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## Shape Matters

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Shape Matters

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film and Theatre Arts  
Film Production

by

Thomas Baumgardner

B.A. College of William and Mary, 2009

December 2014

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## **Abstract**

This paper describes the conception and creation, and then analyzes the results, of the University of New Orleans thesis film *Shape Matters*. This paper will discuss details of the production of the film, my initial goals, and whether or not those goals were achieved. I will discuss pre-production, production, and post-production.

Keywords: Phrenology, 19th century, film, pseudoscience, American history, screenwriting

## INTRODUCTION

After three years of instruction, and many previous years of filmmaking before attending the University of New Orleans, my thesis film is hopefully a triumphant culmination of much labor, education, observation, and cooperation. I decided on an ambitious idea for this thesis project: a period comedy, set in the Antebellum South. I wanted to create a film with compelling characters, humor, and emotion that also explored the debunked science of Phrenology and introduced an audience to its more obscure and entertaining aspects.

One of my goals for this film is to enter it into many festivals, and I felt that the more unique the film could be in terms of its setting and subject the more likely it is that the film would be selected for inclusion. I have a love of history, especially American history, and the weirder the better. Having recently read a book that touched on the stranger aspects of Phrenology, I was hooked on the idea of writing a film about this forgotten “science”. It was a bizarre enough practice that I was sure any story about it would stand out, and it also possesses enough similarities to modern day activities (such as horoscopes and palm readings, etc.) that a movie about it could still maintain a universal appeal.

Phrenology was an extremely prevalent study that loomed large in scientific and popular circles throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was concerned with the shape of the human skull, and also the brain within it, and it was believed that this shape could give useful information about the characteristics of the skull’s owner. This “science” posited that the brain was made of many different “organs”; it was compartmentalized and each of these different areas, such as Amativeness (associated with love and sexual desire) or Destructiveness (concerned with violent feelings), corresponded to a specific human trait.

There was a wide range of beliefs about Phrenology and disagreement about the implications of the practice. Some believed that the shape of the brain and skull could only tell you about the existing character of a person, yet others believed that it was possible to change your behavior and this would slowly manifest itself as a change in the physical shape of your brain and skull. In other words, as you changed your ways so would the bumps and valleys of your head transform. My film is concerned with the type of adherents who would fall into this latter group, those who thought Phrenology offered a revolutionary opportunity for human progress.

The story of my thesis, *Shape Matters*, concerns a somewhat neurotic and bashful young preacher named William who, in 1853, attends the wake of a murdered man. This man was shot dead under dubious circumstances; some sort of altercation occurred with a black preacher named Cyrus, who is now on the run. William meets the eccentric niece of the slain man, a young woman by the name of Catherine, and she convinces the smitten William to accompany her to the local Phrenological Society. There William is introduced to the peculiar leader of the group, who also has his eye on Catherine. Soon, William has to contend not only with this romantic rival but also with Cyrus, the “murderer”, when he accidentally discovers the man hiding in the woods outside the town. The film concludes with William confronted with whether or not he can move beyond his initial impression of Cyrus, and Catherine confronted with whether or not she can accept the final decisions that William makes.

*Shape Matters* is a comedy. It was essential to me to make a film that reflects who I am, and anyone who is a good friend of mine will tell you I’m something of a clown. I have always felt, with a few exceptions, that films need to attempt a blend of comedy and drama in order to properly capture the spectrum of emotions that play out on any given day of a person’s life. My

own life vacillates wildly between hilarious and tragic, sometimes every few hours. I find that many of the problems of bad and boring movies could be remedied by an injection of comedy and fun. Though the main thrust of my story is dramatic, it was important to me that the film have a goofy sensibility, because phrenology, and life, is goofy so much of the time.

And though I hoped to make a film where the vision was very much unique to me, I required the help of a legion of talented artists, both at UNO and beyond, to help me bring it to life. Over the course of about six months I prepared with my two producers, my costume designer, production designer, and many others. We managed to assemble appropriate locations, costumes, and props in time for our January shoot dates and shot the film over three weekends in that month. I then delayed my own post-production while I assisted classmates with their advanced projects and thesis films. However, close to the end of the semester I began post-production in earnest. I was my own post-production supervisor, though I did enlist a local composer to write the score. At the beginning of September 2014 the film was complete and I set about writing this document and receiving feedback to determine the success of the production. That feedback will be featured in this paper as I attempt to assess the effectiveness of *Shape Matters*.

## Methodology

In this section I will go through most aspects of filmmaking and the obstacles my crew and I encountered in each of those areas. At the end, I will discuss the feedback I have already received on the film and whether I think it is a success.

## PRE-PRODUCTION

### Screenwriting

My inspiration for what would become my true thesis script was two-fold. I was reading a book called *The Trouble with Tom*, written by Paul Collins. The book is not about Phrenology, at all; only a few small sections of the book touch on Phrenology. The book concerns the author's quest, in the present day, to locate the final resting place of the bones of the famous author of *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine. Apparently, Paine's bones were passed from person to person after he died, a kind of macabre souvenir the likes of which was fairly common during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. At one point in Collins' journey, he learns about a Phrenologist who came into possession of Paine's skeleton. At each stop along the way the author goes into detail about the lives of each of the people who interacted with Paine's bones, and the Phrenologist was one of these personalities that Collins explores. Collins discusses the bizarre study that the Phrenologist indulged in and broadens his description to include the major Phrenologists of the day, including the Fowler brothers. I found all of this material completely fascinating and knew that it could be the basis for a fun screenplay.

My other inspiration, in a limited way, was the killing of Trayvon Martin. To be clear, I had no particular goals set for myself to make an allegorical movie and this unhappy event was only a subtle inspiration. William is not George Zimmerman. And race had already entered into

the story I had in mind for *Shape Matters* without any inspiration from the Martin incident. I had felt compelled to include race in the story because of my own broader interest in such matters (I was a Sociology minor at the College of William and Mary and am an active progressive, politically) but that was not the main reason I included it. The reason I felt compelled to include a racial dimension was that race was an essential part of the history of the period and it is inseparable from Phrenology. It would have felt negligent of me to ignore the racial divisions of the time. One of my goals was to explore the more lighthearted elements of the “science”, but to ignore race was to be somewhat irresponsible.

So I already knew that I wanted to feature both black and white characters, but I wasn't sure how to have a theme to the film that tied the race angle together with the false nature of Phrenology. But then it occurred to me that Phrenology, since it was not really an accurate science at all, did not reveal anything but the biases of the person performing an examination. Basically, the person examining a volunteer's skull was only confirming what they already believed about the person before ever touching their head, or they were simply saying things that they thought the client wanted to hear.

Mark Twain was a famous critic of Phrenology and he described a visit to Lorenzo Niles Fowler, one of two brothers who helped popularize Phrenology in the United States. Twain resolved to visit Fowler in a disguise and with an assumed name. The reading of Twain's head was all over the place and amounted to a fairly non-committal assessment. Twain describes the final result:

He continued his discoveries, with the result that I came out safe and sound, at the end, with a hundred great and shining qualities; but which lost their value and amounted to nothing because each of the hundred was couple up with an opposing defect which took the effectiveness all out of it. (Neider 1959)

But there was one area where Fowler did not pull any punches: humor.

However, he found a cavity, in one place; where a bump would have been in anybody else's skull. That cavity, he said, was all alone, all by itself, occupying a solitude, and had no opposing bump, however slight in elevation, to modify and ameliorate its perfect completeness and isolation. He startled me by saying that that cavity represented the total absence of the sense of humor! He now became almost interested. Some of his indifference disappeared. He almost grew eloquent over this America which he had discovered. He said he often found bumps of humor which were so small that they were hardly noticeable, but that in his long experience this was the first time he had ever come across a cavity where that bump ought to be. (Ibid)

Twain decided to return and see if there was any consistency to this practice.

After three months I went to him again, but under my own name this time. Once more he made a striking discovery—the cavity was gone, and in its place was a Mount Everest—figuratively speaking—31,000 feet high, the loftiest bump of humor he had ever encountered in his life-long experience! (Ibid)



So when Twain returned, fully revealed as Twain the author and humorist, he received exactly the kind of glowing examination one would expect. The whole enterprise was a song and dance and the examiner's verdict could have just been given to Twain as soon as he stepped through the door.

For some reason, this unwillingness to really let the facts of a situation determine the verdict put me in mind of an event like the Trayvon Martin shooting. It seemed like anyone who had an opinion about what happened during that confrontation was really entering the debate already sure of who was the guilty party, based on only a few tiny details. The reality is only two people really know what happened that night, and only one of them is around to testify about it. I agree with those who say that Zimmerman is responsible for what happened, but I remember when I first formed that opinion I did so with very little information.

I wanted to put an ambiguous element like the Martin incident into my script and that's where I came up with the idea of this mysterious altercation between Cyrus and the man he kills, the moment which launches the whole story. William instantly has ideas about who is responsible and who is the true monster in that confrontation, and that lead to my theme: "When we draw conclusions before studying the circumstances, it will be impossible to ever form a new conclusion". This theme, I think, accurately describes Phrenology, which is devoid of any real explanatory power, and it's true of so many situations where we rush to judgment and never give ourselves the opportunity to truly understand a person or situation.

So, I wanted to combine the goofy details of Phrenology I had enjoyed so much in The Trouble with Tom and the racially tinged mystery of the unfortunate Martin incident. I liked this disparity and the challenge it represented; it would lead to a story with two distinct halves. And so an early goal of the screenplay became to create these two different worlds, the trivial romantic rivalry and Phrenology portion and the mortal danger of Cyrus's portion, and then have them collide.

The purpose here was to represent two very different experiences in America: the world of white people and the world of black people in this country. The juxtaposition is made early on when Cyrus's screaming, pained face is replaced by the comedic wailing of the widow and William's useless attempts to comfort her. This juxtaposition hopefully amuses the audience while also emphasizing the tragic nature of the story: that William and Cyrus live in totally distinct worlds and William is willfully unequipped to bridge the gap. I felt like having these different approaches in the same film might help to place both the comedy and the drama in sharper relief.

To me, if I'm going to make a historical piece, it is important to emphasize those details of history that I feel are underappreciated. One of those things is just how inhumane the situation for African Americans was for most of our history. We all know this to a certain extent, but the brutality of it can't be stated enough. Having Cyrus in a situation of life or death and the white characters consumed with petty squabbles and fake sciences helps communicate just how wide the gulf was between the black and white experience in this country. And I hope that audiences make the connection to how wide that gulf remains even in 2014.

I feel that this historical truth was communicated effectively by the script and it's an element of the screenplay that does work. But, in hindsight, there are some parts of the script that I am not sure do. And though there are many imperfections that I see in the screenplay, if I could only go back and address one of them it would probably be William's relationship to Cyrus, specifically how his thoughts and feelings about Cyrus change over the course of the story.

The psychology of my lead character and how he changes, or does not change, throughout the story is possibly the most important element of my film, and I feel like I could have been more explicit in this particular area while I was writing the screenplay. There are three different relationships in the film: William and Catherine, which is a romantic relationship and clearly defined, William and Prentiss, whose antagonism towards each other is more than obvious, and William and Cyrus, which is perhaps the most pivotal.

The film, as stated earlier, is really about drawing conclusions and how doing so, before encountering any real facts about a person or situation, can make it impossible to ever come to a new and more honest place. The end of the film should be dramatic and effective because we see that William, who was always sure that Cyrus, the killer of Catherine's uncle, was a violent menace with no justification for his violence, is instantly returned to this position, even after helping Cyrus and agreeing to smuggle him out of town. William, despite being rescued by the man, refuses to let any of the details contrary to his initial conclusion sway him. I would hope this would be a sad state for the character to end up in and that the audience would feel like a profound change and a meaningful relationship had been lost by William's refusal to fit his conclusions about Cyrus to the facts.

However, I fear that the screenplay does not show William's journey explicitly enough to make William's regrettable backslide have the impact it should. If I could go back in time and produce another draft before shooting, I would probably put in a few more moments of connection between Cyrus and William so that when William ultimately rejects and threatens Cyrus this betrayal feels like a real backslide. To put it a different way, if William's feelings about Cyrus and his race are at a 1 on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being disgust and distrust and 10 being love and respect) the screenplay only takes William to a 2 at the film's climax before dropping him back to a 1 again by the end. If I could write another draft I might take William to a 4 or 5 and then back to 1.

Basically what I'm talking about here is "tracking", an idea we talked about on many occasions in Erik Hansen's screenwriting courses. If my film, like so many, is really about the psychological arc of its lead character, then it is important to make sure that the audience understands clearly where that character is on that arc at any given moment of the screenplay. William's feelings about Cyrus are clear at the beginning and at the end, but is it clear that he has the potential to change and then he squanders that potential? And if it is clear, is it done in a way that is dramatically satisfying?

In my defense, tracking William was always a top priority and not something that I realize in hindsight that I neglected. And, of course, while "tracking" is important, there are good and bad ways of doing this; there are ways that are subtle and feel true to reality and there are ways that are "on the nose", melodramatic, cheap, and obvious. I did not neglect tracking, but possibly I buried it too deep to avoid having it there in a simple and silly way. I knew where I wanted William to end up but I felt that maybe I did not need his journey there to be on the page in the traditional sense; I did not need, for instance, specific dialogue between Cyrus and William that indicated that William had gained respect for Cyrus or had recognized his humanity.

While writing *Shape Matters* I felt that it was easy to put too much emphasis on the screenplay and feel that, as long as "everything" is on the page, then you can't fail when you go into production. I've often felt this way in the past and this kind of thinking can lead me to neglect other aspects of the production. I've always been impressed with films that have stories that only seem to succeed because of elements of production, such as the cast or the production design. I've seen movies before where I feel like there's not much going on with the screenplay

and yet a relationship in the movie will really enchant me, simply because of the expert casting or direction. The screenplay is extremely important, and yet it does not have to be the element that is doing all of the heavy lifting for a production.

My goal for myself was to let some of the other aspects of the production do what dialogue and plotting could also do, under different circumstances. Rather than have an emotional scene where Cyrus makes a connection with William and William verbally recognizes Cyrus's humanity, I was interested in whether casting and audience expectations could do that work instead. First, I felt that my cast would engender sympathy and suggest a humanity and a potential for growth that would then not need to be stated explicitly in the screenplay. I will go more into detail about casting Jake Hoyson in the Casting portion of this paper, but suffice to say here that he has a likeable quality and vulnerability that I think engages the viewer's sympathy. I think these qualities can convince an audience that he is ripe for change without any big scenes to show that change.

Likewise, audience expectations, coupled with this casting, would hopefully sell the arc of the character. I think your average audience is primed to see potential for growth in a character such as William, with the setup he receives in the screenplay. He clearly states his feelings for Cyrus's race early on and his disdain when he finally meets Cyrus. Then he is surprised when Cyrus is more than he originally appeared (when he's far more knowledgeable about scripture than William). This will prime any audience member, who's seen at least a few movies, for William's potential for growth. Audience expectation, therefore, ought to take pressure off of the dialogue and reduce the need for a big dramatic scene of "connection" between the actors.

