his "penpal" (assumed to be writing from heaven), which is narrated by each character in the show, urging him to hold steadfast to the fact that he is a wonderful person, and that life has wonderful things in store for him. The penpal then assures him that Beethoven (and his dog and the little yellow bird!) are waiting for him in the afterlife.

This touching ending only further serves to show that happiness and improvement can come out of tragedy and hopelessness. And this justifies the demons that *Dog Sees God* as forced plainly and abrasively on our very eyes.

### 8.1.1.3 *Much Ado About Nothing*

Anika Blodgett  
21 November 2008  
EN 2224 (B Term)  
Prof. Ephraim  
*Much Ado about Nothing*

The Means to Marriage: An Analysis of Marital Commentary in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*

A great deal of William Shakespeare's works are centered around the concept of marriage and the various motivations behind it. In his famous play, *Much Ado about Nothing*, two separate couples in particular provide an obvious contrast regarding the fundamental principles of wedded union. The relationships between Claudio and Hero and between Benedick and Beatrice clash both in terms of individual personalities and in each couple's impetus for marriage; in many ways inspiring debate about love and legal marriage. Through analysis of the dissimilarity between Hero and Beatrice, each couple's preliminary outlook on marriage, and the origination, progression, and final state of each relationship, the relationship between Claudio and Hero and between Benedick and Beatrice presents an assessment of the conventional approach to marriage and a more unorthodox one, respectively.

*Much Ado about Nothing* presents much commentary about the roles of women in a relationship and how they are viewed by men and by society as a whole. The characters Hero and Beatrice, the two women of the couples in question, not only symbolize a typical and atypical model of a woman, but also a typical and atypical approach to marriage. Hero is considered an "ideal" woman. Claudio's attraction to her is based on these idyllic qualities: "Is she not a modest young lady?" (I.i.157), and "In mine eye, she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on" (I.i.177). She is characterized by qualities that deem her inferior to men. On the contrary, Beatrice is what is known in Shakespearean terms as a "shrew". She is loud, arrogant, outspoken, highly opinionated and



generally a maverick. She is thought to have little potential of becoming a wife due to her excessive pride and ceaseless habit of challenging and even insulting men, as made clear by her unending arguments with Benedick: "...In our last conflict, four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed by one..." (I.i.61). Her wit and bold manners are uncommon among women of the age. Not only do Hero and Beatrice represent two very different types of women, but also suggest that their prospective relationships will follow very different paths; Hero's being common and orthodox, and Beatrice's being fairly unconventional.

Each couple's initial views on marriage alone provide a stark contrast. The fact that Claudio and Hero's relationship progresses very quickly without each getting to know the other on any sort of deep level suggests that the main drive of the arrangement is shallow infatuation, duty, or even money, as proven by a statement made by Hero's father: "Tomorrow morning come you to my house,/ And since you could not be my son-in-law,/ Be yet my nephew. My brother hath a daughter,/ Almost the copy of my child that's dead,/ And she alone is heir to both of us" (V.i.276). Although Hero is not really dead, the fact that Claudio makes an arrangement with Leonato to marry Hero's cousin, a complete stranger, immediately suggests that the two men's view of marriage is a practical one, solely for the purpose of continuing one's lineage. Also, the fact that Leonato states that Hero's cousin is "almost the copy" of her, suggests that the foundation of the original relationship was outward appearance. Even before the wedding, Hero states: "God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy" (III.iv.22). One would expect a couple so in love to be excited about their upcoming wedding, but Hero seems distressed... perhaps because something is missing in their relationship. Benedick and Beatrice have the same initial view on marriage, which is quite opposite from that of Claudio or Hero. Both feel that marriage would suffocate their

independence, or that they would never find another worthy of themselves. Benedick originally believes that marriage would be a public humiliation to his pride:

*The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead; and let me be vilely painted, and in such great letters as the write 'Here is good horse to hire', let them signify under my sign, 'Here you may see Benedick, the married man' (I.i.244).*

The image of a man with horns on his head proposes that Benedick believes that he will end up as a cuckold, or a man whose wife commits adultery. This implies that he feels that women are untrustworthy and unfit for his commitment. Similarly, Beatrice cannot seem to imagine a gentleman that would suit her taste: "He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man; and he that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him" (II.i.30). Each seems to be opposed to marriage simply because they have not found a match that measures up to their expectations. Contrary to the shallow and more easily attainable motives of Claudio and Hero, Benedick and Beatrice are, even at a subconscious level, searching for a deeper connection between the person they may potentially marry. Here, the two alternative motives of marriage become apparent... marriage for love, or marriage for convenience.

The manner by which each relationship begins affirms the contrast in marital intentions. Claudio and Hero fell in love instantaneously, in the fashion of a fairy-tale "love-at-first-sight" scenario. Without any sign of potential compatibility they pledged to spend the rest of their days together. Claudio's feelings for Hero are immediate, exclaiming, "I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife" (I.i.184), only moments after they meet. The suddenness of such bold sentiments makes one question the genuineness and validity behind them. Quite the opposite, Benedick and Beatrice claimed to despise one another, perhaps due to the similarity in their personalities. Each was too arrogant to admit if there was any affection between them, although it is

unclear if there was any in the very beginning. Whether or not there was any deep-rooted attraction between them initially, the joke played upon them by the other characters set in motion a slow and rocky relationship between the two. Even after they proclaim their love for one another, Benedick still expresses some doubt regarding the future of their relationship: “Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think... To bind me, or undo me, one of them” (V.iv.18). This makes the revelation between these two characters less sudden and more realistic. Benedick also seems to ponder whether his love for Beatrice should necessarily be followed by marriage, viewing these two concepts as separate ideas. Despite both Benedick and Beatrice’s confusion, they formed a relationship based on compatible personalities that had been tested and tried. This point was commented upon by Don Pedro at the birth of the scheme to convince them to fall in love: “She were an excellent wife for Benedick” (II.i.324). While Claudio and Hero may have married due to conventional motives of infatuation, money, or duty, Benedick and Beatrice decided to marry because they had each found their emotional counterpart.

The progressive pattern of each relationship further asserts the alternate motives. Just as quickly as Claudio and Hero’s relationship began, it breaks apart very easily. Claudio is extremely abrupt to believe from a secondary source that Hero was unfaithful:

*O Hero! What a Hero hadst thou been  
If half thy outward graces had been placed  
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!  
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair. Farewell  
Thou pure impiety and impious purity (IV.i.100.)*

Once she is proven innocent, all is well again without a second thought: “Sweet Hero! Now thy image doth appear/ In the rare semblance that I loved it first” (V.i.241). The evanescent states of the relationship between Claudio and Hero suggests instability and artificial love. This is not to say that the relationship between Benedick and Beatrice goes without issues, yet the overall relationship is fairly

consistent. The two, after years of bickering, listen to one another and resolve their issues, further exemplifying their compatibility. The more superficial means of marriage between Claudio and Hero can be seen through the turbidity of their relationship, as the deeper means of marriage between Benedick and Beatrice can be discerned through the steadfastness of theirs.

Regardless, each couple ends up happily married by the end of the play. Yet the failure of Benedick and Beatrice to write sonnets for one another serves as one last comment on the status of each couple. Shakespeare often seems to mock the sonnet as an overused expression of love. The sonnets would therefore seem more fitting for a conventional relationship such as that between Claudio and Hero, and Benedick and Beatrice's failed sonnets further clarify their unorthodox relationship.

The comparison between these two relationships in *Much Ado about Nothing* offer two very different approaches to relationships and motivations for marriage. Because both couples' situation ended favorably, neither approach seemed to be glorified over the other. But the contrast provided intriguing commentary both on the role of men and women in a relationship and on the role of love and other factors in marriage. These themes fit in well with many of Shakespeare's works.

#### ***8.1.1.4 Frankenstein – A Fictional Letter***

Anika Blodgett  
January 2009  
EN2252  
Professor Schachterle  
*Frankenstein*

Dearest Victor,

I cannot express with words how it pains my heart to witness your current state. It seemed not long ago you spoke with magnanimous ambition and grand intentions. You possessed in your soul such passion and unparalleled curiosity the likes of which I have never before perceived. Now, my most

dignified husband has become a shadow of a being---the remnant of a once bright spirit subjugated by his own creation. As I reflect upon the events through which your fate has inevitably unraveled, I cannot help but notice the similarity in circumstance between yourself and Robert Walton, to whom you have related your intriguing yet tragic tale. Motivated and urged forward by an inexplicable but commanding obsession with discovery and knowledge, you sailed your meager but determined vessel towards the vibrant light of the unknown. But despite the goodness of your aim, great sheets of ice engulfed your endeavor with darkness. While Walton has seen reason and escaped his folly, you were not so wise. Trapped with no resolution, you were forced to ponder the recesses of your mind in search of a cause to which you may attribute your unexpected demise. Well, dear Victor, I am here to tell you that it was your own ignorance and shortcomings that led to this most unfortunate end.

First, please understand that I have nothing but the most genuine concern for your well-being as I discuss the choices you have made. I only wish for you to seek peace of mind in knowing why the heavens have seemed to conspire against you.

