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Process of keeping creative expression and artistic freedom unencumbered and uncensored: a study of student actors in the musical [title of show]

Mathew B. Hagmeier

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE PROCESS OF KEEPING CREATIVE EXPRESSION
AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM UNENCUMBERED AND
UNCENSORED: A STUDY OF STUDENT ACTORS
IN THE MUSICAL *[TITLE OF SHOW]*

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Mathew B. Hagmeier

College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Theatre Arts and Dance
Theatre Education

December 2012

This Thesis by: Mathew B. Hagmeier

Entitled: *The Process of Keeping Creative Expression and Artistic Freedom Unencumbered and Uncensored: A Study of Student Actors in the Musical* [title of show]

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Theatre and Dance, Program of Theatre Educator Intensive

Accepted by the Thesis Committee:

Mary J. Schuttler, Ph. D., Chair, Advisor

Gillian McNally, Assistant Professor, M.F.A., Committee Member

Accepted by the Graduate School:

Linda L. Black, Ed.D., LPC
Acting Dean of the Graduate School and International Admissions

ABSTRACT

Hagmeier, Mathew B. *The Process of Keeping Creative Expression and Artistic Freedom Unencumbered and Uncensored: A Study of Student Actors in the Musical* [title of show]. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2012.

Creativity and the ability to freely devise and express are human capacities recognized to be highly important in today's world. Yet, while many champion these qualities, modern society continually makes achieving them a laborious process, riddled with the pressure of success and commercial marketability. Two years of researching and devising educational methodologies surrounding the use of theatre as a tool for the development of students' unbridled creativity, expression, and self-efficacy have led me to ask the following questions of this process: Can students achieve authentic creative self-expression inside the confines of portraying a pre-written character? How does one freely express oneself using the words of another? Within these parameters, how can the student gain insight to and mastery of their own artistic freedom? In mounting a production of the musical, *[title of show]*, I set out to mirror the authors' own intentions to create with artistic integrity using a group of student actors. How could I expose each student's authentic self on stage and help them achieve unencumbered, unfiltered, and undiluted creative expression as an artist? This thesis details the process used to answer these questions and realize this goal.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

Creativity and ingenuity are human capacities that are vital to developing a promising future in a burgeoning global society that demands collaboration across borders, cultures, and practical fields. Creativity is necessary not only for children on their developmental journey toward adulthood, but also for adults grappling with real-world dilemmas in the workplace and in society. While the act of creation is explicit for those with careers in the arts, it is also equally as crucial for those who spend their lives in other professional fields—medicine, business, science, architecture and almost any other field imaginable.

One way to experience raw creativity is by mounting a theatrical work. In doing so, one can experience creative growth first-hand as an integral part of the theatre-making process. This process allows a concept to develop from an idea into a fully-realized physical interpretation on stage. All involved generate solutions to a myriad of problems surrounding the development of one concept, and must check-and-balance themselves against one another. During this process, multiple solutions may be developed, flushed out, and perhaps scrapped. Each player must learn from this, adjust, and be ready to offer another tangible solution to the challenge at hand. This process is repeated over and over again, stretching the creative cognition of the individual and the collective, in pursuit of

the collaborative end result—the performance. This is then given over to an audience of fresh minds, free to further interpret the idea and calculate its meaning. This process, at its core, is quite universal and has crucial practical applications in numerous fields in the twenty-first century, as illustrated below in “Purpose and Significance of Study.”

For the playwright, the act of creation is to pen the words that capture an idea. In merely saying the words of the playwright, though, the actor is somewhat confined creatively, and must search beyond the physical creative acts of vocal production and body movement in order to harness truly authentic creative expression. The creative process for the actor, then, is not expressing his own ideas, but delivering a performance based on a reconciliation of many variables: the author’s intent, the actor’s meaning of it, his own personal beliefs, the greater commitment to telling the story, the desire to comment on the concept or theme being explored, and countless other notions to consider. This level of creation can be easily clouded by many factors—other actors, preconceived notions about oneself or the material, personal beliefs, societal norms, even the language and dialogue itself can get in the way of an actor’s interpretation.