Regardless of whether audiences do follow William's arc (and I sincerely hope they do) I wanted to be subtle when it came to tracking William, not just for the sake of this story, but as an exercise for myself, as I feel that I am often very melodramatic and overwrought in the way I write dramatic situations (I have always felt more comfortable scripting comedy than drama). I felt that my thesis was an opportunity to really push myself to take risks: one of those risks was possibly losing the audience by not pushing the theme and character arc through dialogue.

The ending was another place that I tried to be more subtle. The final scene went through the most dramatic alterations during the scripting process; all sorts of different fates, including death, awaited the characters in my previous drafts. Ultimately, I wanted the ending to be unified with the rest of my story; that meant looking carefully at what the thematic core of the story was and making the ending a natural extension from that theme. I felt that inevitably led to the ending being William unable to view Cyrus as anything but a threat, as that was his initial conclusion. So it had to be Cyrus who attacks Prentiss and then William had to reject him, despite Cyrus having just saved his life.

Still, I wonder if having William actually shoot at Cyrus would have made the ending a little less "soft". It would have made it clear that William really hadn't changed his mind about Cyrus, despite any arguments or facts he had encountered during the story. It's a balancing act between tone and jeopardy, I suppose. I ultimately wanted a more comedic tone to the whole project and that had to extend to the ending.

I've had a growing feeling, during my time at UNO, that if a choice must be made between complete clarity, that results in the audience feeling talked down to, and narrative ambiguity, that leaves the audience not completely sure of the filmmaker's intent, then I would choose the latter (of course, the choices are never this clear cut, but hypothetically I would choose the latter). I suppose I've come, over the past few years, to see ambiguity as not a compromise but as a tool that can lead to Cyrus being shot may have added clarity but it also

could have put too fine a point on things; and at this point in my journey as a filmmaker I prefer messiness and loose ends over death and finality. I feel like there are still moments and emotions that the audience can take away from a potentially confusing film, but a film that has successful elements that ultimately spells everything out may make the viewers reject the whole enterprise.

I feel that *Shape Matters* was a good exercise for me and that there were far easier ways to write it that would not have pushed me to think as hard about these questions. One of the few things I think can objectively be said to be a positive attribute of a film is that it's not too easy to predict. I think my script accomplishes that.

## **Production Design**

The production design, as can easily be imagined for a film set in the 19th century, was going to be neither simple nor cheap. It was essential to me, however, that the production design sell the world of the film. I wanted to be slightly anachronistic in other areas, and in order to support that direction, everything within the frame needed to seem utterly authentic. I made two decisions early on that eased this process: I got Alex Lanaux and Ellen Bull to sign on to help.

After some trouble securing locations, I had the idea of building one of our major interiors on the UNO soundstage. The Phrenological Society is one of the more important places that William visits, and it needed to have the right atmosphere. Rather than hope to find an existing building that happened to be appropriate to the period, appropriate to the story, and not a hindrance to the realities of production, we decided that constructing a room, despite the labor and cost, was worth it. After all, we were likely to have to pay for an existing location anyway and this way we wouldn't have to worry about dealing with anyone, we would have complete control over our lighting, the temperature was guaranteed to be moderate, and we had pretty much free reign as far as scheduling. Trenton Mynatt, my Director of Photography, was enthusiastic about having the control that working on the soundstage would afford us; once Trenton gave his approval I made my final decision and got ready to make the purchases necessary to go this direction.

I immediately asked my friend Alexander Lanaux if he was interested in helping to build such a room. He had been instrumental in helping me with my advanced project, *Guinevere*, where he was responsible for designing and constructing a gallows from which I could hang an actor with a stunt harness. It took several weeks to finish the room, working from Alex's designs, and a bit more than one thousand dollars. We used an existing room in the soundstage, the shell of which had been used for many other UNO projects. We ripped the walls off of this structure but maintained the frame, which we extended. We also reused a ceiling frame that had been built to cover part of the original structure.

Many of the decisions about the room were made on the fly as we got a sense of exactly what the thing was going to look like. The walls of the room were wooden slats, actually fence posts with the tops cut off as these were the cheapest option, and it was difficult for us to get them to fit flush together. There were many gaps and if you looked closely you could see the soundstage through these gaps. We decided to fill the gaps with plaster and were confident that it would only add to the rugged look of the room. After all, it needed to look like it was built by only a few people using simple tools. After many, many trips to Lowes, a dozen volunteers, and many power tools loaned by Alex or borrowed from Second Line Studios, we completed the

room. I should mention that Elijah Eastlund, one of my producers, and Stephen Bertucci, one of the other crew members, were instrumental in constructing the set and devoted a lot of their free time to assisting.

At this point my second production design MVP came onboard: Ellen Bull. Ellen was our official Production Designer and was responsible not only for completing our Phrenological Society hall but also for all the other props and set decoration in the film. She took over painting our set and filled it with props and furniture. Alex had loaned us a giant, ancient easel that we placed a chalkboard on, and I gave Ellen some broken-down crates that were left over from my classmate Weizhong Huang's thesis film *Turtle Beach*. After she'd "distressed" the walls and dirtied up the room, manufactured some curtain rods and hung curtains, added some scribbling to the chalkboard, the room really came to life. It was an amazing effect, actually, when, the night before we were scheduled to shoot in there, we finally hung the curtains and turned on the lights to see what the place would look like. The curtains filtered and colored the light in such a way that the whole room was bathed in a warm glow. It was late, we were exhausted, but when we finally flicked the switch and saw the finished product we all knew that the effort had been worth it.

I'm glad we relied on the soundstage. Building our own set in advance made the actual shooting days for the Society scenes much less stressful. These were the longest scenes in the script and it was a weight off of all our minds to know we had the soundstage set to ourselves to use as we pleased. It might have been one of the smarter decisions we made during the production.

Production design elsewhere in the film was simpler but never simple. I already had a few props that I was able to give to Ellen, so she had to worry less about key props and more about just filling the world of the film, making it feel authentic and lived in. I knew ahead of time, before I ever committed to *Shape Matters* as my official thesis script, that if I couldn't find certain locations or props then the film would be really hard to make. So before pre-production began in earnest I started researching props, locations, and costumes to see if the film was doable. I found a lot of what I was looking for, decided to go ahead with this idea for my thesis, and bought some of these props. The calipers that Prentiss uses, Cyrus's pistol, the Phrenological bust at the Society, and many other items were bought ahead of time by me. Ellen didn't have to worry about them and she was relieved to have some of the more obscure items off of her plate.

There were all sorts of other obstacles to overcome, however, and she did so with aplomb. One good example was the bed that we needed for William's house. There were two potential buildings we could have used at the park location we had. We liked one more than the other, but the one we didn't choose was the only one with its own bed in it. We were unable to move the bed from one to the other, but Ellen was able to solve that problem. She had found a headboard and a base for a bed that were both appropriate to the period, so she just used those and improvised the rest of the structure. She used "apple boxes" from the grip truck to create a foundation, then covered those with pads and then put some of the quilts that were available on site on top. She set up the headboard and base and the whole thing looked totally convincing.

We encountered many instances like this where we needed to imply something rather than have the authentic item. In the wake scene, we were never able to find a table of the appropriate height for the corpse. I wanted something wooden that would be right for the period but also elevate the body to a specific level. We found a table that was large enough and the right height—it just happened to be a plastic, very modern looking one that was in the soundstage and often used for craft services. Ellen took that table and draped it in black fabric to obscure it. She

then embellished it with more black fabric and flowers around the body. It blends into the Antebellum Guest House location perfectly.

Ultimately, she did a great job and she and her team really helped make *Shape Matters* convincing. I have received nothing but compliments so far about the authenticity of the look of the film; in fact, that's the most consistent praise I have received. Some of the feedback questionnaires I have reviewed had comments like: "the set design was great", "the sets were great", and "you really accomplished taking your audience to that time era". No one has complained that the Phrenological Society location or any of our handmade props seemed inauthentic, even though they are seen alongside many locations and items that are historical and were provided by the locations we visited. We had all sorts of pamphlets, books, curtains, etc. that Ellen and her team made for the film and they blend seamlessly. Ellen was one of the few people I paid to work on the film and I'm really glad I did so. I considered other candidates but she was definitely the best of all options.

## **Casting**

Casting for low-budget and student films is always an interesting exercise and is one of the areas where I always feel like I'm compromising the most. When casting previous films at UNO, I've felt limited in my choices and in several cases have felt myself going with the "least bad" choice. For this film I really wanted to have as many options as possible and I put a lot of energy into getting the word out there. I saw a lot more people than I did for my advanced project, but I don't know if I would say I saw many *better* actors than I'd seen previously. The talent pool just isn't really out there in New Orleans, unfortunately. However, I found the right people, regardless.

The part I was most worried about, unsurprisingly, was my protagonist. I've been watching local films and local auditions for a couple of years now, and the young male demographic has been particularly unimpressive to me, as far as Louisiana actors go. When I was casting for William I probably saw about fifteen actors who were responding to our audition fliers and posts. I also made a list of every young man I'd seen in other local movies, especially UNO movies. I went back and watched many of those movies to remind myself of the performances. Not a single person that I saw impressed me, and especially not for this particular role. They either were too inexperienced, too theatrical, or just did not seem right for the period.

Before I even started auditions, though, I got this idea to ask my classmate Jacob Hoyson to try out. I noticed that he had a lot of the traits of William, especially his timidity. I have always found Jake to be a really likeable guy; he never has a bad thing to say about anybody, he's always enthusiastic and ready to work hard. These were traits that both made me interested in working with him as an actor and that would translate to the screen and make him a character that the audience could care about.

This was especially important because I wanted William to do a lot of questionable things and I didn't want the script to have to "apologize" for them, as it were. I didn't want to have to put in those "save the cat" moments, as described by Blake Snyder in his screenwriting book Save the Cat, where we have a selfless, sympathetic action early on that gets the audience on the protagonist's side. If there was going to be a "save the cat" moment it would simply be William's interest in Catherine and his awkwardness around her, the universality of which I hoped would get viewers to empathize with him. Other than that, William is a pretty awful person: he's selfish, racist, and manipulative. I felt Jake could make William a character we could root for, despite all these things.

I asked him to audition and I thought he did fine, but I still wasn't really sure. Jake does have some strange mannerisms and the audition performance was not as crisp as I was hoping. I wanted slightly better comedic timing and I felt that there was a bit too much Jake and not enough of an actual performance there. It was also hard to be objective since I knew Jake well; I really started second guessing myself. Was I just considering Jake because he was a friend who I thought it would be easy to direct? Was I just considering him because I was being lazy and didn't want to go and search for more people to audition? I had already spent several weeks, had cast other character at this point, and still hadn't decided on a William.

It was around about this time that I thought about casting myself. I've also had many years of acting experience, went to a theater school during my high school years, done Shakespeare many times, etc., etc. I felt like maybe the kind of person I was looking for, after all this time, was *me*. I talked to my producers about it and they said, sensibly, well, why don't you audition then? I did so, at the callbacks, and we all agreed that it wasn't a bad audition. However, we thought that I looked huge next to Sam (who is something like 5'6", whereas I am 6'2") and that I looked too physically intimidating. I also came across as too assertive and confident; my producers felt that I didn't seem like the type that would be easily manipulated by Catherine or who would even consider changing my position on Phrenology. I agreed with them and we dropped the idea.

Honestly, it was silly to ever consider it. Even if I had been perfect for the role, that's not really the point of this project. The thesis project is an opportunity for me to direct (and write or edit) and to show off those talents, if possible. It's not really about creating the perfect movie and it's not about giving me another chance to perform. If I had been acting in the film, it would have severely distracted me from other responsibilities, and it would have denied me the opportunity to get more experience working with actors.

So I cast Jake. Looking at the final product, I think that Jake is much stronger in the finished film than he was at the audition and I think he really does work in the part. My early sense that he would bring a vulnerability and a likeable quality to the film was correct. From the feedback I received at the test screenings, it seems that he really got viewers involved. There were no complaints; most viewers seemed to find him quite charming.

Anna Brown as Catherine was a no-brainer. I saw quite a lot of women for the part and they were in general all much better actors than those I saw for William. Anna stood out immediately, though, as someone who was playing a very strong objective. The scene that I had the potential Catherines audition with was the scene where she approaches William from out of the bushes. Many of the women who auditioned just sort of entered the scene as if they wanted to have a conversation with William, for the sake of flirting. Anna played the scene as if she needed to use William; he was a means to an end. I thought this captured the presumptuous, blunt nature of Catherine perfectly. She expects William to immediately acquiesce to her requests, and Anna was utterly convincing as a young woman who is used to getting her way. There wasn't any serious discussion amongst my producers and I about casting anyone else in this role.

Finding Tim Bellow, who plays the character of Cyrus, was really a stroke of luck. He was the only actor I did not know before auditions and I'm glad that the many fliers and internet postings we put out there managed to bring him in. We only saw about 5 black actors in total and, though many had interesting qualities, Tim was head and shoulders above the rest, as far as fitting this part. I wanted the character of Cyrus to bring a whole new energy to the film, when he appears for his first major scene, and I think Tim does so. He has a sad quality to him, but also a passionate fire that sells both the idea that he is a preacher like William and his righteous anger

for being put into this dire situation. He also has a period look to him, and something about his voice and manner of speaking makes it easy for him to slip into a different time.

Sam Cobean, who I cast as Prentiss, was someone I had already worked with, on my advanced project, *Guinevere*. I really enjoyed working with him on that and we'd become friends. I basically wrote the part of Prentiss with Sam in mind, though I didn't tell him until after casting him. I auditioned other people for the role, to be sure that there wasn't a better option out there. There wasn't. Sam works because of both his acting talent and his look. I wanted someone small, harmless, and nerdy looking. With the right hairstyle and some glasses, Sam could easily slip into the role of a 19<sup>th</sup> century nerd—an outcast who would never be a romantic interest of Catherine's no matter what his fevered imagination would like to believe.

I don't really think there are any weak parts in this cast and I feel very confident about the decisions made in this area. The most important thing is that they all make sense together; there's true chemistry. The relationship between Jake and Anna is sweet and convincing, he and Sam feel like evenly matched rivals, and his combative energy with Tim is just right.

## **Location Scouting**

Locations were one of the biggest questions when heading into this film. The main task I had for my producers, Elijah Eastlund and Jordan McVey, was to find them. I have to admit that they disappointed me somewhat on this score. Elijah definitely put some effort in early on and then scored us a great location near the end of our search, but for the most part I, myself, found our locations and it really took up a lot of my time and energy. Some places, like City Park, I feel I should not have had to do the bulk of the work, but it was pretty clear from my communications with my producers that either I was going to do it or it was going to happen too late.