For as long as the mind could ponder the world around it, many souls have attempted in vain to interpret and understand their very existence. I have come to the conclusion that there exist two predominate philosophies with which one may begin to delineate the intricate and seemingly unfathomable mysteries of life---two apparently contrasting explanations that provide a rough framework for the workings of the world around us: that of natural philosophy, and that of art. You, my husband, have become completely confident in the teachings of natural philosophy, to the point of obsession. You have patronized the passions of your friend, Henry Clerval, who embraced the study of romantic ideals such as language and sentiment. This has been your greatest mistake, for you felt there was truth in your philosophy and misleading fabrications in the other, and this has contributed greatly to your downfall. For I believe that neither side is devoid of truth, and in fact, that nothing but a clever combination of the two will bring you any sort of clarity. Both, however diverse, provide enlightenment

regarding the fundamentals of life. Natural philosophy provides rationalization through a technical standpoint---the atoms that form molecules and interact to make the body move, grow, sense, heal, and do work independent of its environment. This aspect of life you have mastered, as with your knowledge you have created a human being with your own hands. But can natural philosophy explain to any large degree how a living thing thinks, feels, relates? It cannot, for the arts and the relationships you possess with your own family provide the answers to life at the emotional level. So consumed by your work, you have slowly neglected your family, your only close tie to that spiritual part of life. You yourself have forgotten its dire importance completely. So once you have given life to an inanimate object, allowing it a rational mind with which to do good or bad as it pleased, you did not possess the emotional capacity to then direct it to a safe place within society. For a living thing consists not only of a corporeal body, but of a mind; both are just as intricate. And without a deep understanding of both art and natural philosophy, one will find his knowledge of the workings of an animate object incomplete, and they will forever remain a mystery.

I have often noticed that upon your return from a lengthy visit to the remotest parts of the natural world, you return with a renewed air of passion, and the melancholy disposition that has inhabited your face daily since the reign of your creation seems, at least temporarily, to dissolve with the summer breezes and running streams. You have often confessed to me of the extraordinary rejuvenation that nature offers you, which perhaps has served as the foundation for your avid scientific endeavors. But I beg of you, ponder this: your intense fixation with the natural world and your fervid attempts to discover its workings have deprived you of the very ability to admire it. While it is man's instinct to be curious, nature and life in general must be respected. Believing that you, being human, were superior to Nature's careful and delicate work were arrogant enough to mimic her greatest masterpiece---life---and in doing so have lost your own soul. Your creation, out of spite, has led you

away from the comforting scenes of summer and rational thought, towards a desolate land of ice and misery and ignorance. It is this spot on which your fate is sealed.

Fate! How can I attribute your tragic end to fate?! Even Fate, with her omniscient ways had naught to do with you. You have not predicted the penalties of your rash actions. You did not consider them before the being was created, nor did you contemplate them when your creation began to wreak havoc upon those you love. Even the confession of your responsibility might have saved innocent lives. But, alas, you sought secrecy and revenge as the utensils of recuperation, and thus have led yourself to certain doom.

And so, dearest Victor, I hope this gives you closure. Your friend Walton has avoided catastrophe, perhaps due only to the wishes of his crew. But I ask, although he is quite downtrodden, is it not better that he be alive to enjoy the wonders of the world to which he dedicated his brave voyage? Men will continue their inquisition into the mysteries of nature, but my only hope is that they do as you should have done: acknowledge the strong connection and magnitude of both natural philosophy and emotion, respect the intangible power of Nature and cease to take her work for granted, and to right immediately that which they have made wrong. Only then can man delve safely into the glory of the world.

I miss you greatly, and I love you dearly. I am sorry for the tragedy that has fallen upon you spurring simply from your genuine and admirable passion for discovery. I am truly sorry. I hope we will see each other in another lifetime. Until then.

Elizabeth Lavenza

### *8.1.1.5 Shakespeare Sonnets*

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November 2008  
EN 2224 (B Term)  
Prof. Ephraim  
*Shakespearean Sonnets*

#### Rise and Fall: An Analysis of Love and Lust in Two of Shakespeare's Sonnets

Brimming with themes of love, beauty, mortality and desire, William Shakespeare's 154 sonnets have been a coveted and deeply analyzed source of poetry since the nineteenth century. Through the sonnets, the many themes shift and interweave, individual ideas often seeming to evanesce only to reappear again later within the dense lines. Despite this, one of the most prominent themes one may notice while reading is the struggle between love and sexual desire. This theme is especially apparent with regards to the great schism that has been identified within Shakespeare's sonnets. The early sonnets refer to a "fair-haired" young man, to whom the author expresses his love. The later sonnets are addressed to a more mysterious woman popularly labeled the "Dark Lady." The author's conflict between love and lust can be found simply in the differences in tone between the two sections of sonnets, where a lighter tone of pure love and beauty gives way to a general tone of sin and untamed desire. Through the comparison of emotional content, analogies, and shifts within Shakespeare's 110th and 151st sonnets, one can ascertain the speaker's internal struggle between innocent love and sexual desire, and discover some bold ideas brought forth by Shakespeare on the topics of love and sex.

Sonnet 110 is used by the speaker as a sincere apology to the young man for being unfaithful. From the beginning, it is apparent that the speaker is confessing, and that the tone is obviously regretful and a bit self-deprecating, "Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,/ And made my self a motley to the view." The speaker is in no way attempting to justify what he believes



that he has done wrong, "Most true it is, that I have looked on truth/ Askance and strangely."

Furthermore, the speaker offers an almost obsequious plea for the young man's forgiveness, "Now all is done, have what shall have no end:/ Mine appetite I never more will grind/ On newer proof."

The speaker has admitted to experience with infidelity, yet swears that it is behind him, that his love for the young man is what matters most. On the contrary, sonnet 151 serves as the speaker's attempt to justify his inability to control his lustful desires, "Then, gently cheater, urge not my amiss,/ Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:/ For, thou betraying me, I do betray/ My nobler part to my gross body's treason." The speaker knows that his sexual eagerness may compromise his relationship, but ignores the idea as strongly as he declared it in the earlier sonnet, "My soul doth tell my body that he may/ Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason." The general tone of sonnet 151 is encompassed by sexual phrases, suggesting that the speaker's mind is likewise driving solely by his sexual desire, even associating it directly with love. The conflict between love and lust is credibly here, as in sonnet 110, the speaker was willing to ignore his physical needs for the sake of his relationship, while in sonnet 151 he seems to argue that the two emotions are indivisible, that the distinction between the two are obscure. Should sexual desire be subjugated for the sake of true love? Judging by the contrast in tones, the speaker seems to favor the thought of love over the reigning of sexual need.

The analogies present in each sonnet reveal much about the speaker's opinions. Sonnet 110 uses many heaven-related analogies towards the end including, "A god in love," "next my heaven the best," and "thy pure and most loving breast." Each of these analogies refers in a fawning manner to the young man, thus further expressing his confidence in the importance of love in a relationship; expressing that it is the quintessential part. Sonnet 151 as a whole, however uses sex as an overall analogy, "But rising a thy name doth point to thee,/ As his triumphant prize. Proud of

this pride,/ He is contended thy poor drudge to be, / To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.” The author uses the image of an erect penis as a symbol of the way his sexual needs govern his relationship, instead of the other way around. The fact that the woman is considered the analogy’s “triumphant prize” further strengthens the speaker’s point that sex is the main impetus in the relationship. These analogies again provide evidence of the speaker’s inner battle with love and lust. In sonnet 110, he regards the young man and his innocent love with reverence, yet diminishes his relationship with the woman to a mere means of relieving his sexual tension. The use of such a bold use of sexual language and innuendo was also hugely uncommon for the time, leading to the fact that Shakespeare’s thoughts on love, sex and the relationship between them were shocking to say the least.

As is standard within a sonnet, the last two lines consist of either a slight change in tone or a dramatic shift in opinion; this can be either an extension or a contradiction. In the case of the two sonnets in question, the shift is merely a nuance in direction and only further clarifies the speaker’s original philosophy. Each sonnet deals with the speaker’s arguments after an act of infidelity. The last two lines of each sonnet servers to further elucidate the speaker’s views regarding whether that kind of behavior should be tolerated. In sonnet 110, “Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,/ Even to thy pure and most loving breast,” the speaker switches from his desperate promise to remain faithful to an ingratiating plea for the young man’s forgiveness. He communicates his opinion that acting on his sexual needs is a sin that requires punishment. In sonnet 151, “No want of conscience hold it that I call/ Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall,” the speaker shifts from a description of his sex analogy to a blatant statement of his views on infidelity (yet still with a double meaning). In these two lines, the speaker feels no shame in being

driven by sexual desire and even suggests that the two are almost synonymous. In the two sonnets, the speaker obviously contradicts himself, a very clear example of his gridlock of love and lust.

At a time when sexual intercourse was a very ambiguous part of life, Shakespeare's sonnets bring up some very important views and questions regarding the role of both love and sex in a relationship. To what extent can the expression of sexual desire be tolerated? Can sex and love be separated from one another, or are they unified? When pondering the lighter tones of the earlier Shakespeare sonnets, the speaker seems to view uncontrolled sexual desire as sinful, shallow and problematic. His distinct views remain nebulous, yet raise many questions within a subject that is still very ambiguous today---Love or Lust?

## 8.1.2 Analysis of Acting and Performance

### 8.1.2.1 *American Buffalo and The Laramie Project*

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February 2011  
EN3223  
Prof. Vick  
*American Buffalo and Laramie Project*

The Actors to the Audience: Methods of Portraying the Dramatic Element of Thought in Two Plays

A playwright's choice of style regarding the structure of a play becomes the fundamental factor regarding how the element of thought, or the themes and motifs, of the play are finally communicated to the live audience. But the individual styles and choices of the director, dramaturg, and actors also influence the way in which an audience perceives the playwright's original words and thus, his intended thought. These factors also vary widely between play to play in terms of diversity in genres and moods.

*The Laramie Project*, by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project, and David Mamet's *American*

*Buffalo*, are both immensely serious and deeply provocative works that are well-known and loved by audiences and critics alike. Though the production of the two plays, put on by Masque and MW Repertory Theatre Company, etc. respectively at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, utilize very different methods relating to the types of acting used, the application of the structure of the plays, and the interpretations of the character to communicate very similar themes: a look into the human condition.