When selecting my producers I went with people I was familiar with and who I had reason to believe were reliable. I think perhaps I erred, however, when choosing them, simply because of the many other commitments my producers had. They definitely were an asset in many areas, including auditions and location scouting, but I felt that a little too much of the burden of securing locations ultimately fell on me. The remedy would have been to find another producer, and yet I had no luck finding one. If I had been able to pay someone then maybe I would have been more successful in getting a third producer, but I didn't have the funds to pay anyone. That's just the reality of shooting a low budget film where your best options for crew are students with a legion of their own responsibilities.

The main problem that the three of us encountered was this: location owners either over or underestimate the importance and reach of your film. Some locations are willing to host films but don't see the benefit in helping small ones—you can't offer much in terms of compensation and they don't think the exposure from your film is worth it. Other places don't see a student film as a big inconvenience, but they're concerned about being seen by a large audience and potentially having their bottom line affected because your movie somehow portrays them in a negative light. It's hard to find that Goldilocks place where they're both willing to help for little in return and don't assume that your movie will be widely seen and then adversely affect their business.

One example of this problem occurred with one of my early leads: the Pitot House, which is near the New Orleans Museum of Art. It's a small house, of the appropriate era, that had some interiors we could use. The exteriors would be impossible to use since it is so close to the road and other modern sites. I felt that the Pitot House was a good option as they had seemed very



friendly and willing to assist when we approached them for Wendy Granger's thesis. However, we went with a different option at the time, and didn't follow up with them.

When I approached them for *Shape Matters*, they said they would look at the script and get back to us. They lead us on for a very long time, about a month, and then finally said they weren't interested in being associated with the project. That's the trouble with historic locations: their funders and visitors are often conservative-minded. It's difficult to make a period piece that includes an erection scene, and with any kind of racial commentary, when you're trying to appeal to squeamish locations. Many places see association with such a project as nothing but a liability.

The exterior scene was a bit easier: for the scene where William finds Cyrus, bleeding and helpless, against a tree, we just needed some place green with no signs of civilization. We decided to go with City Park. It's the natural choice for UNO students when they need large open areas, fields or forests, and they don't want to travel far from campus. It wasn't hard to find a good spot in City Park that would work for our purposes.

There was some trouble securing this location because I foolishly left the process to the last minute. So many people have used City Park that I thought it would be relatively straightforward. This was not the case. I think that I knew, subconsciously, that I was being stupid and needed to get to work on City Park as soon as possible. But there were so many other difficulties at the time, and I put City Park off until there was only a week left before we were supposed to shoot.

I severely aggravated the woman in charge; too be fair, she was a fairly irritable and dismissive person to begin with. I may have been a bit persistent and desperate, but in total I probably took up about 20 minutes of her time over a few days and she was asking for documents that she really didn't require, since The University of New Orleans and City Park are part of the same state system. She only made things more complicated for herself by asking for these documents, and when I tried to deliver them this was apparently a major inconvenience.

Another unpleasant encounter we had was with Ormond Plantation. I had a recommendation from a friend that Ormond Plantation may be willing to let people shoot there. I called and scheduled a meeting with the woman who runs the place. When I then showed up to that meeting she was not present and the plantation chef, of all people, had to tell me she was not there and I should try again later. When I did get in touch with her again she seemed irritated and said something like "I was busy". That's fine, of course, but one expects that when a meeting is scheduled that it will have been scheduled at a time when both parties are *not* busy.

I managed to meet with her, finally. I looked over the room I wanted to use (for the wake scene) and it seemed like a good choice. She seemed a little anxious about what kind of a project the movie was and what the content would be. She asked if it was "appropriate", which is basically a meaningless statement (I have a sense that my definition of appropriate would be far more relaxed than hers), and I asked her to clarify. She said "well, there won't be any nudity or blood and guts or anything?" I assured her that there would not be. She then asked where this project would be shown. I told her, truthfully, that it was a school project and the only place it necessarily had to be shown was at school. She asked "well, it's not going to be on television or anything". Feeling that it was essential to be a bit duplicitous, I decided to lie by omission and said "Oh, no, it definitely won't be on television" and neglected to elaborate and say "but I will try to screen it publicly across the world in various festivals". She seemed satisfied.

When I returned later with my Production Designer and Assistant Director, we did not fare so well. I showed the woman the location contract and she immediately balked at the provision that I would be able to screen the film anywhere in the world. She started making

extravagant demands about needing to give approval on the finished film before she would allow me to show it anywhere. I tried to explain to her that that would be a completely unreasonable thing for me to agree to: she could torpedo my film for absolutely any reason. If she determined at any time that she just didn't want to be associated with *any* movies then where would that leave me? I'd have to cut the scene or reshoot it. And I definitely couldn't allow this person to have any input on my final cut.

The compromise I was willing to make was that I would send her the script, and maybe give her a contract that said we would be allowed to show the film anywhere as long as the finished scene reflects exactly the dialogue in the script, with no additions or alterations. I still didn't much like that idea, but at least it was a bit more of a guarantee that she couldn't arbitrarily shoot down my cut of the film. She seemed somewhat satisfied, but left things vague. I sent her the script and never heard from her ever again, to this day. But, as you can imagine, before even sending the script I immediately moved on to finding some other place to use.

It's clear to me now that lying about where the project would screen did not ultimately get us the location. However, telling the truth up front would not have, either. The location was a lost cause. I should have seen the signs earlier, but I was so desperate that I did what I could to secure the room. I ended up wasting a lot of my own time, some of the time of my crew, and causing myself a lot of aggravation. I suppose it's always best to be truthful because then I would have been able to move on much earlier.

There isn't much to say about the three locations that went well. Acadian Village, used for the exteriors of our little 19<sup>th</sup> century town, Antebellum Guest House, which became our official wake location, and the Louisiana State Parks house we used outside of Lafayette, for William's home, were all very understanding and helpful. Elijah found the location for William's home, after doing a little research on various Louisiana film websites; I found the Antebellum Guest House by searching bed and breakfasts and calling a bunch of them; I found Acadian Village on the same site where Eli later found the Lafayette State Parks locale. The people at these sites were very cooperative and either asked for nothing, or, in the case of Acadian Village, asked for 200 dollars to open the park to us and have an employee there to watch it.

Our location scouting was successful, in the end. There isn't a single location that I'm unhappy with and I wouldn't trade any of them for an alternative. I wish that the process had gone a bit more smoothly. Too many breakthroughs happened very late, only a week or so before shooting the specific scene. However, in most cases, we were diligently searching for weeks in advance. It was simply difficult to find these kinds of locations. Maybe we should have started that whole process earlier. And maybe, as mentioned, I should have recruited another producer to help specifically with that. I sort of did that; I asked adult UNO student and limo driver Kevin Korson to help out, but that only lead to Ormond, which was not a success. Maybe there's always a bit of a "by the skin of our teeth" haphazardness to this kind of thing, and it's true that in many cases, despite the obstacles along the way, things "turn out all right in the end".

## Budget

The budget for *Shape Matters* was extensive and not all costs were anticipated up front. My original estimates were as follows:

Pre-Production	
a. Costumes	3100
b. Props	500
c. Makeup/Hair	150
d. Location Fees	600
e. Set Construction	1200
Production	
a. Craft Services	900
b. Expendables/Fuel	400
c. Permits	200
d. Repairs	700
Post-Production	
a. Data Storage	500
b. Publicity	250
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>8500</b>

I ended up paying a bit more than this, but I always knew that was a possibility. It wasn't much more; many things evened out. I allowed for repair fees (Weizhong Huang ended up having to pay for all sorts of grip truck and equipment repairs on his thesis) but I didn't end up having any. However, fuel costs were more than originally anticipated because, at the time, I didn't realize we would have two different days in Lafayette, which is a drive of about two and a half hours with multiple vehicles (including the grip truck). Location fees only worked out to about \$400 and there were no permits, but props ended up being more than the \$500 allotted. Data storage ultimately amounted to more because I had two harddrives fail on me. Some additional costs included paying a few crew members. We also compensated some extras for one of our exterior scenes, just for their transportation costs.

To help with financing the film, I started a fundraising campaign on the website IndieGoGo. The goal was set rather low; I knew I would never be able to raise the entire budget this way. Honestly, I wasn't really confident that we would even hit our much more modest goal, as these IndieGoGo campaigns don't really reach many people, and the people that are reached are usually just close friends or family. We set our goal on the site at \$3,000 and ended up raising \$1,085 of that amount, after promoting the IndieGoGo through e-mail and Facebook outreach. This was about as well as I thought we would do. I'm not the sort of agreeable, popular person who generates much online interest.

The rest of the funding was supplied by my parents. We had come to an understanding that they would help me pay for my thesis if I went to graduate school. I did my best to offset

costs with the IndieGoGo and with some of the money I earned working as a graduate assistant at UNO and doing other odd jobs.

One major cost that was not accounted for in the original estimates was the musical score. At first, I had planned to ask an old friend of mine to compose the score, but life events made it impossible for him to work on the film at the time I needed him. He said he could probably take a look at the film in several months but I didn't like the uncertainty of it. I figured it was for the best; this would force me to find a true professional. My friend had been a music composition major in school and I was a fan of his work, but music composition was not his true ambition and he had access to limited resources.

I found a local composer who I was interested in (I will go into more detail on this in the post-production section of this document) and he asked me for \$1000. I was willing to pay this, as I was impressed with the sample music on his website, and my early interactions with him convinced me that he understood the specific score that I needed and would be easy to work with. I was happy to pay this extra cost and worked over the summer on several jobs in order to be able to afford it.

I ended up having to pay my Production Designer and my Makeup Artist. These were the only crew members who were paid for their services. Neither of these individuals were UNO students; I felt that paying them wouldn't interfere in any way with the barter system that is unofficially established in our film department. I paid them reasonable amounts, considering the several-week time commitment: \$300 each. Their time was worth more, but they appreciated my limited budget and just needed something to take a bit of the sting out of working on my project rather than other jobs.

## PRODUCTION

### **Directing**

Directing *Shape Matters* was a very educational and exciting process. If there's one overarching idea that I can take away from the experience of being on set, and directing the actors and crew, it's that directing is a very delicate balancing act between knowing when to be hands off and when to step in and assert one's position as the ringleader of the project. This extends to the issue of how to exactly communicate your directorial intentions. That is also a balancing act: using the right language to suggest the right direction, to actors or crew, but also leaving room for that person to bring their own imagination to bear.

One of my most important priorities was simply one of management, however. I was very concerned with using our time wisely, not just so we would finish all the scheduled scenes for each day, but also to preserve the crew's morale and to keep my actors energized and involved. I stayed very aware of the time it was taking to complete each take and attempted to exert a lot of control and foresight when it came to establishing a pace to the day. If we were constantly rushing and compromising, because of the sheer volume of shots we had to get through, that

would only succeed in discouraging everyone and I was willing to make certain sacrifices to avoid this.

For this reason, I tried not to be a perfectionist. I forced myself to admit when an acceptable number of takes had been achieved; there were some instances when I didn't think we nailed a shot but I moved on anyway. I've had years of editing experience and I was confident that we were getting plenty of material to cut together, so even if something wasn't perfect I knew there was probably an alternative angle or other remedy that could be found in the edit.

We never went over our allotted time, and we only had one day where we didn't end the shoot early. I think we did an excellent job scheduling; credit goes to Wendy Granger and Rashada Fortier, my first and second Assistant Directors, for that. Finishing early helped everyone stay sane and also gave us extra time to plan ahead for the next day.

The only day that was problematic was when we drove to Acadian Village in Lafayette. It was a busy day—the entire climax of the movie had to be shot there, as well as two other shorter scenes. The travel time was what made it so difficult. The drive was two hours, so our trip there and back again at the end of the day lost us four hours in total. We had to rush on this day and some compromises had to be made. Ultimately, I don't think those scenes suffered too much, but it was a lot to try and accomplish. We could have gone up multiple days, but it was a cost thing and we would have had to add another day to the length of the production. Paying for the gas for all of the various vehicles, especially the grip truck, and paying an additional location fee, was just too prohibitive. Otherwise, I would have been happier heading up there twice.

Working with the actors was a joy, but there were some instances where I was unsure what to tell them. Sometimes I had an instinctual feeling that I needed them to make an adjustment, but I hesitated because I wanted them to create the characters themselves. Because of my own experience in performance (on both stage and screen) I sometimes fear that my direction is inspired by how *I* would play the character but isn't necessarily what's best for the particular strengths of those that I have cast or for the movie as a whole.

This temptation was particularly strong when directing Jake Hoyson as William, especially since I had entertained the idea of playing the part myself. But Jake is not me and directing him to act like me could only lead to an unnatural performance. I think I was able to adequately combat this temptation but, psychologically, it created a problem for me. I kept wondering to myself, after wrapping for the day, if the performance should have gone another direction that was closer to what I would have done. In hindsight, these were just worries that resulted from the pressure of working on my thesis. My brain was searching for things to stress over. The final performances were guided by me, but also took advantage of the actors' unique characteristics.

However, the general verbosity of my direction when guiding these performances may have been an issue. Interestingly enough, I ended up being cast as the lead in Jake Hoyson's thesis film which wrapped about eight months after my thesis. I noticed, when being directed by Jake, that he would often give me direction that I would immediately understand and yet he would continue to describe what he wanted me to do. Thinking back, I can remember myself doing this, too; I was being extremely wordy in my descriptions of blocking and performance notes. Rather than just say "Jake, this time, play it as if you want Catherine to go away" I would then then go on for another 60 seconds saying the same thing in multiple ways, using metaphors, and referring back to earlier scenes, etc. I think Jake probably understood what I meant after a single sentence, and I think going any further than that just wastes time and can potentially confuse.

Some of my direction came in the form of suggesting new dialogue, in rehearsal and on set. I remember giving dialogue to Jake and Anna just before we shot the scene where William shows Cyrus to Catherine. There was less conflict in the scene initially and William gave in a little too easily to Catherine's desire to help Cyrus. I had him try a bit more to convince her that Phrenology was a scam, and I had him bring up his attempts to exercise his Amativeness. This allowed for the Amativeness portion of the story to become relevant again and gave Catherine an opportunity to use flattery and William's sexual interest in her as a way to finally convince him. I felt that this resulted in an amusing moment that helped the Amativeness scenes feel unified with the rest of the plot, and the additions also kept William's goal (romancing Catherine) consistent and in the forefront.

I was happy with the tweaks we made and felt that what we ended up shooting was better than any previous draft of the script. Adding dialogue and making changes to the script, even at the last possible moment, is another example of what I mean about the balancing act between hands-on versus hands-off: to neither feel overly beholden to the script nor to alter it casually. If you veer too far away, then what originally attracted the producers, director, actors, etc. to the project could be lost. And yet it's important to be alert to when changes will result in a better performance or more clarity or perhaps a necessary bit of additional humor. Many of the best additions to screenplays can't be anticipated before being on set where the pieces of production come together and suggest new possibilities.

## Cinematography

It was always an important priority to give *Shape Matters* a contemporary energy that would draw in audiences who might not necessarily be interested in period films, and one of the best ways to achieve this was through thoughtful use of cinematography. I wanted everything within the frame, in terms of production design, locations, costumes, and makeup, to be authentic and historical; however, the actual framing and camera movement would be used to counteract this historical approach and add some modern sensibility to the mix.

Cinematography was an area that I really wanted to show more appreciation for in this project. I felt it had been somewhat neglected on *Guinevere* and I wanted the visuals to do a lot more work on *Shape Matters*. I don't know if the cinematography is a roaring success on this film, but it's definitely a considerable improvement over my previous work. I think I had a much clearer vision for the cinematography, fueled by the historical setting.

Trenton and I talked early on about whether we would lock the camera off or if we would do the film handheld. I thought that handheld, which is all the rage now, would add a nice realism to the movie and I was afraid that having the shots too still might give the whole enterprise a Masterpiece Theater feel. I didn't want the movie to be stuffy. I wanted it to be energetic and remind people that this world wasn't always history, it was the present. I'm a big fan of the John Adams Miniseries, starring Paul Giamatti, and that series was all handheld. I thought it added a nice realism and energy to the proceedings and thought we should do the same.

I received an interesting comment on this stylistic choice, during my feedback session: someone described their experience watching the film as like "watching a 19<sup>th</sup> century *Parks and Recreation*". When I queried them further during the talkback, they explained that they were

talking about the handheld style, the quick pacing, and the humor of the film. Though I don't think the movie is as comedic as that show, I'm happy to take the comparison as a compliment.

There aren't too many complicated shots in this film. We have a simple jib at one point, and one dolly shot. One unique shot I wanted early on was a transition shot between Cyrus, who is crying out, and the weeping widow. This required Trenton to perform a somewhat strenuous maneuver with the camera where he turned the whole camera apparatus on its side, with just his brute strength, and from an awkward crouching position. It proved an effective transition: several viewers have already commented that it's an amusing and memorable cut.

Oftentimes, cinematography became more about cutting anachronistic things out of the frame, rather than what we were putting in the frame. The Phrenological Society set had all kinds of elements that were purposefully left incomplete, for cost purposes (for example, we only had a partial ceiling), so we had to be careful. The Acadian Village set, where we shot some exteriors, had lots of anachronistic things, such as electric lights and wires going to those lights, and we managed to keep those hidden, either through our on-set framing, or later through editing.

## **Sound**

Sound is an essential part of any film and poor sound can completely undermine even the best story. However, it can be very easy to do right. All you really need is a couple of different microphones (giving yourself a few options to choose from in post-production), a reliable sound mixer and boom operator, and to make sure you give the sound mixer enough time to do his or her job. This last point is extremely important yet is often neglected on many shoots. I did my best not to do so.

I certainly chose a reliable sound mixer; I had recruited Jonathan Kieran as my sound mixer and trusted him completely. I knew that he would do the best that could do with the equipment available and that he would be thorough in insisting on recording plenty of additional sound.

One of the big issues, true of many productions, was all of the traffic and industrial-type sounds that kept bleeding into our locations. This is especially problematic, obviously, because it's anachronistic for my particular film. Jonathan was good about getting wild tracks and lines, however, and there weren't too many instances of traffic noise.

Wild tracks are extra recordings of sounds and dialogue from each scene. These are usually recorded in the same space where the scene was located, but with the actors placed into a better position, away from unwanted background noise. Jon did a good job with these and I ended up replacing some of the dialogue of the wake scene with these wild tracks.

The only serious sound problem was that we ran out of time on the day that we went to Acadian Village and so were unable to record wild tracks. We never actually got around to recording them for that particular day. It wasn't a big deal. I brought back some of the actors and recorded a bit extra. I should have been better about leaving Jon time on a different day (which he asked for but it just never ended up happening) where he could have recorded the Acadian Village wild sounds.

## Costumes

Costumes were an important part of making the film a convincing window into the past, and they were essential to communicating the character of the story's various personalities.

The trick was finding options that were both inexpensive and accurate enough to satisfy the average viewer. I found options online; some sites were businesses that supply authentic period clothing to plantations and other historic tourist spots, and some were simply costume stores. We got most of our costumes from the Gentleman's Emporium website, which provides costume-type pieces which are inspired by historical styles (they also provide a lot of "steampunk" items). I thought these were close enough, and by combining some of these "inspired" costume pieces with more authentic pieces on the same character they would work fine.

Barbara Vinson, who was in charge of costumes, helped me with some of the purchases, and she and Maria Hinterkoerner helped dress the cast on set and distressed the clothes during pre-production, to give them a worn out look. It was important for these clothes to seem well-worn, because I assumed that my characters would not own too many different outfits, meaning that the few outfits they did possess would have been washed and worn many times over.

Our costume decisions were only interesting or significant in a few cases. We gave William and Cyrus the same jacket in order to suggest a kinship between them, and because they are both in the same profession. We clad Prentiss in lighter tones compared to the other characters, tans and browns, to complement his general nebbishness. We originally had a bit of a motif going with the color blue; William had a blue vest and Catherine had an all-blue dress, but those colors became far more subdued after color correction.

I have received nothing but compliments about the costumes, so they certainly succeed in drawing people into the world of the film.

## Hair and Makeup

Interestingly enough, one of the biggest headaches of the entire production was a result of makeup. Our makeup ended up looking very strange, at least until I went about correcting the issue. There is a simple and obvious lesson to be learned from this experience: when filming a movie, always be sure to review your footage at the end of each day.

Our problems began when I decided to go with someone I was unfamiliar with as the makeup artist for *Shape Matters*. The artist that I used was the recommendation of a recommendation. I asked Wendy Granger if she knew of any makeup artist and she enthusiastically recommended someone. That person was unavailable, but she enthusiastically recommended someone else who was.

This person had their own local makeup business and seemed perfectly competent and excited when we met her. Unfortunately, we ran into real problems with the makeup on the first day of shooting. I suppose they were problems of our own making, in a way, because it took us so long to realize there *was* a problem.

Here was the problem: when our actors showed up on set from hair/makeup/wardrobe they were *caked* in makeup and also severely orange. My first thought when I saw the actors was that they looked odd, but then again, I don't know anything about makeup. I didn't want them to



appear oily and blemished, either. So I went ahead and had Trenton start shooting. I don't remember exactly, but I may have made a few comments about the makeup and asked for some slight changes. I also remember that Trenton and I discussed, in depth, the strange color that the actors appeared on the monitor. But then, some of the alternate monitors looked fine.

Here was where Trenton and I truly messed up, and no one can be blamed but us. We didn't look at the dailies until after the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. I can't remember why. I know we spent some time messing around with DIT and there might have been some kind of harddrive issue. We also had to plan for the next day. We may have watched some of the clips, but not on a big screen.

This was a fatal mistake. We shot the next day under similar conditions. And then, at the end of that day, we did a sit down and looked at the material. We were appalled. Everyone looked like John Boehner, spray-tanned, but with pale eyes and necks. At first it was much worse. Then we noticed that the saturation setting on the Red Epic had been set higher than the default. That was a simple matter of setting it back to zero. This helped somewhat. But everyone still looked like they had jaundice. We should have gone with our instincts and *looked* at the actors to determine if they were wearing too much. Instead, we relied on the camera monitors. And they were inconsistent and misleading.

The other strange thing about this makeup problem was how the lighting in the soundstage set changed its appearance. About 50 percent of the shots looked fine, the problem seemed to occur when the actors were being directly hit by the light; it totally negated the effects of the makeup. In fact, they looked quite nice—with an even complexion and just a hint of a sun-kissed bronze. Sam Cobean, in particular, looked great. This must have been another reason why we didn't notice the problem ahead of time: many of the shots looked fine, while some of them looked completely terrible.

The third day of shooting I sprang into action. It was awkward, but I had to tell my makeup artist to basically do almost nothing with the actors. She really only ended up putting makeup on Catherine; everyone else received next to no touching up. This was especially awkward because I talked to her about my concerns first, then she made up the actors, and they still looked pretty much as bad as the first two days. They were just smothered in makeup. I had to send them back and tell her that I needed her to take it all off. It was rough, and I could tell that she was taken aback at this criticism.

Her experience had never been on film. My understanding is that she did wedding makeup and makeup for photography. I wouldn't have thought that photography would be so different, but I don't know much about it. If I hadn't received a recommendation from someone who did do film makeup, I never would have considered this person.

The ultimate solution was to do some reshoots. Luckily, as I said, not every shot was unsalvageable. We reshot only the angles that absolutely could not be used and kept the rest. I had already decided I wanted to aim for a desaturated look, in terms of color correction, so that also helped mediate the orange color.

All in all, it was a pretty harrowing experience, and, after all our other work making the movie look right, I was terrified that my actors would look like a bunch of clowns. I suppose that's what reshoots are for. I will be far more careful about seeing the previous work of any makeup artist I recruit, in the future. And I will never again go home at the end of a shoot date without reviewing the dailies first, no matter how exhausted or busy I and the Director of Photography might be.

Hair was a delight and we had no serious issues with it. If there was a mistake here it was that I didn't really appreciate how important hair was until I lucked into finding the perfect

person to do it. I thought at first, in a pinch, the makeup artist could do hair. I figured that the styles would be fairly simple.

However, I was aware of Crystal Wells from Wendy Granger's thesis and I thought I would ask her to come on board. If she had said no, I'm not sure who else I would have asked. When she did come on board she brought a book of period hair styles to our first meeting. I was amazed at all the different options and impressed with her confidence that she could recreate any of them.

The styles we picked out together really bring the film to life. I was amazed when I first saw the actors in costume with their period hair. They really seemed to have stepped out of a time machine.

The only problem we had with hair was some inconsistency with the styles. Some days Crystal could not be there and so her assistant, Stephanie, took over. Stephanie's version of the characters' hair did not always look exactly the same, but since we were pressed for time we weren't always able to perfect it. I haven't had anyone make any comments about the hair changing, however.

## POST-PRODUCTION

### **Editing**

Before I ever even settled on a script, I knew I would edit *Shape Matters* myself. I edit all of my own projects; editing is a particular interest of mine, and I enjoy any opportunity I have to indulge in it and improve my skill.

Of course, editing your own film is difficult and dangerous. When an outsider cuts the material it's far easier for them to divorce themselves from it. They view nothing as sacred. I, however, had a lot of decisions to make about what to keep and what to abandon, and it was all dear to me.

The original cut was 24 minutes. That was including everything from the script. I'm surprised that it was that long, since the script was exactly 18-pages and, except for one day, when we finished in 12 hours, every day of production ended early. I guess I just left a lot of time in the cut for things to breathe. It took cutting an entire scene, cutting another scene in half, and removing many lines of dialogue before the movie got close to the 18-minute length I desired. In the end, I settled for 19 minutes and 40 seconds as the final runtime. No one who has watched it so far has said that it drags; hopefully, its length will not be prohibitive when I submit the film to festivals.

I completed six cuts, receiving feedback at many points along the way. I showed the movie to professors (all the members of my committee), my producers, and other people on the crew whose judgment I trust, and acquaintances who had no connection to the movie (in order to get a completely unbiased view). I took many of their suggestions into account, especially when they told me something was superfluous. This helped me trim a lot of fat.

There was an additional scene where William and Prentiss confronted each other that I removed almost immediately, with no prompting from outsiders. I knew it was superfluous as soon as I cut the whole story together. Nothing is added plot-wise and the scene is simply an extension, if heightened somewhat, of the interior scene between Prentiss and William. I enjoyed

some of the lines here but knew that if I cut the entire scene no one would miss it. It never made it past the first draft of the edit.

After a few cuts and showing the work in progress to Erik Hansen's classes and friends of mine, I realized another problem with the film: people were not making the connection between Cyrus and Catherine's dead uncle in the funeral scene. I was hoping that simply seeing Cyrus running from something in the first scene, then having his face "turn into" the widow's when we cut to the wake, that the audience would understand he was responsible for killing her husband, and that's why he was fleeing. However, many people didn't get the connection at all, and weren't sure who he was or who he had shot when he shows up again later.

I deliberated for some time with Trenton and we decided that it was best to do some pickups that clearly established that Catherine's uncle was the one in the altercation with Cyrus. We got John Landry back, dressed him up, and shot a new opening that shows his dying face, as Cyrus is seen fleeing in the background. This then leads into the original shot of Cyrus running. Tim was unavailable when we wanted to do this, but it didn't matter: we never intended to show his face until the next shot. So I filled in and it's my legs and torso that are running away.

Looking back now, I think this opening is a much stronger opening image than what I originally had. I still like the idea of the other opening, but opening on John's dying bald head is a pretty fun way to begin.

An essential part of editing is being able to see the big picture. Though there may be individual moments that work well, it is still possible for those moments to work against the overall film. This is something that I have learned during my time at UNO, and, while editing *Shape Matters*, I think I've been able to find those moments that do not add to the story I am trying to tell and remove them. This is especially important when trying to shorten a film. The original length of *Shape Matters* was over twenty minutes; that did not feel right to me. I removed moments that I felt worked just fine in isolation, but could lead to a lengthy film that audiences would not want to sit through. Editing is about making sacrifices and *Shape Matters* reflects an improvement in my ability to do so.

## **Color Correction**

I didn't have many ideas early on about color correction. At first I thought maybe I would go for a colder, blue scheme. I liked the idea of adopting the color of the Phrenology bust- white porcelain, black text, blue trim- into the color of the finished film, and I had incorporated some of those ideas into costume. This was only a half-serious idea, though, and I figured that a final decision could be made once the film was in post.

After our makeup troubles I started thinking about a way to reduce the impact of the few shots where the faces of the actors were too orange. It occurred to me that desaturating the entire image would considerably reduce the makeup woes, and it appealed to me quite apart from that because the look would resemble early photographs. I decided to go with a faded, yellow, desaturated look with very high contrast that really made the blacks of the period jackets and hats and ties dark and rich. I think the look is successful and contributes even further to the period feel.

## Post-Sound

Post-production sound played a huge role in selling the world of *Shape Matters*; in many ways, it is as vital as production design in terms of making the audience believe that the story takes place in a bustling 19<sup>th</sup> century town. I was responsible for all the post-sound work, and the more I worked on it the more I appreciated how much work there was to be done.

The most significant element of this post-audio work was adding in the atmosphere. Before this stage, although the film *looked* convincing, it sounded empty and dead. The story is meant to take place in a bustling little town, or out in the busy creature-filled wilderness. The scenes shot in the soundstage in particular needed to be opened up. It made sense to me that you would hear the sounds of the village through the wooden walls of the building.

I remembered this from the John Adams miniseries which, as I said, inspired many of the stylistic elements of this production. Even in the interior scene, the distant sounds of horses and people going about their business could be heard. I went through every scene in town and tried to add in sounds to give the impression of a busy population; I added in voices, dogs, a church bell, the sound of a blacksmith, horses, etc. It was amazing to me how much more alive the movie seemed; listening to previous cuts was odd. The imagination can really be stimulated by even the simplest soundscape.