The foundational structure of the two plays is widely different, which immediately affects how the actors must choose to interpret their lines. *American Buffalo* consists solely of a continuous scene between three men. The subtle themes of the play, therefore, manifest themselves through the reactions of the characters to one another. Most of the lines are relatively colloquial, so the mood of the play and underlying motifs must be discerned through the intonations, dispositions, and body language of the actors. It was quite obvious that the actors had taken the time to understand exactly what they're saying with each line, even if that involved reading *between* the lines, and that effort most definitely aided the audience in interpreting the play the way the playwright intended. Conversely, *The Laramie Project* consisted mostly of monologues pieced together from real-life interviews. The actors did not have the luxury of being able to communicate the important themes through their reactions to other characters. But the monologues themselves mostly contained the recollection of a story or an open reflection of the way the character felt at one point in time. Thus, the themes of the monologues are more or less clearly stated, and the actor's work was in presenting the lines with the proper intonation to reflect the mood of the individual monologues. Despite different methods, both plays communicated their respective play's commentary on the human condition effectively, with *American Buffalo* using reactions to one another and the situations that occur and *The Laramie Project* using intonation as they discuss certain people or events.

The structure of the chronology of the two shows was also fundamentally dissimilar. Mamet's play was conventional in a sense, as the plot utilized a continuous set of circumstances that that

happens more or less in real time. Because the timing is very realistic, the actors were able to use even more of a natural tone to their acting. Similarly, the lighting for the show was able to be very minimal, only consisting of blackouts between scenes. This aided the actors as it gives the audience the sense that they are watching a believable scene, which will make the commentary in the play that much more effective. Kaufman's play, although it had a very loosely chronological plotline, consisted of monologues grouped together based not on date, but on subject matter. As the plot progressed, the monologues were interspersed throughout it as if they were flashbacks. This presents a challenge to the play's actors as their monologues sometimes seemed to come out of context and didn't relate directly to any dialogue right before it. The actors did a very effectual job, however, with preparing themselves mentally with the background of the particular character that they were portraying, so that their emotions would match the words they were speaking. The lighting, which would spotlight an actor as they spoke, also played a crucial role in helping the actors to communicate the distinction between their various characters and to separate the chronology of the monologues from one another. Whether the plays were concretely believable or abstract, the plotlines of both shows were easy to follow and the emotions involved spoke greatly of the themes of the plays.

The actor's interpretations of characters can greatly affect the communication of the play's motifs to the audience. *American Buffalo* was in great part a character study. Therefore, the three men were very easily distinguishable not only from the descriptions of their characters in the script, but also from the types of lines assigned to them. The character's personalities are so evident that they may even be considered stock characters. The actors were competent in taking this resource to the extreme, choosing intonations and mannerisms that suited the characters perfectly. This allowed a very easy analysis regarding how these stock characters related to one another. *The Laramie Project*, on the other hand, is a play that was written with over 70 characters, intending a small cast to perform multiple roles. This can make character development rather difficult, as an actor will have many personalities to focus

upon. Furthermore, the actors must switch back and forth between characters throughout the show. On a superficial level, the change of costumes certainly helped not only the audience, but also the actors themselves, to distinguish between personalities. In terms of acting, the actors were advised to think about ways to differentiate between the characters by examining their backgrounds and motivations. Despite the fact that the audience was obviously required to use the concept of “suspension of disbelief” in accepting that the same actor was representing multiple characters, the actors’ skill in creating multiple personalities allowed the audience to understand the themes of the play.

The comparison of Mamet’s *American Buffalo* and Kaufman’s *The Laramie Project* provides great proof that there are many different ways to communicate thought to an audience. Whether the structure of the play is simple and straightforward versus abstract, or whether the themes of the play are subtle versus plainly stated, a group of talented actors in collaboration with a dedicated theatre company has the ability to use the wonderful, diverse art of theatre to bring inspiration, enlightenment, hope, new perspectives, or simply sheer entertainment to its audiences.

### *8.1.2.2 Life as Performance*

Anika Blodgett  
November 2010  
EN2221  
Prof. Cocola  
*Life as Performance*

#### Reflection on Life as Performance

Pondering the intricate dilemma regarding whether or not life itself can be considered “performance” is a delicate task to which I believe there is no definite end. I, personally, am under the assumption that, due to the fact that there are many slightly nuanced definitions of the concept of “performance” or “to perform,” it is up to one’s own judgment whether or not to consider oneself an actor simply by existing. A quote found in Schechner’s “What Is ‘To Perform?’” provides an interesting interpretation of performance upon which I feel that further discussion is required, “The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as ‘performance,’ or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself.”

Drawing an allegorical situation that could apply to one’s life as a whole may be of help. So imagine a scenario: you are planning to propose to your girlfriend. But first, you must tell her that you’ve lost your job. In the moments before you break the news on which your future hangs precariously, you would be very aware that she is watching you every second. Your body language and facial expressions cannot give away the fearful emotions that rattle within you. Your exterior must be calm. You must anticipate the reaction she will produce based on the way in which you phrase your admission. You would choose the correct rhythm, intonation, and stresses so as to convince your girlfriend to react in a favorable way. When she accepts your folly, you get down on one knee, pull out a box with a diamond ring, and say, “Will you marry me?”

Now, all those things you would do are also things that I find myself doing on stage when I am literally performing before an audience. I know that, even when I am not the center of the scene, the audience is always watching me. I must always react to what is around me in a way that best reflects my character's attributes. I know my character's personality and motives, therefore I phrase my lines to mirror the intent and emotion that my character would put behind them. I follow blocking and use props that were previously designated. I follow protocols that are expected of me to portray an image that I want others to see.

I believe that both on stage and in real life, you are trying to express yourself in a way that will be interpreted correctly by those around you. When acting, this involves following blocking and set lines, and in life it sometimes involves following certain predetermined norms that are considered socially acceptable, like getting down on one knee with a diamond ring when you've chosen a potential life mate.

Generally, while I've come no closer to really answering the root of the question, I find a great number of similarities between methods I use on stage and in real life. I learn far too much about one from the other to ever treat them as two completely separate concepts. And, anyway, I have NO problem considering my whole life a performance. Performing is what I live for!



### 8.1.3 Theatre Production Design

#### 8.1.3.1 Indian-Inspired Costume Design for *Taming of the Shrew*

Anika Blodgett  
April 2009  
EN2222  
Costume Design

Innovative Costume Design for William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*

William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a highly comical and deeply thought-provoking play involving many mistaken identities and confusing situations. Due to these frequent costume changes, I have chosen to use this play for the Costume Design Project, for it allows a great bit of freedom in creating costumes, and provided quite a challenge in terms of the costume plot! It was leisure to design costumes to match costumes to the characters' very prominent personalities!

There is much identity shifting in *The Taming of the Shrew*. This constant theme of the ambiguity of the truth led me to create costumes that reflected this mysteriousness. The costumes were inspired by the Hindi or Arab culture, partly modern and partly old-fashioned. Much inspiration was taken from the Arabian Dance from Tchaikovski's ballet *The Nutcracker*. The dancer is dressed lavishly as an Arabian Princess, with male escorts.. Her dance is seductive, mystical, and beautiful. The music certainly matches her movement and mood. Similarly, I drew inspiration from Nicole Kidman's scene from *Moulin Rouge*, in which she played a Hindi courtesan. In the costumes, I hoped to translate the nebulous situations of the play visually.

The costumes themselves, while reflecting the mysterious aspect of the play, also offer symbolism regarding what is going on in the plot. At the start of the play, Katherine is brash, outspoken, and untamed. Her clothing reflects this. It is revealing, flashy, and loud, and she does not wear binding shoes. As her scenes go by, her costumes become more and more conservative as Petruccio succeeds in

“taming” her. This shift culminates visually as in the last scene, when she is suddenly completely “tamed” she appears in a plain, conservative dress with heeled shoes on. On the other hand, Bianca begins as the picture perfect wife---sweet, innocent, and obedient. She begins the play in conservative, dark dresses with fancy heels. Her outfits become slightly more ostentatious and bright. In the final scene, she has become just as brash as Kate had been in the beginning, and her bright, decorative, seductive costume reflects this transition.

There is always doubt among readers of this Shakespeare play as to whether or not Kate has really been “tamed,” or whether she is just going along with Petruccio’s wishes, realizing that it is the only way that she can be happy and find a place in society. To reflect this ambiguity, Katherine’s character constantly wears some accent of gold (however subtle). Whether it be a cuff, jewelry, a headpiece, or the embroidery on her dress, the gold symbolizes Kate’s free will and vivaciousness, which at least I believe can never really be taken from her.

In a play such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, with mixed identities and criss-crossing plotlines, it is very fun to be able to create costumes to match the mysterious and amusing transitions that comment on the roles of husband and wife in society.

Costume Plot for *The Taming of the Shrew*

<b>Costume Plot</b>	Int .i	Int. ii	1. i	1.ii	2.i	3. i	3.ii	3.i ii	4.i	4. ii	4.iii	4.i v	4. v	4. vi	5. i	5.ii	cou nt
Katherine			X 1		X2		X3	X3	X3		X4			X4	X 4	X5 qc	5
Petruccio				X1	X1		X2	X2	X3 qc		X4			X4	X 4	X5 qc	5
Bianca			X 1		X2	X 2	X3	X3							X 4	X5 qc	5
Babtista			X 1		X2		X3	X3				X4			X 4	X5 qc	5
Lucentio			X 1	X2 qc	X2	X 2	X2	X2		X 2		X2	X 2		X 3	X4	4
Tranio			X 1	X2 qc	X2		X2	X2		X 2		X2			X 2	X3 qc	3
Gremio			X 1	X1	X1		X1	X1								X2	2
Hortensio			X 1	X1	X2 qc	X 2	X2	X2		X 3	X4 qc			X4	X 4	X5 qc	5
Grumio				X1			X2	X2	X2		X4					X5	5
Biondello			X 1	X2 qc	X2		X2	X2		X 3			X 4		X 5	X6 qc	6
Chris. Sly	X1	X2 qc	X 2														2
Hostess	X1																1
Lord	X1																1
Servant(s)	X1					X 2	X3 qc	X3	X3							X4	20*
Players	X1																5*
Bartholomew		X1															1
Curtis									X1								1
Pedant										X 1		X2			X 2		2
Tailor											X1						1
Vincentio														X1	X 1		1
Widow																X1	1
Total Costume Count: 81																	

\*The number of servants and players is not specified. In this plot, it was assumed that there is 5 each of servants and players, all having identical costumes, and the former being used as extras throughout the play. Not all must be used in each scene, or there may be more, etc. Therefore the final costume count will depend on the number of servants and players used for each scene.

Katherine- Costume Breakdown

Costume #	Act.Scene	Description	Notes
1	1.i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-red bustier with gold décor</li> <li>-floor-length transparent skirt</li> <li>-waist is belt-like, red, with gold design</li> <li>-gold chains hang from sternum of bustier around the back</li> <li>-gold chains hang from middle of “belt” across thighs and around back</li> <li>-gold cuffs, jewelry and head ornament</li> <li>-piece of red material attached to both wrists and back</li> <li>-barefoot</li> </ul>	-very revealing and flashy
2	2.i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-another bustier, metallic light blue, and with sleeves that hang from the elbow, trimmed in gold</li> <li>-draping pants in the same material that are fitted around the knees and ankles with openings along the thighs, waist area is gold</li> <li>-turban-like headdress in the same metallic light blue material and decorated in gold trimming</li> <li>-same gold jewelry, but light blue and gold headpiece</li> <li>-barefoot</li> </ul>	-similarly flashy
3	3.ii,3.iii,4.i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-white top that covers midriff, cap sleeves, decorate along the bottom with silver coin-like decorations</li> <li>-floor-length</li> </ul>	-slightly more subdued

		transparent white skirt, waist area is opaque white, similarly decorated with silver decorations -gold headpiece across forehead with trailing white transparent material in the effect of a veil -flat white shoes	
4	4.iii,4.vi,5.i	-pale pink long-sleeve shirt, textured with faint gold pattern -loose pale pink opaque pants that are fitted around the ankle -tan shoes with a slight heel	-less ostentatious
5	5.ii	-long-sleeved, loosely fitting, floor length dress in brown -black shoes with a relatively high heel -subtle gold necklace	-very modest and conservative

#### Bianca- Costume Breakdown

Costume #	Act.Scene	Description	Notes
1	1.i	-modest, deep maroon dress with subtly triangular pattern on the front -long-sleeved and floor-length -black shoes with relatively high heel	-very conservative
2	2.i,3.i	-similar dress in dark blue, pattern is different and slightly more significant -similar shoes	-similarly conservative
3	3.ii,3.iii	-another similar dress in lighter green, with a prominent bright pattern	-a bit more loud

		-tan shoes with a smaller heel	
4	5.i	-much tighter, light blue dress that ends at the knee, short cap sleeves -light blue cuffs and headpiece, decorated in silver -white flats	-increasingly loud and non-conservative
5	5.ii	-bustier composed of silver strands -similarly decorated short skirt -long red gloves -red fabric trailing from back part of waist to the floor in the fashion of a train -prominent silver cuffs and jewelry -barefoot	-very revealing and flashy

### 8.1.3.2 Director's Note for *Dark Play*

Anika Blodgett  
 July 2010  
*Dark Play*

In regards to theatre, I believe that Ms. Spiegel is completely correct. I agree with her in that, "The best theatre is theatre that challenges the audience," so they, "Can recognize the darkness and danger in their own souls, and actively take steps to change it." A play, or any piece of performance art for that matter, is most valuable to me when I leave the theatre thinking about life--- the way I view it and the role I play in it. I am most intrigued with a piece of art when I am left slightly altered by it; whether I've gained a new appreciation for something, received inspiration, or have been left unsettled by some negative thought that I see reflected in myself. *Dark Play* has done all of these things for me. It enraptured me with its obvious warnings of naivety, pathologic lies, manipulation, and hopeless

desperation. But it also instigates intricate thoughts of explored sexuality, mixed identity, and deep, almost suicidal love. I found myself, over the course of the few months this show was in production, attempting in vain to summarize this show into a neat one-line moral. But it just can't be done. This play is just too complex and multi-faceted, and leaves too much open to interpretation. So I still have a lot of thinking to do regarding what exactly it means to me; but nevertheless, it has left me truly moved. I hope it does the same for you.

I hold WPI theatre, and all of the immensely talented people involved, with the utmost respect. I hope with my first experience directing, through a rough trial-and-error method, I will eventually learn how to make my own contribution to an organization which has made me incredibly happy.

Nick says, "I like to see how far I can push people's reactions." I just *have* to take a page out of his book. Thus, I hope when the houselights come up after *Dark Play*, that your reactions have been successfully pushed. Enjoy our dark and dangerous play.

### ***8.1.3.3 Original Scenic Design***

Anika Blodgett  
March 2009  
EN2222  
*Scenic Design*

#### Helixes of Life A Blending of Art and Science through Scenic Design

### **Introduction**

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) is nothing short of the molecule of life. This substance's intriguing combination and arrangement of atoms is what make us who we are. Composed of two parallel backbones of sugar and phosphate groups connected across by two of four different nucleotides like rungs of a ladder, DNA forms a double helix, and contains instructions for the development and

functioning of all living things. When DNA is replicated to create new strands for the growth or reproduction of an organism, the two connecting nucleotides are “unzipped” down the entire strand of DNA, and new complimentary strands complete another, identical molecule of DNA.

“Helixes of Life” is a set design that attempts to bridge the unfortunate and sometimes relentless gap between science and art. The set itself draws inspiration from the structure of the DNA molecule. As the spiral staircases are built around a beam, they mimic the “unzipped” form of the DNA strand, where the helical shape of the railing reflects the sugar phosphate backbone and the steps reflect the nucleotide bridges. The catwalks take the shape of two reciprocal “waves” that suggest the helical shape of a full DNA molecule. The platform itself, consisting of a central circular platform surrounded by raised or lowered circular platforms of increasing radius imitates a very simplified model of the atom---the building block of all matter. The central platform represents the nucleus of an atom, while the ascending and descending circular platforms represent the orbital shells which electrons inhabit as they circle the nucleus. Also, the designs cut out of the back walls will suggest yet more helical shapes. Despite the fact that the set is based off of scientific ideas, it is nevertheless a set on which theatrical plays will be presented. While this mixing of logic and emotion may seem to be juxtaposition, both aspects of the human mind are crucial to the world around us and the workings within us. Thus, “Helixes of Life” endeavors to utilize the set and the plays to present science and art at last as one entity: each using the other in a beneficial way to bring enthusiasm and clarity to life in general.

## **Structural Design**

### *Summary*

“Helixes of Life” consists of a central, circular platform, with four circular platforms of increasing radius engulfing it. The back half of said circular platforms increases in height in a stepwise fashion. Similarly, the front half of the platforms decrease in height in a stepwise fashion. For the purpose of the



entering and exiting of actors, three spiral staircases sit atop the highest platform, one in the center of the set around an I-beam, the other two centered between it and the start of the catwalks. The catwalks, taking the rough outlined shape of a helix, extend from the edges of the highest platform towards the edges of the seating banks, allowing actors to traverse them and get very close to audience members. A wall surrounds the entire back half of the set, allowing a backstage space and crossover for actors. Simple doors in said wall coincide with the landings at the top of the staircases so actors may enter and exit the stage via the staircases. Simpler staircases backstage will allow actors to reach these doors from backstage. Two doors will be placed in the wall in the spaces between each staircase leading to the top of the highest platform for more entrances and exits (staircases will also be needed backstage). Please see the included figures to clarify design, dimensions, concepts, and relative position inside the Little Theater.

### *Platforms*

The highest platform of the central circular set of platforms will be 3'. The diameters of the 5 enclosing circles will be 15'9", 11'3", 9', 7'6", and 6'. The stairs at the front of the platforms will be 4'6" across, and the diameters of the circles in the direction from said stairs to the center spiral staircase will be slightly smaller than those in the perpendicular direction because of the front stairs. The circles are not perfectly centered around one another, but are layered inside one another in such a way that one part of each circle meets to form the front staircase, resulting in tapered platform width as one nears the front stairs. The approximate rise and run of each successive platform, whether ascending or descending, will be 7" by 9".

### *Spiral Staircases*

The center staircase is based around the northwest I-beam in the Little Theater, and the adjacent two staircases will be free standing. The staircases will be approximately 7' tall, will rest upon

the topmost circular platform, and will terminate in a landing that leads to an opening in the back wall through which actors may enter and exit using the staircases.

### *Escape Staircases*

There will be three escape staircases that rise from backstage to meet the landings of the spiral staircases. The approximate rise and run of these staircases will be 9" by 9". The staircases will require supporting beams every few steps from the step to the floor. There will also be two smaller escape stairs of the same rise and run that meet the two doors between the spiral staircases.

### *Catwalks*

Two catwalks in the rough shape of a double helix will extend from each side of the tallest circular platform in an approximate 40° angle from the center of the circular platform. Each will consist of three oval-shaped sections 3' in length, with a total of 9' altogether. The outline of the helical catwalks will extend to the floor for support.

### *Walls and Doors*

A continuous set of walls will engulf the back side of "Helixes of Life" to provide backstage space and crossovers for actors. All walls will be approximately 10' high, or high enough to reach the top of the spiral staircase landings. The first wall, beginning near the wall in front of the stairs that lead to the Green Room, will extend 6'9" across and end right before the right side of the landing of spiral staircase A. This wall will begin 1' away from the wall above the stairs to the Green Room, so actors may enter and leave the backstage area and the Green Room. The second wall will begin attached to the first, but will run parallel to the front edge of the landing of spiral staircase A for another 6'9". The third wall will adjoin the previous wall and run 8'3" parallel to the front of the landing of spiral staircase B. The fourth wall will adjoin the previous wall and run 6'9" parallel to the front of the landing of spiral staircase C. The fifth wall will adjoin the previous wall and extend 12' to the opposite wall, ending at the edge of the door that leads to the "lobby." Openings will be cut around each spiral staircase landing to allow actors

to utilize the staircases Between each set of spiral staircases will be a door in the respective wall, 3' by 6', that will open "up and off." All walls will require two supports forming a 90° angle, with the vertical support fastened to the wall and the remaining support resting parallel on the floor. A third support should be fastened to each of these supports forming a right triangle. Either a weight should be added to the support running along the floor, or said support should be fastened to the floor.