I decided to do this audio work in Avid as it simplified the process and, honestly, I'm not skilled enough with audio work to really know what I'm missing by using other programs that are more equipped for audio mixing. Perhaps this is a lazy move on my part, but I have neither the time nor the resources at this point to do much more than this.

## Music

Music was another difficulty for a film like *Shape Matters*. I definitely wanted a score. I'm a great fan of film music and have quite a collection, from John Williams to Patrick Doyle. I wanted something robust and thematic, but it had to feel period. I was sure that I needed music and that I needed that music to function in the same way as the script: it needed to suggest a different time, while also possessing a modern sensibility that would engage all viewers.

Google did all the work here. I typed in Louisiana film composers and a Louisiana entertainment site popped up. I clicked on it. I clicked on the first name I saw there: Andrew Morgan Smith. I followed a few more links, found his personal website, and listened to about ten or so samples he had there. I was immediately impressed with the melodies he'd come up with and that the music didn't sound synthesized in the slightest. The website showed that he used local musicians in addition to synthesized sounds, but I couldn't tell the synthesized instruments from the real, so I guessed he had fairly expensive and impressive tools at his disposal.

He had a long list of credits and had worked on a host of SyFy channel movies and other fairly big budget productions. No great movies, but at least he was getting a lot of work and must be reliable. I messaged him and asked him for a quote. He requested a cut of the movie and a sense of how much music I would want. He enjoyed the cut I sent him, said he was interested in the project, and told me that for the amount I wanted it would be \$1000. I didn't have any other money budgeted at this point, because, originally, I had thought my friend Mike, from my undergraduate studies, would do the scoring, and he had always volunteered his time in the past.

However, I had an intuition that Andrew was right for the job so I agreed, not entirely sure where the money was coming from but aware that I had several job prospects for the summer and that I would pursue them with renewed vigor in order to pay this man.

Who knows what kind of score I would have received if I'd done more searching, but I honestly can't imagine the movie with any different music. I think Andrew really understood the original ideas I gave him. The instrumentation was appropriate to the period but the vibe is staccato and humorous and exciting when necessary. I think it strikes that balance between history and modernity really well.

## CONCLUSION

### Feedback

So, in the end, how does the film work? After the many months effort put into it, is it an effective story? I performed several test screenings and I will now discuss in some detail the impressions I got from those participants.

My primary concern remained that some aspects of the movie were not explicit enough. But even after screening the film, I still feel like I made the right decisions. From the limited feedback I have received from a few test screenings and from friends and family that I've sent completed cuts to, I feel like if there has been any confusion that confusion has not negatively affected anyone's enjoyment of the movie. A good portion of the respondents seemed to understand that the arc for William was a non-arc—that he ends up back where he started—but they also understood that there were some slight indications that he would change. Many people were confused by the arc, but ultimately had many positive things to say about the film in general. There was a specific section for “Was there anything you found confusing or disliked about the film?” and a few respondents mentioned that William's psychology was confusing. Of the 27 questionnaires that were filled out, only two or so made any mention of William's arc or psychology under that “disliked” question.

I had a separate question that tried to tease out the audience's reaction to William's arc, phrased this way: “How do William's feelings about Cyrus change or not change over the course of the film?” I then had a number of blanks that the respondent could fill in. I made it clear that not all of these blanks needed to be used and that they should feel free to use them to “track his arc, *or lack thereof*”. It's possible that simply by asking about an arc the respondents would feel obligated to search for one, even if they otherwise wouldn't pick up on one. It's likely that this bias would be balanced out, however—some respondents will see a question about arc and feel like they need to find an arc, and some will likely see that the question talks about “lack thereof” and assume that I am implying there is no arc. If I were to have engaged each viewer in conversation, rather than give them a questionnaire, who knows if they would volunteer information about William's arc on their own? Perhaps it's impossible for these questions to not be leading; perhaps a completely genuine response from this kind of survey is impossible.

The answers to this “arc” question were varied. Some respondents seemed confused, but many others seemed to understand that William didn't really learn anything and, to my satisfaction, a few pointed out that there were subtle parts where William was or could have been improving, but he still came back to his original view. Some left the question blank (though they had left other questions blank, as well) and others were a bit mixed up in how exactly they

ordered William's progression. Still, I feel that enough people understood what I was trying to accomplish with William's character and his psychology.

There were other specific moments in the film that puzzled the test audiences; however, few of the problems were expressed by more than one respondent and this suggests differences between the sensibilities of the audience members more than any true, objective problem with my script. I received one comment that it was unclear whether Cyrus was a slave or a free person. There is a single line that clarifies Cyrus status early in the film, when William says "the attacker was one of those Northern freedmen". Maybe that wasn't enough, as some people seem to miss the line or do not understand entirely what a freedman is.

I had done an early test screening, several versions before the final cut, where many people were confused who Cyrus was. That version started with Cyrus running through the woods and there was no explicit evidence that he had just shot somebody. I hope that the immediate transition to the wake scene and the talk of "the attacker" being a freedman would make the connection for the audience. Unfortunately, that didn't seem to be enough for lots of people, so we went back and added an additional shot of the dead man and Cyrus's legs as he flees. This made the connection obvious and seems to have reduced confusion. I also happen to think that it is a stronger opening image. The original script probably should have begun with such an image, but we were able to rectify that mistake.

One of the more surprising bits of confusion that resulted from the film was a quick moment where William shoves his hand into Cyrus's wound. There were all kinds of weird reactions to this. Most assumed that he was trying to check and see if there was a wound there or if Cyrus was still bleeding. In fact, it was just William purposefully trying to inflict pain on this man who he views as a murderer and, because of his race, something less than human.

The actual reason this attack by William was present is because I wanted to capture something of the brutality of the time. I wanted to show the surplus cruelty that whites inflicted on blacks during that era (and well beyond that era). I remember a lecture where the speaker talked about some of the sadism that went on. Normal, pleasant, and apparently moral white people would often attend lynchings and, after watching a black person be hung to death and then possibly castrated or burned, many of them would take "souvenirs" home—pieces of the corpse, such as toes or fingers. They would then display these body parts in their homes or places of business. My film is hardly that dark or depressing, but I wanted a small moment where we see how someone who seems harmless and for the most part ethical, like William, always had a reserve of hatred at the ready for any black person they came across. People who would be perfectly sweet and compassionate towards others of their race revealed a different side when confronting black people.

That was an important thing for me. I don't really understand why it caused so much confusion. It may have simply been a matter of direction. If there had been a closeup of Jake's face as he surveyed Tim, or possibly if Jake had snarled or something as he thrust his hand forward, maybe the intention would have been clear. At the risk of sounding condescending, I think it's a matter of the particular audience I showed the film to being unfamiliar with the history and of not really paying attention. There is a medium shot of Jake's face and he certainly doesn't look at Cyrus with any concern. There was one student who understood that William was just trying to hurt Cyrus (she also seemed to understand most of my other intentions in the film). I hope that my future audiences are filled with the likes of her.

Another moment I was concerned about was the final interaction between Catherine and William. William threatens Cyrus, and Cyrus walks away in disgust. Then Catherine comes over

to William, looks at him, touches his forehead, and shrinks away. I was hoping that people would understand that she is rejecting William as a result of performing a quick Phrenological probe of his forehead. After everything she has witnessed, she has a suspicion that William is not who she thought he was; she performs her examination and her fears are confirmed.

Many respondents understood this; many others thought that the final interaction between the characters suggested that she was concerned about William and still liked him. The specific part of William's skull that she touches actually related to "Benevolence"; she's checking to see if his head reflects that he's a good person. That wasn't something that I expected anyone to understand. They were only meant to see that she was performing an examination and they at least should have understood that, no matter what she was doing, she is not happy at the end of the film. I think that Anna's performance sells this; she pulls back and has difficulty making eye contact with William for a second. Once again, at the risk of sounding judgmental, I feel like it's the viewers' fault in this case if they do not see what seems plain on Anna's face. Of course, many respondents did understand.

Ultimately, 13 respondents had an understanding of the interaction in line with what I intended and 14 either were utterly confused or felt that the ending implied that Catherine was still very fond of William. I can live with that.

I wish I had the time and opportunity to do a test screening for adults. When I say adults I mean a group of people who are at least older than, say, 35. As it is, I really only have easy access to college students, and, while I did show the film to both undergraduates and graduates, I wonder if older audience members would have a very different reaction to the film. I think they would understand the presence of the racial cruelty, the reference to Cyrus being a freedman, etc. The one adult I did show the film to, who was not a faculty member and so was completely unfamiliar with the script or premise, was an old friend from Virginia, Edward Whitacre. He was a local actor who my friends and I cast in some projects. His feedback was positive and I specifically asked him to tell me if anything was confusing. He found a single editing choice to be confusing but otherwise had no questions. And this was before we even added the new opening shot. I feel like maybe an older audience would be a more appreciative audience.

## **Dénouement**

*Shape Matters* was a worthy project to pursue as the final culmination of my time at The University of New Orleans. I would like to thank my committee chair Erik Hansen for his assistance with the screenplay and for providing emotional support throughout the stress-filled production. I would also like to thank him for allowing me to screen the film for several of his classes. I would like to thank my other committee members, Laura Medina and Danny Retz, for their feedback on the film at various stages. Many of their notes contributed to what I believe is a much stronger final cut. Though he was not on my committee, Henry Griffin provided some invaluable help on the screenplay that got me to overhaul the second scene and I'd like to thank him for that. And, naturally, my most enthusiastic gratitude is extended to all of the cast and crew who so tirelessly worked to make the film a reality.

*Shape Matters* is a film I am proud of and I hope to immediately begin entering it into as many festivals as I can. I hope it will add something unique and engaging to any slate of films it is a part of and that those who come to see it will leave the theater having learned something about the peculiar history of America and the peculiar nature of human beings.

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Shape Matters

By

Thomas Baumgardner

Draft 1-11-2014

1 EXT. FOREST - DAY

1

It is 1853.

A figure tears through branches. CYRUS, a well-dressed middle-aged African-American man, grim determination on his face, clutches his bleeding side as he sprints for dear life. There is a REVOLVER in his left hand. He stumbles...

His head hovers just above the dirt as he squeezes his eyes shut and cries out in pain.

2 INT. WAKE - DAY

2

The crying face of a woman, 50's, in mourning dress, pressed against the shoulder of WILLIAM WHEELER, 20's. William, looking uncomfortable, rubs the woman's shoulder gently. He is dressed in black himself, but it is the black of a preacher's frock coat and tie.

A number of others stand solemnly in the dark parlor. The body of GRAYSON CAMPBELL, 60s, is displayed on a table at the front of the room. Faint light passing through the curtains highlights the pale features of the deceased.

A nearby OLDER MAN, 40s, pulls the crying woman off of William gently.

WILLIAM

Remember, Mrs. Campbell, our Father's Kingdom is a land of both reward and reunion. Your husband is receiving that reward and one day you shall partake in it with him.

OLDER MAN

Thank you, Pastor.

William smiles. He hears movement behind him and turns slightly. He sees a young woman, 20's, CATHERINE, in close-fitting black, poking the side of the corpse's head.

William looks around, unsure if he should be the one to intervene. He steps over.

CATHERINE

He would never let me do this when he was alive.

WILLIAM

And, uh, what precisely are you doing, Miss-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2.

She remains focused on the corpse.

CATHERINE

Phrenological examination. See this protrusion? It reflects a desire for liquids. Here...

She is pressing against a portion near the corpse's ear. She reaches out and takes his hand to put it near the ear. William looks back at the Older Man and woman. They have not noticed yet, as Catherine keeps pulling on William's hand.

CATHERINE

He's my uncle. I give you permission.

She manages to get him to lightly touch the head of the corpse. William, sweating now, steals another glance at the Older Man who frowns.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

And yours...

She reaches up and touches him behind the ear, leans in to look. It has little intimacy for her; for William it produces an immediate reaction.

CATHERINE

Yours is totally recessed. Do you drink any alcohol?

WILLIAM

Not...no. None.

A very satisfied smile appears on her face. She turns back to the body.

CATHERINE

Isn't the human body fascinating?

WILLIAM

I suppose it...is, yes.

She turns to the corpse.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

I always thought the drink would kill him, not some stranger.

WILLIAM

The attacker was one of those northern freedmen. They're especially bold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3.

She seems to react strongly to the word "bold" and clutches his wrist.

CATHERINE

My parents-

She sees the Older Man frowning. She lowers her voice and leans in close to William's ear.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

My parents say that about me.

She smiles and pulls back slightly. Her eyes flick down.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

Oh, your...that's...interesting.

William looks down, horrified.

WILLIAM

I...uh...

CATHERINE (CONT.)

I read my father's anatomy journals. I know all about it.

William tries to turn away from her, a pained expression on his face.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

Don't you find the human body fascinating?

She grins at him.

WILLIAM

I would like to change my answer now, if you don't mind.

She laughs at his discomfort, then so does he, drawing more suspicious glares.

3

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

3

William shuffles alone down a dirt path. An OLDER MAN leading a horse saunters by.

There is a rustling sound from the foliage to William's left. He stops dead. Someone...or some *thing*...is emerging from the forest towards him...

A face pops out of the branches. It is *Catherine*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

4.

CATHERINE

Do you have any obligations  
tomorrow?

WILLIAM

Where...where did you just...spring  
from...?

She brushes off and walks past. He attempts to catch up. She stops suddenly and turns, catching him off guard.

CATHERINE (CONT.)

I've been attending the Greensboro  
Phrenological Society for weeks.  
And I need a new chaperone.

WILLIAM

These phrenologists teach racial  
amalgamation and other immoral  
doctrines.

CATHERINE

If I bring a new member to the  
Society the guest and I will  
receive a prize.

WILLIAM

I'm trying to establish a  
respectable ministry in this town;  
I need to be cautious with my  
associations.

She thinks for a moment.

CATHERINE

If you accompany me, I'll give you  
a kiss when we arrive.

He laughs at the silliness of this offer. She just waits.  
After a moment...he stops laughing.

4

INT. PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY PARLOR - DAY

4

Catherine enters the large room pulling William behind her,  
He looks ready to turn back at the least provocation.

Six chairs are set out, three are occupied. A thin smiling  
man, 40's, sits reading a pamphlet. Next to him, a man of  
similar age, but with far more facial hair, CLARK, 60's,  
sits staring about, bored. A younger woman, 30's, nervous,  
is next to Clark, her hands in her lap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5.

There is a BLACKBOARD against the wall with crude drawings of heads scrawled upon it and a variety of numbers and DEFINITIONS. Illustrations and charts are nailed to the nearby wall.

Almost as soon as William crosses the threshold a jovial man, short and with round, golden glasses, PRENTISS, 30's, swoops towards them.

PRENTISS  
Catherine!

Then he notices William. There is a split second's hesitation before the enthusiasm returns.

PRENTISS (CONT.)  
And a fresh disciple!