### **Scenography**

The set should be painted one of two ways. One way would involve the use of very dark earth tones, so as to give the set a biological feel without clashing with the mood or costumes of the different plays presented on it. Preferably, the steps of the spiral staircases would consist of four colors, in two pairs that are always together. Each step should be divided in half, and painted on each side with one of these pairs of colors (each color represents a nucleotide---adenine, guanine, thymine, cytosine---which connect in specific pairs and determine an organism's traits, but the order of the pairs/side they are on does not matter). The railings should be painted a different color. The rest of the set does not require specific or color combinations as long as they are earth tones. Alternately, the set can take on a futuristic, laboratory-esque, more metaphorical metallic look much like the figures of this set and the imaginative depiction of the DNA molecule on the front cover.

The top surface of the center 3' sections of the catwalks will be composed of Plexiglas, unlike the remaining sections, which will be composed of wood like the rest of the catwalks and platforms. Inside the hollow compartment will be a light source containing several different colored lenses, so each play may choose a particular color to illuminate the situation of the character or the mood of the scene or play as a whole. Similarly, at the very top of each wall, a thin, 2" outline of a double helix will be cut out, through which a similar light source will cast the colored light of choice for each play.

## **Audience Seating**

To seat 99 people, “Helixes of Life” will allow the southern and eastern seating banks to remain intact. There will also be a northeast seating bank that seats 25 people. A few of the mobile chairs must be added to the ends of existing rows.

## **Conclusion**

“Helixes of Life” is a set that not only allows many play spaces and effects to aid actors in their performance, but attempts to unify both logical and romantic ways of viewing life. Both science and art, while they seem to accomplish very different goals, aim to explain or elucidate life on both a more detailed and fundamental level. Science explains life from a molecular and physical point-of-view, while theater comments on the emotion aspect of life. “Helixes of Life,” hopefully, will bridge the gap between these two concepts and will bring them together into one fabulous production.

## **8.2.4 Dramaturgical Analyses**

### ***8.1.4.1 A View from the Bridge***

Anika Blodgett  
November 2010  
EN2221  
Prof. Cocola  
*A View from the Bridge*

#### **Dramaturgical Essay: A View From the Bridge**

Arthur Miller’s *A View From the Bridge* is a powerful play exploring many intricately intertwining themes of hatred toward immigrants, personal reputation, integrity, and respect. The obvious tension surmounting throughout the play accumulates in the final climactic scene, during which Eddie and

Marco finally confront one another. With the proper use of stage direction, character development, costuming, technical and lighting design, and symbolism, the last scene has the potential to effectively portray these issues to the audience in a poignant manner.

The way in which the characters are clothed can lend to the overall artistic goals. For example, having Catherine, Beatrice, and Rodolpho dressed in very light colors (not white, as the lighting designer would certainly be unhappy) while having Eddie and Marco dressed in darker or black colors will provide contrast between the peaceful characters and those that clash with one another. This emphasizes the seriousness of the deadly issues between the two men, as those around them plead desperately for a peaceful reconciliation.

As Eddie is a man that relies heavily on his “name” and the amount of respect he is given by those in his life, this last scene allows the character to finally let out his anger at being slighted. All of Eddie’s lines should be given as though his anger borders on the point of insanity, they should be intense, and full of seething hatred, especially during lines that mention personal worth, “I want my name! He didn’t take my name; he’s only a punk. Marco’s got my name...” As fervently angry as Eddie’s lines should be, Catherine’s, Beatrice’s, and Rodolpho’s lines should be equally desperate, foreshadowing that something very serious and tragic is about to commence.

Certain particular adjustments can enhance the scene as well. This anger and desperation should increase even more dramatically at the line, “You want somthin’ else, Eddie, and you can never have her!” This is obviously a terrible insult to Eddie, and he must react as such. The emotion should increase to a climax when finally Marco’s line, “Eddie Carbone!” is heard, at which time the commotion should immediately cease; creating a dramatic, suspenseful silence that signifies the imminent arrival of a very critical and frightening situation. During Eddie’s monologue, the general lighting of that play area should darken and become dreary-looking, as the tragedy of the play is about to unfold. Marco should move centerstage, where a pale and wide spot should encompass him. Eddie should recite his

monologue with loathing, circling around Marco as if employing interrogation. Written stage directions should be followed as the two men engage in physical altercation. A subtle and wordless but intense piece of music should begin to be heard as the men begin to fight, adding even more of a dramatic feel. The moment the knife is presented, however, the general lighting for the play area, yet concentrated on the middle spot in which the men struggle, should fade quickly to a dramatic red. This is a common symbol for rage, passion, and death; a fitting set of concepts for the emotions and goings-on in the scene. The music should also gain in intensity. Once Eddie is stabbed, the music should cease, and the lights should fade to their deepest red. There should be a moment of utter silence, as the audience has a chance to process what has happened.

After the last of Eddie and Beatrice's lines, a projection of a bridge should appear on the back wall of the stage. The bridge represents the pragmatic way in which Alfieri recounts the story, looking over the town while standing on the symbolic means by which Italian culture makes its way into modern industrial America. Separate red spots should remain on Beatrice, Catherine, and the dying Eddie in the center of the bridge, with Rodolpho and Marco spotted and stunned on either side. While the spots and projections transition, so should low and morbid music, and a pale spot on Alfieri, who delivers his last chilling lines before all lights fade out.

Adding these directional and technical flares to the scene will not only create a more dramatic and heart-wrenching scene, but will also make clear the obvious conflicts around which the famous play is based.

#### 8.1.4.2 A Critique of a Broadway Show

Anika Blodgett  
October 2010  
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Prof. Cocola  
*Critique*

“The Whole World... It’s All Show Business!”: Broadway’s *Chicago* Razzles and Dazzles (Without the Sequins)

With a show centered around the glamour of the jazz music, Vaudeville-style entertainment, flappers, prosperity, free-thinking and celebration characteristic of the “Roaring Twenties,” one would expect nothing less than a flashy and exorbitant visual feast of allure and grandiose accompanying all costumes, props, and sets. But the 2010 Broadway revival of this risqué delve into murder and greed utilized mostly exceptional over-the-top acting skills, sultry and exciting choreography, and near-perfect vocals and orchestration to, “give us an act with lots of flash in it.” And once the curtain finally fell, there was no doubt about it: the reaction *was* most certainly passionate.

Especially compared to the recent highly impressive 2002 motion picture version, or to newer musicals on Broadway which employ monstrous sets and intricate costumes and technological effects, this production of *Chicago* was a perfect example of a dramaturgically subdued production that still achieved an equally dramatic effect. Consisting of a very small cast of approximately twenty, the musical showcased six main leads, and the rest of the cast served as all-purpose fills, playing the Six Merry Mistresses, the reporters, Roxie’s male entourage, general chorus, etc. Furthermore, there were few to no costume changes throughout the entire show---most of the cast remaining in their lingerie blacks despite character shifts. This alone is a very impressive achievement: To be able to create the allusion of dozens of different characters using solely a modification of physical mannerisms is the apex of “suspension of disbelief.” There was also no set in sight. The orchestra remained onstage for the duration of the performance on a gradually raised platform, lending a very stark “night club” feel, while

the actors portrayed their fictional scenes in front with no more than plain black chairs; another startlingly remarkable accomplishment. Overall, it is clear that the “razzle dazzle” of an extended cast and elaborate costumes and sets is not at all the most important part of a wonderful production: for the acting, vocals, and dancing in this production of *Chicago* was so astoundingly professional, the audience was immediately immersed in the crime, betrayal, and rise to fame that would convince anyone that, “You can like the life you’re livin’, or you can live the life you like!”

In terms of the portrayal of characters, this rendition of *Chicago* was no disappointment. The characters took to breaking the fourth wall often, making direct eye contact with individual audience members and even going so far as to talk to and flirt with them, and to throw objects into willing viewer hands. This served to make each character seem very real, signifying that the issues presented in the musical are not fabricated situations, but some that are present even right outside the walls of the theatre in New York City at that very moment. The actors presented their characters in such and over-the-top way that as real as they seemed, they could also be taken as caricatures---Roxie as a ditzy and desperate aspiring starlet, Billy Flynn as a sleazy and dishonest lawyer, Velma as a pushy diva, Mama Morton as a money-hungry manipulator, and Amos as the passive-aggressive introvert---that the themes presented in the musical are very apparent and made to be very exciting.

As the final bows were taken, the success of the show was plainly apparent: the costumes and set were modest, but the show was *anything* but. The musical offered a view of the reality of show business---it is dishonest, cruel, dirty, and wildly exciting... a view that is still consistent even today regarding not only show business, but politics, capitalism, and success in general. It achieved all of this while making the audience laugh, drop their jaws, and resist the urge to get up and dance. A fabulous production, Broadway’s *Chicago* is the quintessential combination of performance art, social commentary, excitement, and... well... “all that jazz!”



## 8.1.5 Analysis of Science and Literature

### 8.1.5.1 Code of Ethics and Literature

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February 2009  
EN2252  
Professor Schachterle  
*Code of Ethics*

Science and Society: The Code of Ethics of Biochemistry and its Relation to Literature

In the exponentially flourishing age of technology and scientific discovery, the borders between technological advancement and society become blurred, and the former will inevitably impact the latter, sometimes for the worse. Therefore, a code of scientific morals is created and the adherence to it expected, so as to protect society from an unlimited number of fatal predicaments involving the ever-increasing power of human knowledge.

The International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology urges the scientists in these fields to conform to a general yet powerful set of principles, and to remain true to the field's ultimate goal of "the advancement of human welfare." One of the most prominent obligations stressed by the code is to "ensure the current and future welfare of both human and non-human subjects of the research and the protection and sustainability of the environment." Generally, the primary motivation of a biochemist should be to help society, the environment, and the people that rely upon them. Victor in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* failed to see the importance of this crucial piece of advice. Blinded and consumed by obsession with the prospect of glory and fulfilled curiosity, he failed to anticipate the effects his accomplishments would have upon society and humanity in general. Not only did he release a monstrous creature whom he did not possess the emotional knowledge to control, but he discovered the ability to create and manipulate a human life... an advancement for which humanity may not be

ready. Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* examines the essential combination of a classical, or logical, personality and a romantic, or emotional, personality. One must possess an interest in the technical workings of the world to produce beneficial advancements in a field of science. But one must also concern themselves emotionally with the impacts such an advancement will have on the well-being of the people and the environment with which it may be connected. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, it may appear on the surface that the futuristically advanced technology has benefited society to the point of a flawless existence. But a deeper analysis of the novel reveals that the ultimate goal of science and technology in the *Brave New World* is not the satisfaction of society, but a means of control. As long as the people are kept complacent, the government will retain all of its power, achieving immortal supremacy. This impetus of power, not societal well-being, violates the ethical objective of science. Galileo Galilei in Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo* possessed new discoveries that would revolutionize common scientific knowledge, yet he himself admits that the betterment of society and the environment is not his most outstanding motivation, "Besides, I needed the money. How can I work, with the tax collector on the doorstep? And my poor daughter will never acquire a husband unless she has a dowry... And I like to buy books... And what about my appetite? I don't think well unless I eat well. Can I help it if I get my best ideas over a good meal and a bottle of wine?" Glory, unjustified curiosity, power, and money are poor motivations for scientific exploration. Scientists must predict the effect of their work on society, with the ultimate intention being the service of mankind. Without such forecasting, achievements in science, however substantial, violate their fundamental goal.

Biochemists are also urged to communicate effectively all of their research to other scientists and the community, to "report the findings of their research arising from public funding with due diligence and in a full, open and timely fashion to the scientific community." The secretive and introverted manner with which Victor Frankenstein carried out his scientific endeavors was one of his

most detrimental mistakes, “My tale was not one to announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar.” He refrains from communicating his scientific folly for fear that he would be loathed or that he would not be believed. His failure to correspond with others and seek advice may have cost him a solution to the predicament that ended in tragedy and death. Pirsig’s novel examines the concept of Quality, the undefined intersection of the classical and romantic mentalities that is the basis for all ideas and progression. The “peace of mind” achieved through Quality involves truly “caring” about the things that a person does and learns, including technology and scientific exploration. Caring about science would involve communicating one’s discoveries in the hopes of improving them and using them to benefit society. The government in *Brave New World* clearly violates the principle of communicating research. Most technology is used to keep the masses ignorantly happy and unaware of the deeper modes of societal control. Keeping the people of the community complacent and uninformed of the manipulating ways of the government prevents them from developing opinions and unique thoughts, thus securing all power and authority with the government. Galileo in Brecht’s play possessed information that would be very beneficial to science and society. When he was ultimately given the choice to recant his teachings which opposed those of the church, or to be condemned, he chose to recant and keep his discoveries from the community, thus violating a scientific moral of biochemistry. In each of these novels, scientific secrecy never proves to be an advantageous method, and indeed, the code of ethics for biochemistry urges communication of scientific advancement.

The IUBMB obviously advises scientists not to “engage knowingly in research that is intended for the production of agents of biological warfare or bioterrorism, nor promote such agents.” Not only must scientists adhere to the fundamental goal of societal well-being, but they must refrain from any practices that will directly harm the public or the environment. Victor Frankenstein caused a great danger upon the world in releasing a creature which he immediately abandoned, and who proceeded to

murder several people after swearing revenge on mankind. Although it is unlikely that he had destruction as a goal, Frankenstein also refused to accept the responsibility for the burden he produced, deflecting the blame for the catastrophes of the story from himself to a variety of other sources. This creation of a “weapon,” unintentional as it was, and the failure to accept responsibility for it, disobeys a rudimentary moral of biochemistry.

Interaction with other scientists is another essential principle of biochemistry, as the IUBMB urges scientists to “provide training and professional guidance and share experiences,” and to “provide appropriate help to suitably qualified individuals who seek training...” Contact and relationships with other scientists and people is crucial to the proper growth and control of science and technology. Victor Frankenstein became so consumed in his work that he neglected all ties with his family and friends. Without the emotional background to support his scientific discoveries, his creature was left lost and confused as to the workings of society and the associations between people, “There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.” Guidance regarding society and relationships may have spared the world from this creature’s dangerous solution. The society in Huxley’s novel has eradicated all familial connections, intense feelings, desire, and love between people. When John enters the society from one that allowed him to experience these things, he feels empty and unsatisfied by the lack of human emotional interaction. The *Brave New World’s* contradiction of this principle of science is one of the conflicts that leads John to suicide. Pirsig’s classical/romantic contrast is reflected here as well, in that science must derive benefits from a more “romantic” interaction with fellow scientists and the people of the society which it affects.

The Code of Ethics for biochemistry also mandates that scientists “will maintain their professional competence by keeping abreast of new information and developments in their areas of

expertise.” The acquisition of the most current knowledge is essential to the growth of science and technology. Victor Frankenstein became so infatuated with his immediate work that he became ignorant as to the effects his discoveries would have and the methods with which he could have avoided tragedy. The narrator in Pirsig’s novel explains that utilizing a purely classical approach to problem solving may leave a person “stuck” with no means to obtain a solution. To get “unstuck,” one must open the mind, and re-evaluate each situation in perspective in the hopes of achieving a solution, “What’s *really* been getting you stuck is the running from the stuckness through the cars of your train of knowledge looking for a solution that is out in front of the train.” Obtaining and using a wide breadth of knowledge will be beneficial, and sometimes mandatory, in solving problems and making scientific progress. Similarly, the society in *Brave New World* operates in a very mundane and routine manner. Very little changes so as not to upset the delicate social hierarchy and strict way of life. But, according to the Ethics of Biochemistry, science and society cannot grow and improve without new information and progress. Galileo in Brecht’s play was never able to reinforce his teachings, but as the events are based on fact, it is clear that the scientist’s revolutionary discoveries have been vital to the development of modern science.

The Code of Ethics for biochemistry and molecular biology contain principles important not only to these fields, but to science and technology in general. Scientific ethics is paramount subject matter in these novels, and many others, which reflects its significance to the societies in which we live and the environment on which they depend. Codes of Ethics have been fabricated for many fields of science, with the intention that science and technology will maintain a sound relationship to people, society, and the environment, and that the advancement of each field will always retain the ultimate goal of service to humankind.

## 8.2 Playlist

This documents the breadth of dramatic works which I have read, studied, analyzed, and retained as a crucial contribution to my skills as an actress and my theatrical knowledge during my time at WPI thus far.

<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Title</b>
Albee, Edward	<i>The Goat or Who is Sylvia?</i>
	<i>The Sandbox</i>
Bradbury, Ray	<i>Pillars of Fire</i>
Carlson, Tofer	<i>A Letter Unsent</i>
	<i>A Prayer for Rain</i>
Carmichael, Fred	<i>Any Number Can Die</i>
Cruz, Nilo	<i>Anna in the Tropics</i>
Desilets, Richard	<i>The Party Train</i>
Durang, Christopher	<i>Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*</i>
Durrenmatt, Friedrich	<i>The Physicists</i>
Finn, William	<i>Spelling Bee</i>
Fornes, Maria Irene	<i>Fefu and Her Friends</i>
Gilbert, W.S. and Sullivan, Arthur	<i>Pirates of Penzance</i>
Guare, John	<i>Six Degrees of Separation</i>
Harrower, Shannon "Haz"	<i>Bower Bird or Crazies in Love</i>
	<i>Screw This Noise</i>
Hart, Moss and Kaufman, George S. Kaufman	<i>You Can't Take It With You</i>
Jones, LeRoi	<i>Dutchman</i>
	<i>The Slave</i>

Jones, Rolin	<i>Shortstack</i>
Kander, John and Ebb, Fred	<i>Chicago</i>
Kaufman, George S.	<i>The Still Alarm</i>
	<i>Still Alarm</i>
Kaufman, Moises	<i>Gross Indecency</i>
	<i>The Laramie Project</i>
Kelley, Dennis	<i>Love and Money</i>
Kruckemeyer, Erna	<i>Cyrano De Bergerac</i>
Larson, Jonathan	<i>Rent</i>
Lee, Young Jean	<i>Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven</i>
Lindsay-Abaire, David	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>
Loesser, Frank	<i>Guys and Dolls</i>
Mamet, David	<i>American Buffalo</i>
Miller, Arthur	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
	<i>The Crucible</i>
	<i>A View from the Bridge</i>
Mowatt, Anna Cora	<i>Fashion</i>
Murillo, Carlos	<i>Dark Play</i>
O'Donnell, Dean	<i>Get me to the Church on Time</i>
Parks, Suzan-Lori	<i>The Death of the Last Black Man</i>
Pavis, Richard	<i>The Secret of Water</i>
Pirandello, Luigi (Ad. Ben Laverriere)	<i>Six Characters in Search of An Author</i>
Roger, Richard and Hammerstein, Oscar	<i>South Pacific</i>
	<i>Cinderella</i>
Royal, Bert V.	<i>Dog Sees God</i>

Sedaris, David	<i>Book of Liz</i>
Shakespeare, William	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	<i>A Winter's Tale</i>
	<i>As You Like It</i>
	<i>Macbeth</i>
	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
	<i>Sonnets</i>
	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
	<i>True West</i>
Shepard	<i>Fires in the Mirror</i>
Smith, Anna Deavere	<i>Twilight: Los Angeles</i>
Sondheim, Stephen	<i>Into the Woods</i>
	<i>Company</i>
Vessella, Steven	<i>The Change</i>
Wasserman, Dale	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
Webber, Andrew Lloyd	<i>Phantom of the Opera</i>
Wilde, Oscar	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Wilder, Thornton	<i>Matchmaker</i>
Williams, Tennessee	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Wilson, August	<i>Radio Golf</i>
Wright, Doug	<i>I Am My Own Wife</i>
Zagone, Nick	<i>Smoke Scenes</i>



### 8.3 Completed Theatre Course Requirements

The following documents the courses taken thus far that satisfy the requirements for a degree in Humanities and Arts with a concentration in Drama/Theatre from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, excluding core classes, electives, and IQP.