CATHERINE  
William, this is Mr. Prentiss.  
Prentiss, this is William Wheeler-

PRENTISS  
Stop, don't say another word.

He slaps William on the arm and gestures to a small STOOL.

PRENTISS  
Don't tell me who you are. *I'll*  
tell me who you are.

Before William knows what's happening he is seated and Prentiss is perched before him. A pair of metal CALIPERS close around the sides of William's head. A tape measure encircles William's skull. Prentiss jots some notes, nods, murmurs, takes another skull measurement.

PRENTISS  
Hmm...very impressive  
"Constructiveness". Yes.

He stops his examination.

PRENTISS (CONT.)  
You are a blacksmith. By trade.

William looks at Catherine.

PRENTISS (CONT.)  
Painter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6.

WILLIAM

Preacher. I thought.

Prentiss places two fingers at the top of William's skull.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

"Veneration" is just not telling me that. No, no, no. You do metalwork.

CATHERINE

(to William)

Do you? Sometimes?

William shakes his head.

PRENTISS

Well, it's what you ought to be doing. Perhaps you're in the wrong profession.

WILLIAM

Perhaps you are.

An awkward moment, then Prentiss moves off to the board.

PRENTISS

These new papers from Fowler Publishing arrived. This one contains a fascinating article by George Combe.

He hands a PAMPHLET out to each attendee.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

(to William)

I assume you keep up with the latest phrenological literature.

WILLIAM

Not at all.

PRENTISS

A summary then: though the discipline originated in Europe it was Mr. Orson Fowler in New York who truly pioneered the study.

He turns from them and begins writing on the board.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

There are 27 individual organs in the brain, corresponding to different characteristics.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

7.

William's attention is drifting. Catherine pokes him.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

These areas can be augmented and made superior through regular exercise. To put the miracle succinctly Mr. Wheeler, the human brain is capable of "illimitable progression".

He underlines this phrase on the board.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

This progression will be reflected in the physical shape of the skull.

Catherine takes William's hand. Prentiss sees and stops.

PRENTISS

Why don't we show Mr. Wheeler? Let's examine the progress we've made since last week. Catherine.

Catherine comes to the front of the room; she sits on a TALL STOOL in front of Prentiss.

With a glance at William, Prentiss places his hands on either side of her head.

He caresses her skull at a variety of points, pausing occasionally to take an exact measurement with his CALIPERS and to mutter praise like "splendid" and "very promising".

The bearded, and slightly unhinged-looking man, Clark, leans over to William.

CLARK

President Taylor's measurements are in the latest Popular Phrenology.

William attention remains fixed on Prentiss's delicate massaging of Catherine's temples.

WILLIAM

I'm glad that...pleases you.

PRENTISS

(to Catherine)

Put your head back a bit.

There is something unconsciously seductive about the way she reclines her head, exposing her neck. But Prentiss is conscious of it.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

8.

CLARK  
(to William)  
My own measurements are almost exactly similar. What do you think that means?

WILLIAM  
Probably not whatever you think it means.

PRENTISS  
(to Catherine)  
You've improved in all the areas we specified Monday. Your "Amativeness" remains amazingly developed. Though not to a licentious degree.

William looks up at the chalkboard. A number of definitions are there; he sees "Amativeness: concerning sexual desire, physical attraction, conjugal love".

PRENTISS (CONT.)  
It really is incredible how different your organs are than Mr. Wheeler's. His Amativeness: almost nonexistent. I'm surprised you two get on.

WILLIAM  
You learned all that from five minutes examination?

PRENTISS  
I can tell even before the examination. It just confirms my suspicions. The Phrenological Arts will not seem immediately intuitive.

Prentiss has absent-mindedly placed his hand on Catherine's leg. She doesn't notice. William does.

WILLIAM  
I wonder if they said similar things about witchcraft.

Prentiss's nervous laugh. The other woman quietly gets up and leaves the room. Catherine watches her.

CATHERINE  
(to William)  
You're embarrassing me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

9.

William looks directly at Prentiss.

WILLIAM  
There's plenty of embarrassment to  
go around.

CLARK  
I'm not embarrassed.

They all look at him.

5

INT. PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY - LATER

5

The meeting is over; the attendees shuffle out. William  
approaches Catherine as she is about to leave the room.

CATHERINE  
And I thought I was rude sometimes.

WILLIAM  
I apologize.

CATHERINE  
Mr. Fowler was a minister too. This  
is all perfectly above board.

WILLIAM  
That man is using this nonsense to  
seduce you.

She laughs out loud.

CATHERINE  
Nonsense? I offer you the  
opportunity to retract that  
sentiment.

WILLIAM  
I refuse to make that retraction.

He looks proud of his boldness for about 3 seconds but her  
sour reaction causes him to instantly regret it. She spins  
on her heel and walks out.

WILLIAM  
Um, uh, what about my kiss?

From the hallway:

CATHERINE (O.S.)  
HA!

6 EXT. PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY

6

William runs out of the building after her.

Prentiss appears behind him and pushes past, holding two pieces of PARCHMENT in his hand.

PRENTISS

Catherine! Your complimentary gift!

WILLIAM

I'll give it to her.

PRENTISS

I wouldn't bother with her if I were you.

WILLIAM

No, you would bother with her which is exactly why you don't want me to bother with her.

PRENTISS

Of the two intruders into our community recently I can't decide which of you is the least civilized.

William snatches one of the pieces of parchment. He unfurls the corner, sees the edge of an ILLUSTRATION of the skull.

PRENTISS

A chart for assistance with at home augmentation.

William goes for the other. Prentiss pulls it out of reach. William turns to go.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

You know, Amativeness is quite difficult to improve. However-

He laughs, waves the chart meant for Catherine, and walks past.

PRENTISS (CONT.)

George Combe says that even oysters are capable of mental progression.

7 INT. THE WHEELER HOME, WILLIAM'S ROOM - DAY 7

William sits at a table near the window, scribbling in a JOURNAL. The words are a part of some new sermon....

William stares into the nearby MIRROR. Then he looks to his left: the folded Phrenological chart is there. He reaches over...lifts the corner. He points to "Amativeness" and rubs that part of his skull. Then he shakes his head and goes back to the sermon.

The joyous sound of FEMALE LAUGHTER wafts through the window from some nearby garden. William looks at the window and puts down his pen....

8 INT. THE WHEELER HOME - MONTAGE 8

a.) William, staring into the mirror, wraps a TAPE MEASURE around his skull. Then he looks at the measurement.

b.) William paces around his room, reading from a BOOK of SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS.

c.) He embraces a COAT RACK and holds the embrace for several moments.

d.) He kisses up and down his own arms. He does this quickly, in a workmanlike fashion, getting in a good thirty or so kisses a minute.

9 EXT. THE WHEELER HOUSE, BACK GARDEN - DAY 9

William walks behind the house. There isn't much there, only a few scattered flowers and some small shrubs. William already has a bundle of small FLOWERS in his arms, freshly picked. He takes a quick measurement of his head with the tape measure...

Dissatisfied, he sees another flower and stoops down to pluck it. He notices something on a nearby stone: something RED and WET.

He runs his finger over it and stands. He stares at his finger, rubbing it together with his thumb. BLOOD.

10 EXT. FOREST - DAY

10

William creeps forward to the edge of the wooded area that outlines the garden.

A muffled cry gets his attention. He drops all his flowers. William, terrified, advances towards the noise.

He steps around a particularly large and grizzled tree and, lying amongst the tree's massive roots, is *Cyrus*, the escaped killer of Grayson Campbell. His clothes, at one point quite impressive, are now torn to shreds and covered in dirt. His side is tied up with STRIPS of his own torn pants, crusted with dried blood.

CYRUS

Do you have anything I can eat?

WILLIAM

HELP! HELP! I'VE CAUGHT HIM. THE KILLER! HE'S HERE.

CYRUS

Please!

William grabs at Cyrus's wounded side and Cyrus yells in pain. William thinks for a moment then runs off.

11 EXT. FOREST - DAY

11

William appears again at the tree, out of breath. He holds a length of thick ROPE.

He wraps the rope around Cyrus and the tree and begins tying Cyrus firmly to the tree.

WILLIAM

You'll remain here until I...fetch the sheriff.

CYRUS

You a godly man?

WILLIAM

More so than a murderer like yourself, I assure you.

CYRUS

Oh, you know that, do you?

William continues struggling with the knot.

(CONTINUED)

CYRUS (CONT.)

Name me chapter and verse, I can recite it.

WILLIAM

Ha, don't make me embarrass you.

CYRUS

You couldn't do that.

WILLIAM

Hebrews, Chapter 8...the final verse.

CYRUS

Verse...13. "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." That right?

WILLIAM

I don't know. I...don't have it memorized.

CYRUS

I can't comprehend your people. You talk and talk about Christ, then I do the same and next thing a man's screaming about "the word of the Lord from a Devil's tongue".

WILLIAM

We have laws against Negro preaching in this state.

William finishes his rather strange-looking knot.

CYRUS

Some pistol-toting pie-eater isn't going to silence me. I was attacked, why shouldn't I defend myself?

WILLIAM

That's what you claim happened.

CYRUS

But quite apart from being a monster himself that man Campbell had monstrous aim.

He raises a PISTOL from his side, points it at William's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

14.

CYRUS (CONT.)

Mine is divine.

William crouches back.

CYRUS (CONT.)

Could have shot you down same as I did Campbell. But I know you're gonna help me. This meeting. It's not happenstance. It's providence.

Cyrus smiles, then lowers the pistol, shuts his eyes, breathing heavily. William comes closer...and snatches the pistol away and points it at Cyrus. Cyrus doesn't move.

William notices something about Cyrus's head and leans very close. He touches the top of his skull...just where Prentiss touched William's head.

WILLIAM

Veneration...

Cyrus jerks up. The knot immediately comes untied and the rope falls off the tree.

CYRUS

Clearly not a sailor.

12

INT. THE WHEELER HOME, WILLIAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

12

William helps Cyrus limp into the room. Cyrus sees the bed and throws himself down on it.

WILLIAM

No, no. On the floor.

He yanks on Cyrus's arm, trying to pull him off. Cyrus angrily pulls away and lays back, shutting his eyes.

William runs his hand through his hair, anxious, unsure. His hands are bloody from Cyrus's wound.

Cyrus's chest rises and falls. He's asleep.

The face of William rises into view. He encircles Cyrus's head with the tape measure from his chin to the top of his skull. Looks at the measurement.

15.

13 EXT. VILLAGE - DAY 13

William strides past other residents as he moves through the town. A few of the Phrenological Society members pass him.

14 INT. PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY PARLOR - DAY 14

Catherine is speaking to one of the other members as William enters the room.

CATHERINE

Oh. It's you.

WILLIAM

I..uh...have you thought much about...your uncle recently?

CATHERINE

Why do you ask?

WILLIAM

I think I've made a phrenological discovery that will interest you.

Catherine grins. Prentiss turns from cleaning the blackboard.

PRENTISS

Mr. Wheeler.

He steps up very close behind Catherine.

WILLIAM

(to Catherine)

I need to...show you now.

He takes her hand and starts to pull her away.

PRENTISS

I thought you said you weren't a painter?

William looks back at him. Prentiss is staring at the bloodstains on William's hand. Prentiss gives William a curious look. William leads Catherine away.



15 INT. WILLIAM'S BEDROOM

15

Cyrus sits on the bed reading William's PHRENOLOGICAL CHART and eating a piece of BREAD.

WILLIAM  
Don't touch that.

Cyrus looks up at him, unmoved. Catherine stares at Cyrus.

CYRUS  
Ah, you brought the sheriff. I like  
your dress.

He grins at her. Catherine keeps staring. William sees her staring and jumps into his explanation.

WILLIAM  
He knows the scriptures far better  
than I do and yet his Veneration is  
less developed. He's a violent man  
of a violent race and yet his  
Destructiveness is totally  
recessed.

William snatches the Phrenological chart and points at Destructiveness.

WILLIAM (CONT.)  
He attacks your uncle...and yet has  
undeveloped Destructiveness? A  
clear example that all that  
Prentiss has been telling you is  
false and you shouldn't go to those  
meetings or see him ever again.

Cyrus looks on skeptically and keeps eating his bread. Catherine steps up. She looks at Cyrus's "Destructiveness".

CYRUS  
(to Catherine)  
Well, then I guess that proves I'm  
innocent. I can't have attacked  
anyone if I don't have this  
"developed" Destructiveness... That  
is, if Phrenology is true...

He suggests this innocently enough, but there is a manipulative gleam in his eye as he looks at Catherine.

Catherine looks very convinced by this; she nods, deep in thought.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

He's right. I mean, he hasn't  
attacked us...

WILLIAM

(to Catherine)

You're letting your philosophy  
define the facts rather than the  
other way around! He attacked your  
uncle in cold blood!

CATHERINE

Oh! I have the most irrepressible  
impulse: we should help him escape.

WILLIAM

Catherine, please! This "science"  
of yours is complete humbug. I  
mean, I've been working on my  
Amativeness for days and it hasn't  
made me any more desirable!!!

CATHERINE

Huh. I thought I noticed something  
different about you.

WILLIAM

Uh...really?

He smiles and "poses" slightly.

WILLIAM (CONT.)

It worked? Do I seem more alluring?

CYRUS

Most certainly.

William stares at him, then at Catherine.

WILLIAM

(to Catherine)

Well, I...perhaps you are right  
about all this.

She smiles and kisses William. Cyrus gets back to business.

CYRUS

Alright, now what are you going to  
do about me?

PRENTISS (O.S.)

That is an excellent question...

William and Catherine turn. Prentiss is standing in the doorway. He casually picks up Cyrus's revolver off the dresser. He pulls the hammer back on the pistol.

16 EXT. THE WHEELER HOUSE, BACK GARDEN - DAY 16

Cyrus and William walk out into the garden with Prentiss and Catherine right behind. The pistol is trained on William.

PRENTISS  
(to William)  
They're going to ride you out of town on a rail for this, Wheeler.

He stops and looks at Catherine.

PRENTISS (CONT.)  
(to Catherine)  
Go get the sheriff.

William takes this chance. He lunges at Prentiss.

They fall. The pistol drops from Prentiss's hand. William takes a swing at Prentiss which misses and throws him off balance. Prentiss flips him over and gets his hands around William's throat. William starts turning red.

Catherine throws a pleading look at Cyrus. He hesitates then, as William gasps for air, Cyrus leaps forward, grabs Prentiss's shoulder and throws him to the side. Prentiss struggles to reach the pistol but Cyrus grabs it and brings it down on the back of Prentiss's skull.

As Prentiss groans, Cyrus reaches out a hand and pulls William up. Bewildered, William immediately falls over again.

He jabs an accusatory finger at Cyrus and grabs the pistol.

WILLIAM (CONT.)  
(to Catherine)  
I told you. He's...we've...got to turn him in. He's a danger.

CYRUS  
(to William)  
You had me pegged as a murderer before you even met me. Whatever I am...You have neither the wit nor inclination to figure it out.

William looks up into his eyes...Cyrus walks away. Cyrus takes one last look back at her and moves into the trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

19.

Catherine comes over to William's side. Prentiss is groaning, trying to sit up.

CATHERINE

It's okay. I know that you're a good person.

William's face suggests he's not so sure about this and so does hers. She feels the top of William's forehead, benevolence.

Prentiss flips himself over, with difficulty.

PRENTISS

Could someone possibly locate a doctor?

17 CREDITS

17

## **SHAPE MATTERS BUDGET**

### *Pre-Production*

a. Costumes	3100	
b. Props	500	
c. Makeup/Hair	350	
d. Location Fees		
a. Acadian Village	200	
b. City Park	100	
e. Crew Payments		
a. Production Designer (Ellen Bull)	300	
b. Makeup Artist (Ingrid Butler)		300
f. Set Construction	1600	

### *Production*

a. Craft Services	1000	
b. Expendables/Fuel	500	
c. Permits	0	
d. Repairs	0	

### *Post-Production*

a. Data Storage	700	
b. Music Composition (Andrew Morgan Smith)	1000	
c. Publicity	275	

**TOTAL:** **\$9925**



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PRODUCER: Thomas Baumgardner	DIRECTOR: Thomas Baumgardner

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Name: Jacob Hoyson

Address: 1111 Lake Avenue Apt 237

Telephone: 412-952-2386

Signature: [Signature] Date: 10/25/14

Character Name: William Wheeler

Producer Signature: Thomas Baumgardner Date: 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338



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Name: Anna Brown

Address: 1610 Robert E. Lee Blvd., Apt. 606  
New Orleans, LA 70122

Telephone: (615) 512-7147

Signature: *Anna Brown* Date: 10/26/14

Character Name: Catherine

Producer Signature: *Thomas Baumgardner* Date: 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338



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Name: Timothy J. Bellon  
 Address: 4514 Prairie St.  
Metairie, LA 70001  
 Telephone: 713-503-6564  
 Signature: [Signature] Date: 10-23-14  
 Character Name: Lyrus  
 Producer Signature: [Signature] Date: 11/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338





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Name: SAM COBEAN

Address: 620 S ACADIAN THRUWAY  
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

Telephone: 225-614-3171

Signature: [Signature] Date: 10-23-14

Character Name: PRENTISS

Producer Signature: [Signature] Date: 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338



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Name: Casey Groves  
Address: 1712 Prytania St.  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
Telephone: 917-969-8698  
Signature *Casey Groves* Date 10/26/14  
Character Name: Clark  
*Thomas Baumgardner* 10/23/2014 757-784-7338  
Producer Signature Date Producer Telephone



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I hereby grant to the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts, its successors, assigns and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and sound track recordings and records which you may make of me or of my voice, and the right to use my name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by me, in connection with the production and/or postproduction of the Picture.

I agree that I will not assert or maintain against the Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts, your successors, assigns and licensees, any claim, action, suit or demand of any kind or nature whatsoever, including but not limited to those grounded upon invasion of privacy, rights of publicity or other civil rights, or for any reason in connection with your authorized use of my physical likeness and sound in the Picture as herein provided.

By my signature here I understand that I will, to the best of my ability, adhere to the schedule agreed to prior to the beginning of my engagement. Additionally, I agree, to the best of my ability, to make myself available should it be necessary, to rerecord my voice and/or record voice-overs and otherwise perform any necessary sound work required after the end of filming. Should I not be able to perform such sound work, I understand that the Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts may enter into agreement with another person to rerecord my dialogue and/or record voice-overs and use this sound work over my picture or however they deem appropriate.

I further acknowledge and agree that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named production, or its duly appointed representative(s) and NOT the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts.

I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Name: JOHN NEISLER

Address: 513 BELLEVILLE ST  
NEW ORLEANS 70114

Telephone: 504 553 6336

Signature: [Signature] Date: 10/25/14

Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Producer Signature: [Signature] Date: 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338



PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: Shape Matters
PRODUCER: Thomas Baumgardner	DIRECTOR: Thomas Baumgardner

**ACTOR RELEASE FORM**

To Whom It May Concern:

I (the undersigned) hereby grant to the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, msilhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student motion picture tentatively entitled Shape Matters the "Picture").

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I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Name: JULIANA STARR

Address: 1930 Annunciation St., Apt. G

New Orleans, LA 70130

Telephone: 504-569-2755

Signature Juliana Starr Date Oct. 24, 2014

Character Name: crying widow

Producer Signature Thomas Baumgardner Date 10/23/2014

Producer Telephone 757-784-7338



The University of New Orleans Film Program

The University of New Orleans  
Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70148  
Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: Shape Matters
PRODUCER: Thomas Baumgardner	DIRECTOR: Thomas Baumgardner

### ACTOR RELEASE FORM

To Whom It May Concern:

I (the undersigned) hereby grant to the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, msilhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student motion picture tentatively entitled Shape Matters the "Picture").

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I agree that I will not assert or maintain against the Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts, your successors, assigns and licensees, any claim, action, suit or demand of any kind or nature whatsoever, including but not limited to those grounded upon invasion of privacy, rights of publicity or other civil rights, or for any reason in connection with your authorized use of my physical likeness and sound in the Picture as herein provided.

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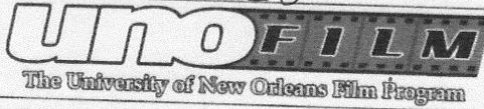
I further acknowledge and agree that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named production, or its duly appointed representative(s) and NOT the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts.

I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Name: LISA MACKEL SMITH  
 Address: 1403 SIGUR AVE.  
METairie, LA. 70005  
 Telephone: 504-234-9153  
 Signature: [Handwritten Signature] Date: 10/24/14

Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Producer Signature: [Handwritten Signature] Date: 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone: 757-784-7338

To: rhm film@gmail.com



The University of New Orleans  
Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70148  
Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: Shape Matters
PRODUCER: Thomas Baumgardner	DIRECTOR: Thomas Baumgardner

**ACTOR RELEASE FORM**

To Whom It May Concern:

I (the undersigned) hereby grant to the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, msilhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student motion picture tentatively entitled Shape Matters the "Picture").

I hereby grant to the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts, its successors, assigns and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and sound track recordings and records which you may make of me or of my voice, and the right to use my name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by me, in connection with the production and/or postproduction of the Picture.

I agree that I will not assert or maintain against the Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts, your successors, assigns and licensees, any claim, action, suit or demand of any kind or nature whatsoever, including but not limited to those grounded upon invasion of privacy, rights of publicity or other civil rights, or for any reason in connection with your authorized use of my physical likeness and sound in the Picture as herein provided.

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I further acknowledge and agree that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named production, or its duly appointed representative(s) and NOT the UNO Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts.

I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Name: Sheryl Diane Shumsky  
 Address: 1827 Cadiz Street  
New Orleans, LA 70115  
 Telephone: 504-314-8837

Signature: Sheryl Diane Shumsky Date 10/27/14

Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Producer Signature: Thomas Baumgardner Date 10/23/2014 Producer Telephone 757-784-7338



The University of New Orleans Film Program

The University of New Orleans  
Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70148  
Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER: <u>Studio II</u>	
PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: <u>Shape Matters</u>
PRODUCER: <u>Eli Eastlund</u>	DIRECTOR: <u>Thomas Baumgardner</u>
LOCATION MANAGER:	

### STUDENT PRODUCTION LOCATION CONTRACT

DATE: 1/15/2014

Permission is hereby granted to Thomas Baumgardner (hereinafter referred to as "Student Filmmaker") by Antebellum Guest House (hereinafter referred to as "Owner/Agent"), to use 1333 Esplanade Avenue, New Orleans, LA the property and adjacent area, located at 1333 Esplanade Avenue, New Orleans, LA

for the purpose of photographing and recording scenes (interior and/or exterior) for motion pictures, with the right to exhibit all or any part of said scenes in motion pictures throughout the world; said permission shall include the right to bring personnel and equipment (including props and temporary sets) onto said property, and to remove the same therefrom after completion of filming.

The above permission is granted for a period of 1  Days  Weeks, beginning on January 26th (Day & Date) and ending on January 26th (Day & Date).

The Owner/Agent does hereby warrant and represent that the Owner/Agent has full right and authority to enter into this agreement concerning the above-described premises, and that the consent or permission of no other person, firm, or corporation is necessary to enable Student Filmmaker to enjoy full rights to the use of said premises, herein above mentioned, and that the Owner/Agent does hereby indemnify and agree to hold Student Filmmaker and the The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts free and harmless from any fees, arising from, growing out of, or concerning a breach of this warranty.

Thomas Baumgardner 1/15/2014  
STUDENT FILMMAKER DATE

Spitt Dechenon 1/15/14  
OWNER/AGENT DATE

ADDRESS: 1333 Esplanade Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70116  
TELEPHONE: 504 943-1900



The University of New Orleans  
 Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
 2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307  
 New Orleans, Louisiana 70148  
 Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER: Studio II		
PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE:	Shape Matters
PRODUCER: Thomas Baumgardner	DIRECTOR:	Thomas Baumgardner

**STUDENT PRODUCTION LOCATION RELEASE**

LOCATION Antebellum Guest House  
 PROPERTY OWNER Keith Tenchoat  
 ADDRESS 1333 Esplanade Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70116

Owner of the property described above and in the Student Production Location Contract between the Student Filmmaker and Owner dated 1/15/2014 ("Property") hereby acknowledges that the Property has been returned to Owner in substantially the same condition it was in prior to Student Filmmaker's use of the Property.

Owner further acknowledges that:

- (a) The Property does not need to be repaired or improved in any respect as a result of the Student Filmmaker's use of the Property; and
- (b) Neither Owner nor any individual who entered the Property at the invitation or on behalf of the Owner suffered any loss or damage arising from or relating to the use of the Property by the Student Filmmaker.

Owner hereby releases and forever discharges Student Filmmaker and the UNO Film, Theater, and Communication Arts and their respective successors, assigns, agents, and employees from any and all claims, debts, demands, liabilities, judgments, obligations, costs, expenses, damages, actions and causes of action of whatsoever kind or nature, whether known or unknown, whether in law or in equity, whether now existing or hereafter arising, that relate to or arise from Student Filmmaker's use of the Property.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO

Thomas Baumgardner \_\_\_\_\_ 10/11/2014  
 Producer Date

Location Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 \* Keith Tenchoat \_\_\_\_\_ 10/13/14  
 Owner/Agent Date

ADDRESS 1333 Esplanade Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70116  
 TELEPHONE 504 943-1900



 <p>The University of New Orleans Film Program</p>	The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts 2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307 New Orleans, Louisiana 70148 Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER: <u>Studio II</u>	
PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: <u>Shape Matters</u>
PRODUCER: <u>Eli Esslund</u>	DIRECTOR: <u>Thomas Baumgardner</u>
LOCATION MANAGER:	

**STUDENT PRODUCTION LOCATION CONTRACT**

DATE: 10/13/2014

Permission is hereby granted to Thomas Baumgardner (hereinafter referred to as "Student Filmmaker") by Equitana Stables (hereinafter referred to as "Owner/Agent"), to use Equitana Stables the property and adjacent area, located at 29068 Little Dixie Ranch Road Lacombe, LA 70445 for the purpose of photographing and recording scenes (interior and/or exterior) for motion pictures, with the right to exhibit all or any part of said scenes in motion pictures throughout the world; said permission shall include the right to bring personnel and equipment (including props and temporary sets) onto said property, and to remove the same therefrom after completion of filming.

The above permission is granted for a period of 1  Days  Weeks, beginning on 1/25/2014 (Day & Date) and ending on 1/25/2014 (Day & Date).

The Owner/Agent does hereby warrant and represent that the Owner/Agent has full right and authority to enter into this agreement concerning the above-described premises, and that the consent or permission of no other person, firm, or corporation is necessary to enable Student Filmmaker to enjoy full rights to the use of said premises, herein above mentioned, and that the Owner/Agent does hereby indemnify and agree to hold Student Filmmaker and the The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts free and harmless from any fees, arising from, growing out of, or concerning a breach of this warranty.

Thomas Baumgardner 10/13/2014  
STUDENT FILMMAKER DATE

J. M. Kelly 10/13/2014  
OWNER/AGENT DATE

ADDRESS: 29068 Little Dixie Ranch Road  
Lacombe, LA 70445

TELEPHONE: (985) 462-3733



The University of New Orleans Film Program

The University of New Orleans  
Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70148  
Office: 504-280-6317 - Fax: 504-280-6318

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER: <u>Studio II</u>	
PROD. #:	PRODUCTION TITLE: <u>Shape Matters</u>
PRODUCER: <u>Thomas Baumgardner</u>	DIRECTOR: <u>Thomas Baumgardner</u>

**STUDENT PRODUCTION LOCATION RELEASE**

LOCATION Equitana Stables  
PROPERTY OWNER \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS 29068 Little Dixie Ranch Road  
Lacombe, Louisiana 70445

Owner of the property described above and in the Student Production Location Contract between the Student Filmmaker and Owner dated \_\_\_\_\_ ("Property") hereby acknowledges that the Property has been returned to Owner in substantially the same condition it was in prior to Student Filmmaker's use of the Property.

Owner further acknowledges that:

- (a) The Property does not need to be repaired or improved in any respect as a result of the Student Filmmaker's use of the Property; and
- (b) Neither Owner nor any individual who entered the Property at the invitation or on behalf of the Owner suffered any loss or damage arising from or relating to the use of the Property by the Student Filmmaker.

Owner hereby releases and forever discharges Student Filmmaker and the UNO Film, Theater, and Communication Arts and their respective successors, assigns, agents, and employees from any and all claims, debts, demands, liabilities, judgments, obligations, costs, expenses, damages, actions and causes of action of whatsoever kind or nature, whether known or unknown, whether in law or in equity, whether now existing or hereafter arising, that relate to or arise from Student Filmmaker's use of the Property.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO

Thomas Baumgardner 10/13/2014  
Producer Date

J. M. Kelly 10/13/2014  
Location Manager Date  
Owner Agent Date

ADDRESS 29068 Little Dixie Ranch Road  
Lacombe, Louisiana 70445  
TELEPHONE (985) 882-3733

## NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK LOCATION CONTRACT

New Orleans City Park Improvement Association ("Owner") is the owner of the property that is the subject of this contract (the "Property"). Owner hereby gives permission to *Thomas Baumgardner (through University of New Orleans Film Program)* and its employees, agents, contractors and suppliers ("Producer") to enter and use the Property known as City Park's old East Golf Course.

Producer may place all necessary facilities and equipment (as agreed upon) on the City Park Property named above for prep/filming/strike on Friday, January 24, 2014, from 7:00am until 6:00pm, leaving Property in good condition as when received, except for reasonable wear and tear from the uses permitted. Signs on Property **may not** be moved or changed. Producer **may not** include any/all signs, gates, trademark logos on the Property and logos of Owner visible on the Property in the photographs, film and recordings.