Course	Term	Credit
ISP: Bower Bird	A08	1/6
EN2224: Shakespeare Nothing But Love	B 08	1/3
EN2252: Science and Scientists in Modern Literature	C09	1/3
ISP: Dog Sees God	C09	1/6
EN2222: Theatre Workshop	D09	1/3
MU2632: Alden Voices	A08-D09	1/12
MU1611: Funds. Music I	A09	1/3
MU2611: Funds. Music II	B09	1/3
ISP: The Crucible	B09	1/6
ISP: Any Number Can Die/Rabbit Hole	C10	1/6
ISP: New Voices 27	D09	1/6
ISP: Book of Liz	E09	1/6
ISP: New Voices 28	D10	1/6
EN2221: American Drama	A10	1/3
EN1221: Page and Stage	B10	1/3
EN3223: Modern Drama	C11	1/3
Major Qualifying Project	A10-C11	3/3 (1 unit)
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>14/3+</b>

### 8.4 Resume

The following documents are resumes created for different general purposes, whether that be a job in theatre, in biochemistry, or in either.

## 8.4.1 Acting Resume

Anika Blodgett  
[ABlodgett@wpi.edu](mailto:ABlodgett@wpi.edu)

**School Address:**  
100 Institute Rd.  
Box #3113  
Worcester, MA 01609  
(508) 471-7935

**OBJECTIVE:** To gain an acting role.  
**WEIGHT:** 150 lbs.

**DOB:** May 21, 1990  
**EYE COLOR:** Blue/Gray

**HAIR COLOR:** Blonde  
**HEIGHT:** 5'2"

### EDUCATION/

**TRAINING:** **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**, Worcester, MA  
*Bachelor of Science* May 2012  
*Major:* Humanities and Arts - Drama/Theatre  
*Major:* Biochemistry  
**Performing Arts School of Worcester**, Worcester, MA  
August 1994-July 2006  
Training in various performing arts, including acting and musical theatre  
**Ballet Arts Worcester**  
August 2006-July 2008  
Training in productions involving acting  
**Auburn Public High School**  
September 2004-June 2008  
Theatrical courses and training  
**Wachusett Theatre Company**  
June 2000-June 2004  
Training in all elements of musical theatre

### EXPERIENCE:

*Company*.....*Kathy*.....*Worcester County Light Opera Company*  
*Bower Bird*.....*Katina Harley*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Dog Sees God*.....*Tricia*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*A Letter Unsent*.....*Wendy*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Book of Liz*.....*Elizabeth Donderstock*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*The Crucible*.....*Abigail Williams*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*The Secret of Water*.....*Director*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Dark Play*.....*Co-Director*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*South Pacific*.....*Liat*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Guys and Dolls*.....*Sarah Brown*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Six Characters*.....*The Mother*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*The Laramie Project*.....*Romain Patterson*.....*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*  
*Pirates of Penzance*.....*Daughter*.....*Performing Arts School of Worcester*  
*Various Ballets*.....*Principal Roles*.....*Performing Arts School of Worcester*  
*Various Ballets*.....*Principal Roles*.....*Ballet Arts Worcester*  
*Cinderella*.....*Cinderella*.....*Auburn Public High School*  
*Matchmaker*.....*Mrs. Molloy*.....*Auburn Public High School*  
*Gameshow*.....*Kathy*.....*Auburn Public High School*  
*Importance Being Ernest*.....*Gwendolen*.....*Auburn Public High School*  
*Various Musicals*.....*Chorus*.....*Wachusett Theatre Company*

### SKILLS:

- Extensive training in the study of Biochemistry and all related areas of study.
- Vocal training in many styles including classical, jazz, Broadway, a cappella, and basic music theory.
- Training in various styles of dancing including ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop, ballroom, and choreography.
- Training in many types of acting including straight plays and musical theatre.

## 8.4.2 Biochemistry Resume

Anika Blodgett  
[ablodgett@wpi.edu](mailto:ablodgett@wpi.edu)

**School Address:**  
100 Institute Rd.  
Worcester, MA 01609  
(508) 471-6935

**OBJECTIVE:** To gain a summer internship related to Biochemistry or Biotechnology.

**EDUCATION:** **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**, Worcester, MA  
*Bachelor of Science* May 2012  
*Major:* Biochemistry  
*Major:* Humanities and Arts - Drama/Theatre

### LABORATORY EXPERIENCE:

Work with micropipette and pipette aid, cell culture growth, sterile technique, DNA transformation, data analysis, centrifugation, bacterial staining, serial dilutions, LB agar preparation, plate pouring, agarose gel electrophoresis, media making, filter sterilization, hemocytometer use, thawing, plating and feeding suspension and adherent cells, cryopreservation, trypsinization, splitting cell cultures, aspiration.

### COURSES

#### TAKEN:

Lecture:

- General Chemistry I-III
- Cell Biology
- Genetics
- Introduction to Biotechnology
- Microbiology
- Organic Chemistry I-III
- Biochemistry I-III

Laboratory:

- General Chemistry Laboratories
- Molecular Genetics Laboratory
- Molecular Biology, Microbiology and Cloning Laboratory
- Cell Culture Techniques for Animal Cells Laboratory

**ACTIVITIES:** Masque, 2008-present  
Ballroom Dance Team, 2008-present  
Alden Voices, *Stage Manager*, 2008-present  
VOX, *Secretary*, 2008-present  
Festival Choir, *Stage Manager*, 2008-present  
The Audiophiles, 2008-present  
Alpha Gamma Delta, *Songbird*, 2009-present  
MW Repertory Theatre, 2008-present  
Alpha Psi Omega, *Business Manager*, 2009-present

#### SKILLS:

- Experience with Clone Manager software which includes gene feature searching and mapping, the simulation of restriction enzyme use, ligation, 3' and 5' incompatible end modification, and ligation.
- Experience with DNASTAR Lasergene software which includes programs involved with primer design, sequence assembly and analysis, sequence alignment, protein structure analysis and prediction
- Proficient with Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Powerpoint.
- Vocal training in many styles including classical, jazz, Broadway, a cappella, and basic training in music theory.
- Training in various styles of dancing including ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop, ballroom, and choreography.
- Training in many types of acting including straight plays and musical theatre.

### 8.4.3 Detailed Resume

#### Anika Blodgett

*Campus:*

Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
100 Institute Rd.  
Box # 3113  
Worcester, MA 01609  
1-(508)-471-7935 (cell)

*Permanent:*

25 Phoenix Rd.  
Auburn, MA 01501  
(508)-832-2276 (home)  
ILoveJoshGroban4@aol.com

**Objective:** Theatre position.

**Summary:**

- Fourteen years of training in ballet and other forms of dance.
- Five years of private voice lessons and other choral and vocal training.
- Performance of lead roles in numerous musicals and plays.
- High school graduate with Highest Honors, currently a student at WPI.
- Several years of experience with choreography in many types of dance.

**Education:**

- *Auburn High School '09-* academics/ theatrical and musical direction.
- *Performing Arts School of Worcester/ Ballet Arts Worcester '09-* dance, vocal, and theater classes and instruction.
- *Worcester Polytechnic Institute '12-* majoring in Biochemistry and Theatre

**Experience:**

I have studied classical ballet for the past fourteen years, beginning at the Performing Arts School of Worcester under the direction of professional instructors, and currently at the school's successor, Ballet Arts Worcester, under the direction of founder Jennifer Agbay. For the past six years, I have devoted an average of seventeen hours per week both in dance classes (including pointe classes) and rehearsals for Ballet Arts Worcester's resident ballet company, The Youth Ballet of Worcester. I have participated in many ballets including lead roles in its annual production of *The Nutcracker* as well as annual concerts that feature its dancers.

For the past six years, I have studied jazz and modern dancing, and have had experience with lyrical, flamenco, Irish step, belly dancing, African, hip-hop, yoga, pilates, stretch, character, and variations. Most recently I have become a part of the Ballroom dance team at college, where I have learned elementary forms of waltz, foxtrot, tango, swing, salsa, and many more.

I have choreographed four pieces for a project in high school, one of which was a group piece, the others being solos. I have participated in BAW's Student Choreography Concert series, choreographing both solo and group works. These five pieces either concentrated on one dance form or combined elements of classical ballet, modern, and jazz. I have also choreographed for my Senior Project at BAW, which was a group jazz piece. All of my pieces have been evaluated and critiqued by

Jennifer Agbay, who provides useful and professional feedback and instruction; all of which I absorb and use to make my choreography better. The opportunity to have Mrs. Agbay as a teacher has provided me with professional skills that I will use in all pieces which I choreograph. I have recently choreographed the musical "Company" for the Worcester County Light Opera Company, and have been asked back to choreography "Spelling Bee."