Producer agrees that no vehicles will be placed on any grass areas without the support of 3/4" plywood, or similar material, to prevent tree root damage or ground ruts. Producer may not park any crew or cast vehicles on the parking lot located on the southeast corner of Wisner Blvd. and Filmore St., directly across the street from the City Park Driving Range. No sand or soil in same parking lot can be touched or disturbed by either hand or vehicle.

Producer agrees to use reasonable care to prevent damage to the Property and will indemnify and hold Owner harmless from any claim and demands of any person or persons arising out of or based upon personal injuries or property damage resulting from the negligence or willful misconduct of Producer, its officers, employees, agents or representatives while Producer is engaged in the aforementioned use of the Property.

All rights of every kind in and to all photographs, films and recordings made on the Property shall be and remain vested in Producer, including, without limitation, the right to use and reuse all such photographs, film and recordings in and in connection with subsequent productions of any kind, as well as in and in connection with advertisements, promotions, publicity, clips, etc. Neither Owner or any tenant or any other party having an interest in the Property shall have any claim or action against Producer or any other party arising out of any use of the photographs, film or recordings. Owner's remedy for breach of this contract by Producer shall be an action for money damages and injunctive action.

Owner represents and warrants that Owner has the right to enter into this contract and to grant Producer all rights provided by this contract, including, without limitation, the right to photograph, film and record and to broadcast and otherwise exhibit photographs, film and recordings of Property and any manner by any method and in any and all media, whether now known or discovered later, anywhere in the world at any time.

In full consideration for all rights granted to Producer under this contract, the Producer has agreed to pay the location fee of \$100.00. Check, in the amount of \$100.00, should be made payable to: New Orleans City Park, attn: Julie LaCour, #1 Palm Drive, New Orleans, LA 70124.

Producer shall have the right to cancel this contract at any time prior to Producer's use of Property. Upon Producer's cancellation of this contract, neither Producer nor Owner shall have any obligations whatsoever under this contract, and Owner shall immediately refund to Producer any and all sums previously paid by Producer pursuant to this contract. Owner reserves the right to cancel this contract prior to scheduled date in the event of unforeseen circumstances which would prohibit production.

This is the entire contract. No other authorization is necessary to enable Producer to use the Property for the purpose contemplated.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED BY:

Producer

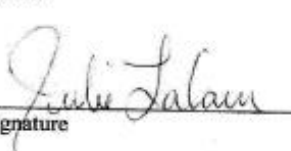
  
Signature

Producer  
Title

1/23/14  
Date

Thomas Baumgardner

Owner

  
Signature

New Orleans City Park

Director of Special Events

1/23/14  
Date

New Orleans City Park  
#1 Palm Drive  
New Orleans, LA 70124  
Ph. #: 504-483-9415

FED ID# 72-60000964

#### Facility Use Agreement for Media Productions on Louisiana State Parks

1. **Introduction.** The following agreement is entered into by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks, 1051 N. Third Street, Third Floor, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70802; phone (225) 342-8111; fax (225) 342-8107; represented by Stuart Johnson, Ph.D. and herein sometimes referred to as "State" and the UNO Department of Film, Theater, and Communication Arts, 2000 Lakeshore Drive - PAC 307, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148; phone: 504-280-6317, represented by Elijah Eastlund of Fox Louisiana Productions, LLC; phone: 913-515-2589, and herein sometimes referred to as "Producer" or "Production Company."
2. **Permission.** In accordance with the schedule and terms herein, the State grants permission to Producer to enter and remain upon Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site, herein sometimes referred to as "Property" for the purpose of filming, photographing, and otherwise recording specified scenes in a graduate thesis film presently entitled "Shape Matters," herein sometimes referred to as "Project". To the extent the State has the requisite authority, the State's permission shall include the following:
  - a. Producer may use its personnel, equipment, and materials (including props and temporary sets) around the exterior and inside the Property for use in connection with the production(s) described above. The Producer agrees to take appropriate measures to avoid damage to the property, including the grounds and facilities.
  - b. Producer may photograph, film or record any names or trademarks connected with the Property, and any logos or verbage contained on any signs, decorations, or fixtures on the Property. Producer may refer to the Property by any real or fictitious name and may attribute any real or fictitious events as having occurred on the Property.
  - c. Producer may alter the Property for use as a set, only as approved by site staff.
  - d. Producer may reproduce, exhibit, and advertise, publicly and privately, all of the photographs and recordings created in connection with this agreement (including use in trailers, advertising, promotions, publicity, commercial tie-ins and merchandising, in all languages, formats and media of any kind now known and hereafter devised, worldwide, in perpetuity and without limitation and without further payment) and may license others to do all of the above. However, the agreement itself may not be assigned to another company.
  - e. Producer shall be the sole, exclusive, and perpetual owner of all right, title, and interest in the Project, any recordings or photographs connected therewith and any copyright, including all renewals and extensions of the copyright interest in the Project.
3. **Schedule.** The following production schedule has been agreed to by the parties. Any changes must be requested in writing by the Producer and approved in writing by an authorized representative of the State.

Saturday, February 1, 2014
4. **Payment.** Due to the nature of the project, as a class assignment for graduate-level university credit, all fees have been waived.
5. **Insurance.** The permission granted in Paragraph 2 is conditioned upon the Producer supplying the State with Proof of Insurance of the following types and amounts, prior to the start of the Project:
  - a. **Worker's Compensation Insurance.** The Producer shall maintain during the life of this agreement worker's compensation insurance for all of its employees employed at the site of the project. For any employees engaged in hazardous work as defined and interpreted

under the Workers Compensation Act, the Producer and any subcontractors shall provide employer's liability insurance for the protection of their employees not otherwise covered.

- b. **Liability and property damage insurance.** Comprehensive general liability insurance, including but not limited to bodily injury, property damage, contractual liability, products liability, complete operations and owner's protective liability with combined single limits of \$500,000 per occurrence with a minimum aggregate of \$2,000,000. The Office of State Parks shall be listed as a named insured.
  - c. **Licensed and non-licensed motor vehicles.** The Producer shall maintain during the life of this agreement, automobile public liability insurance in an amount not less than combined single limits of \$500,000 per occurrence for bodily injury/property damage. If any non-licensed motor vehicles are engaged in operations within the terms of the agreement on the site of work, Producer shall maintain insurance coverage over those vehicles as well.
6. **Liability and Damage.** The Producer agrees to return the Property in the same or better condition as when received. The Producer agrees to be responsible for the repair and restoration of any damage to the Property and shall indemnify the State against any claims arising out of or based upon personal injuries, death, or property damage suffered as a direct result of the Producer's use or activities on the Property to the extent that such liability or loss is not otherwise covered by the Producer's insurance policies. All claims of damage or injury must be presented to the Producer within 30 days of the completion of the use of the site.

The State's sole remedy for a breach by Producer of any of Producer's obligations hereunder shall be an action at law for damages, it being agreed that in no event shall the State or its successors and assigns or any other party now known or hereafter having an interest in the Property seek or be entitled to injunctive or other equitable relief restricting Producer's ownership and/or use, exploitation, distribution, advertising and/or promotion of Producer's video, films, photography and sound recordings.

The State does hereby warrant and represent that the State has full right and authority to enter into this Agreement concerning the Property, and that the consent or permission of no other person or agency is necessary in order to enable the Producer to enjoy full rights granted herein and that the State does indemnify and agree to hold the Producer free and harmless from and against any all loss, costs, liabilities, damages or claims of any nature arising from, growing out of, or concerning a breach of the above warranty.

The State maintains the right to have a representative on site at all times. Subject to notice and reasonable opportunity to cure, the State shall discontinue and cancel all privileges granted to the Producer if the representative determines that the activities of the Producer, its employees, agents, or subcontractors, are resulting in, are likely to result in, or have already resulted in significant damage to the Property or violation of federal or state law, or the terms of this contract.

7. **Credits.** Producer shall use good faith efforts to include media credit in substantially the following form: "Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site, the Louisiana Office of State Parks, the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and the State of Louisiana Office of the Lieutenant Governor." When practical, Producer will provide the State with a copy of the finished film as proof of credit provided for archival purposes only and not for distribution or exhibition.
8. **Entire Agreement.** This document, including the attached addenda, is the complete and binding Agreement of the parties, superceding all prior understandings and communications with respect to the subject matter hereof. All amendments must be in writing and duly executed by both parties.

Agreed to and accepted by the State:

Agreed to and accepted by the Producer:



By: Stuart Johnson, Ph.D.

Its: Assistant Secretary

Dated: 1/27/14

Contact information  
P.O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4426  
225-342-8111



By: Thomas Baumgardner

Its: Producer

Dated: 1/24/2014

Contact information (producer)

Thomas Baumgardner  
131 South Murat, Apt. B  
New Orleans, LA 70119  
(757) 784-7338

BOBBY JINDAL  
GOVERNOR



KRISTY H. NICHOLS  
COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATION

**State of Louisiana**  
Division of Administration  
**Office of Risk Management**

January 22, 2014

Ms. Sherri Ganucheau  
University of New Orleans  
2000 Lakeshore Dr., Computer Center 210A  
New Orleans, LA 70148

Dear Ms. Ganucheau:

RE: Request for Certificate of Insurance

The Office of Risk Management received your request for a certificate of insurance to provide coverage for UNO and the State Parks for a film shoot on February 1, 2014.

Please be advised that UNO and the State Parks are both insured under the State of Louisiana's self-insured policies. Therefore, a certificate of insurance is not needed.

If you have any questions, please call me at (225) 342-8472.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Cain".

Brenda Cain, CAA  
State Risk Underwriting Administrative Assistant



 <p>The University of New Orleans Film Program</p>	The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts 2000 Lakeshore Drive, PO Box 303 New Orleans, Louisiana 70148 Office: 504-280-4317 Fax: 504-280-6218
	The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts 2000 Lakeshore Drive, PO Box 303 New Orleans, Louisiana 70148 Office: 504-280-4317 Fax: 504-280-6218

COURSE NAME AND NUMBER	
PROD #	PRODUCTION TITLE
PRODUCER	DIRECTOR

**ORIGINAL MUSIC LICENSING AGREEMENT**

AGREEMENT made and entered into as of October 26, 2014 by and between  
 The University of New Orleans Film, Theater, and Communication Arts (herein after the "FTCA")  
 and Andrew Morgan Smith (herein after the "Artist"), and  
Shape Matters (herein after the "Picture").

IN CONSIDERATION of mutual covenants and conditions herein contained the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. The Artist grants the Producer, the Director, the FTCA, their successors, assigns, and licensees the non-exclusive right to record, produce and reproduce, the lyrics and musical compositions, or any portion thereof, for use in the production of the Picture. These rights include the use of the lyrics and musical composition for advertisements trailers, marketing, and promotion of the Picture created by the FTCA.
2. The Artist grants the Producer, the Director, the FTCA, their successors, assigns, and licensees the non-exclusive right to reproduce, perform, and edit any existing recordings, or any portion thereof, for use in the production of the picture. These rights include the use of any existing recordings the Artist may have for advertisements, trailers, marketing, and promotion of the Picture created by the FTCA.
3. The Artist grants the FTCA the right to exhibit, distribute, exploit, market, and perform the music for the Picture, created by the FTCA, throughout the universe in any and all media now known or hereafter devised. These distribution rights include the right to advertise, promote or market the music for the Picture, created by the FTCA throughout the universe in any and all media now known or hereafter devised.
4. The Artist will retain all rights to the musical compositions, lyrics and sound recording for the Picture.
5. The FTCA will retain all rights to the Picture, created by the FTCA.
6. The FTCA hereby grants the right for the Artist to use the Picture, created by the FTCA, for promotional use only. This does not include public screenings, television rights, or theatrical distribution. Any public performance of the Picture must be approved by the FTCA.

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7. The Artist is not legally bound from re-creating a picture using the lyrics and music compositions for the Picture, if and when the opportunity presents itself with another company, individual, entity, or educational institution. The FTCA does not have exclusive rights to the lyrics, musical composition or sound recording.
8. The Artist warrants that no promise of payment or compensation was made or will be made by the FTCA for the Artist's participation in this project.
9. The Artist agrees to indemnify and hold the Director, Producer, the FTCA, and their successors, assigns, and licensees free and harmless from any and all claims, liabilities, costs, losses, damages or expenses including, but not limited to, all attorney's fees, and costs reasonably incurred in connection therewith, which may result or arise out of any breach or failure of any covenant and warranty of the Artist contained in this agreement.
10. The FTCA agrees to indemnify and hold the Artist, and their successors, assigns and licensees free and harmless from any and all claims, liabilities, costs, losses, damages or expenses including, but not limited to, all attorney's fees, and costs reasonably incurred in connection therewith, which may result or arise out of any breach or failure of any covenant and warranty of the FTCA contained in this agreement.
11. The Artist warrants and represents that he is free to enter into this license and that this agreement does not conflict with any existing contracts or agreements to which the Artist is a party. The Artist warrants that he maintains all rights to the lyrics and musical score for the Picture. The Artist also warrants that he owns all rights to master recordings of the Picture.
12. This agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Louisiana applicable to agreements executed and to be wholly performed herein. This agreement is not valid until signed by a representative from the FTCA and the Artist. The Artist agrees that this document constitutes the entire agreement between the parties superseding any previous agreements written or oral. The Artist further agrees that any modification be in writing and signed by all parties hereto.

<u>Andrew Morgan Smith</u> Artist	<u>[Signature]</u> Date	<u>10/26/2014</u> Date
_____ Producer(s)	_____ Date	_____
_____ Producer(s)	_____ Date	_____
_____ FTCA Representative	_____ Date	_____

## *Shape Matters* Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation. Your feedback is invaluable. Please make your best attempt at answering the questions. However, if you really do disagree with any question, please put your honest answer. For example, if you truly do not believe there was a recognizable theme to the piece feel free to write "I couldn't discern a theme", etc. for question 2.

1. What is Phrenology, at least according to this film?

2. What would you feel the theme of this film is?

3. What is William's goal?

4. How do William's feelings about Cyrus (the man he finds in the woods) change or not change over the course of the film? Feel free to use as many or few of the following letters to track his arc, or lack thereof.

a.)

b.)

c.)

d.)

e.)

f.)

5. What happens when Catherine approaches William at the very end of the film? How does she feel about William?

6. Was there anything you found confusing or disliked about the film?

7. Was there anything you particularly enjoyed or found effective in the film?

THANKS!!!

## **Vita**

The author was born in Monterrey, California on April 7, 1987. He was only there for a brief time and moved to many different locations, including England, as a result of his father's employment by the U.S. Navy. Eventually, his family settled in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He attended Kellam High School and also the Governor's School for the Arts where he studied Theater. In 2005, he began his studies at The College of William and Mary, where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Literary and Cultural Studies with a Film Studies concentration. He was accepted to The University of New Orleans in 2011 and has pursued a Master in Fine Arts degree in Film Production. He is estimated to graduate in December, 2014.