**Activities:**

In my youth I have taken acting classes and participated in chorus at the Performing Arts School of Worcester, and have participated in *The Pirates of Penzance* through the school. I studied musical theater with the Foothills Theater Company for four years, and have participated in its annual musicals (including *Peter Pan*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Oliver Twist*, and *The King and I*.) During middle school and high school, I have been a valued member of chorus, the jazz and select choirs, and drama classes. I have taken private voice lessons for five years, under various professional instructors. In these lessons, I have been coached in classical, jazz, and Broadway styles. During my senior year of high school, I was accepted in the Central District Massachusetts Music Educators' Association Choir, where I sang higher level choral music with an elite group of singers. I played lead roles in three plays through Auburn High School, including *The Matchmaker*, *Gameshow*, and *The Importance of Being Ernest*, as well as the lead role in the musical *Cinderella*. In college, I am still an active member of chorus, and have played the lead role in *Bower Bird*, a play written by an alumnus. This was only the first of many plays for which I have acted, directed, and choreographed. I look forward to participating in future plays and musical put on by the school, as well as continuing my private vocal lessons.

**Awards/ Distinctions:**

I graduated from high school with highest honors after receiving chorus/ theatre arts awards each year. I was awarded the overall chorus and drama awards during graduation, as well as awards for Social Science, Biological Science, and English. Together, I have been honored with over \$9,000 in scholarships both through Auburn High School and various local businesses. I just recently received a distinction for successful completion of the rigorous Advanced Placement classes I have taken in high school.

**Personal Note:**

Singing, acting and dancing are a large part of me, if not the very elements that make me who I am. I have an immense passion not only to perform in these areas, but also to create in them. If given the opportunity, I would put every bit of effort into the continuation and growth of my career in the performing arts.

**References:**       References available upon request.

### 8.4.4 Biography

Anika Blodgett

Anika has studied classical ballet for fourteen years at the Performing Arts School of Worcester, now Ballet Arts Worcester, as well as modern, jazz, hip-hop, Ballroom and other forms of dance. As a member of the Youth Ballet of Worcester, BAW's resident ballet company, she has performed lead roles in numerous ballets. She has participated in many acting classes, choruses, plays, and musicals through the Wachusett Theater Company, the Performing Arts School of Worcester, the Central District Massachusetts Music Educators' Association, Auburn High School, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Major roles have included Clara and The Dewdrop Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Puck in the ballet *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lead role in the musical *Cinderella*, Abigail Williams in *The Crucible*, and Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls*. She has studied classical and jazz vocals in private voice lessons for four years. She is a junior at WPI double-majoring in biochemistry and Humanities and Arts Drama/Theatre. She has recently choreographed as well as performed in the musical *Company* put on by the Worcester County Light Opera Company, and later returned to choreograph WCLOC's *Spelling Bee*. She co-directed her first full-length play, *Dark Play*, for Sunburns theatre company in 2010.

### 8.5 Work Log

The following summarizes the hours dedicated to the meetings, rehearsals, research, and writing associated with the completion of this portfolio.

Date	Activity	Show/Purpose/Details	Hours Spent
8/16/10	Line Memorization	Guys and Dolls	2
8/17/10	Line Memorization	Guys and Dolls	2
8/18/10	Line Memorization	Guys and Dolls	2
8/21/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	6
8/22/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4.5
8/23/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	8
8/25/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
8/27/10	Line/Music Memorization	Guys and Dolls	3
8/28/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	7
8/29/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4.5
8/30/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	2
8/31/10	MQP Meeting		1
9/1/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
9/3/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
9/4/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4
9/5/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4
9/6/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4

9/7/10	MQP Meeting		1
9/7/10	Read Actors on Acting	Research	.75
9/8/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
9/10/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4
9/11/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
9/12/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	5
9/12/10	Line/Music Memorization	Guys and Dolls	2
9/13/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	3
9/14/10	MQP Meeting		1
9/15/10	Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	4
9/17/10	Cue to Cue	Guys and Dolls	5
9/18/10	Piano Tech	Guys and Dolls	5
9/19/10	Sitzprobe/Piano Tech	Guys and Dolls	8
9/19/10	Read Actors on Acting	Research	1
9/20/10	Dress Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	5
9/21/10	MQP Meeting		1
9/21/10	Dress Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	5
9/22/10	Open Dress Rehearsal	Guys and Dolls	5
9/23/10	Opening Night	Guys and Dolls	5
9/24/10	Show	Guys and Dolls	5
9/25/10	Matinee, Closing Night, Strike	Guys and Dolls	12
9/28/10	MQP Meeting		1
10/5/10	MQP Meeting		1
10/6/10	Auditions	Six Characters	1
10/8/10	Callbacks	Six Characters	1
10/25/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2
10/26/10	Line Memorization	Six Characters	2
10/28/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2
10/29/10	Line Memorization	Six Characters	1
11/1/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2
11/2/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2
11/4/10	Read Actors on Acting	Research	2
11/5/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	3
11/9/10	Line Memorization	Six Characters	1
11/9/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2
11/11/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	2.5
11/12/10	Rehearsal	Six Characters	3
11/15/10	Dress Rehearsal	Six Characters	4
11/16/10	Dress Rehearsal	Six Characters	5
11/17/10	Preview	Six Characters	5
11/18/10	Opening Night	Six Characters	5
11/19/10	Show	Six Characters	5
11/20/10	Closing Night/Strike	Six Characters	7
11/30/10	Auditions	Laramie Project	1

12/3/10	MQP Meeting		1
12/7/10	MQP Meeting		.5
12/8/10	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2.5
12/10/10	MQP Meeting		1
12/14/10	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
1/9/11	Read Actors on Acting	Research	1.5
1/10/11	Line Memorization	Laramie Project	2
1/11/11	Create Project Outline	Portfolio	1
1/13/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2.5
1/15/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
1/15/11	Line Memorization	Laramie Project	2
1/17/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
1/18/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1
1/19/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1
1/19/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	2
1/20/11	MQP Meeting		.75
1/20/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
1/22/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	4
1/24/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	3
1/25/11	MQP Meeting		1
1/26/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1
1/27/11	MQP Meeting		.5
1/28/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2.5
1/31/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1
2/1/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1.5
2/2/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	1
2/2/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	3
2/3/11	MQP Meeting		1
2/4/11	Line Memorization	Laramie Project	2
2/5/11	Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2.5
2/6/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	4
2/7/11	Tech Rehearsal	Laramie Project	3.5
2/8/11	MQP Meeting		1
2/9/11	Tech Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
2/10/11	Tech Rehearsal	Laramie Project	2
2/12/11	Tech Rehearsal	Laramie Project	3
2/13/11	Line Memorization	Laramie Project	1
2/14/11	Dress Rehearsal	Laramie Project	4
2/15/11	Dress Rehearsal	Laramie Project	5
2/16/11	Preview	Laramie Project	5
2/16/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	1
2/17/11	MQP Meeting		.5
2/17/11	Opening Night	Laramie Project	5
2/18/11	Show	Laramie Project	5
2/19/11	Closing Night/Strike	Laramie Project	7
2/21/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	3



2/22/11	MQP Meeting		1
2/23/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	5
2/24/11	MQP Meeting		.5
2/25/11	MQP Writing	Portfolio	2
3/1/11	MQP Meeting		1
		Total:	318.5 hours

## 8.6 WPI Theatre Involvement

### Anika Blodgett

[ABlodgett@wpi.edu](mailto:ABlodgett@wpi.edu)

#### Theater Arts since Enrollment in WPI

Term/Year	Performance/Leadership	Position/Role(s)
A '08	<i>Bower Bird aka Crazies in Love</i> (MWRRep)	Katrina Harley
B '08	<i>The Nutcracker</i> (Ballet Arts Worcester)	Rat Queen
		Flower Corps du Ballet (dancing chorus)
C '09	<i>Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead</i> (MWRRep)	Tricia
	<i>Cabaret</i> (VOX)	Chorus-Poor Wand'ring One (Pirates of Penzance)
		Lisa-Cell Block Tango (Chicago)
D '09	<i>New Voices 27</i> (Masque)	
	<i>A Letter Unsent</i>	Wendy
	<i>Screw This Noise</i>	Stage Manager
	<i>Company</i> (Worcester County Light Opera Company)	Choreographer
	VOX Officer	Kathy
	Masque Officer	Treasurer
E '09	<i>The Book of Liz</i> (Sunburns)	Secretary
A '09	<i>The Book of Liz</i> (Sunburns)	Elizabeth Donderstock
	<i>South Pacific</i> (VOX)	Liat
	<i>Where There's Smoke There's Fire</i> (MWRRep)	Voice #1
	VOX Officer	Treasurer
B '09	Masque Officer	Secretary
	<i>The Crucible</i> (Masque)	Abigail Williams
	VOX Officer	Treasurer

	Masque Officer	Secretary
C'10	<i>Any Number Can Die</i> (Masque)	Wife
	<i>Rabbit Hole</i> (MWRep)	Scenic Designer
	<i>Cabaret</i> (VOX)	Maureen (Over the Moon)
	VOX Officer	Treasurer
	Masque Officer	Secretary
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
D'10	<i>New Voices 28</i> (Masque)	
	<i>Get me to the Church</i>	Bride
	<i>Secret of Water</i>	Director
	<i>The Change</i>	Producing Dramaturg
	<i>A Prayer for Rain</i>	
	<i>The Party Train</i>	
	VOX Officer	Secretary
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
	<i>Spelling Bee</i> (WCLOC)	Choreographer
E'10	<i>Dark Play</i> (Sunburns)	Co-Director
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
A'10	<i>Guys and Dolls</i> (VOX)	Sarah Brown
	VOX Officer	Secretary
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
B'10	<i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i> (Masque)	The Mother
	VOX Officer	Secretary
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
C'11	<i>The Laramie Project</i> (Masque)	Rebecca Hillicker/Romaine Patterson
	<i>Cabaret</i> (VOX)	Co-Choreographer
	VOX Officer	Vice President
	Alpha Psi Omega Officer	Business Manager
A'11	Masque Officer	President

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