For this study, the goal was to free the student actor from this tangled web of variables that can get in the way of ingenuity and creative expression. *[title of show]* is a work that is meticulous in its portrayal of this process as it is literally about the original authors and actors searching for their own authentic creative voice. Could these detailed searches for authenticity transfer to a new group of actors? How might creative minds be challenged and stretched along the way? If indeed the process and the product were successful, is it possible to also achieve tone and intention of a caliber equal to that

depicted by the original collaborators? Why is it important to share this story with the student company and a new audience?

The goal of this thesis, then, was to develop ways to make the process of theatre-making more effective in inspiring the authentic creative expression that fosters growth and positive change in a group of student actors.

Purpose and Significance of Study

America is suffering a creative drought of sorts in its mad dash to improve math and science skills in order to compete with other countries in technologic development and scientific productivity. The president, in his “Educate to Innovate” message on *whitehouse.gov*, has called for action by saying that school systems must “increase STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] literacy so that all students can learn deeply and think critically in [these subjects].” As it becomes apparent that America is falling behind other countries in terms of the applied execution of these skills, researchers have taken to re-evaluating school systems, and are looking to implement STEM literacy so American children can grow up to compete on the same level as (or have an edge over) their foreign contemporaries.

Where the problem lies, unfortunately, is in educational reform that stresses test scores, which restricts educators to emphasize only specific course content instead of allowing them to foster a complete, well-rounded education. In their report, *Expanding Arts Education in a Digital Age*, Haeryun Choi and Joseph M. Piro begin by noting the narrowed content of mathematics curriculum in elementary and middle schools in eighty-one percent of the districts surveyed nationwide by the Center on Education Policy. This

narrowing, they say, was implemented in order to “emphasize tested content skills.” Choi and Piro show concern, and rightly so, that with the implementation of rigid government-imposed standardized testing, a “narrow evaluation occurs instead of a more comprehensive assessment that weighs factors such as social value, vibrancy of content, and the nurturing of both the imagination and the intellect” (27), which are skills often valued in the modern marketplace.

In May 2010, IBM surveyed over 1,500 CEOs from across the globe. The survey found that to successfully navigate in an increasingly complex world, successful executives believe creativity is the most important tool a person can possess (“Capitalizing”). The business world is not alone in valuing strong creative skills, say *Newsweek* authors Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman:

All around us are matters of national and international importance that are crying out for creative solutions, from saving the Gulf of Mexico to bringing peace to Afghanistan to delivering health care. Such solutions emerge from a healthy marketplace of ideas, sustained by a populace constantly contributing original ideas and receptive to the ideas of others.

In their 2010 article, “The Creativity Crisis,” Bronson and Merryman cite recent numbers from a study created over half a century ago by celebrated psychologist E. Paul Torrance. The study has successfully measured creativity levels in elementary school children since 1958, and recently the numbers have not progressed as they had in the past. In over-emphasizing mathematics and science, arts programs in America have taken a major cut nationwide, and children are left with little or no opportunities to express creativity. In fact, applied creativity in any classroom (not just arts-related classes) has plummeted to shocking levels, and the results are visible in today’s children. This clearly

significant decrease is seen as serious by researchers, leading one to ask if the steps the country has taken to improve students' education are actually resulting in better-equipped adults. Are students who have been trained to search for a given answer to a static problem on a standardized test really acquiring the skills that will be necessary for them to inherit such a complex world? Where is the ingenuity? Where is the creativity? Where is the cooperation? With such practices in place to improve education, is it actually possible that American students are learning less or—even worse—becoming less valuable in the modern professional world? The hurdle this country is facing, Bronson and Merryman hypothesize, is that “there’s no concerted effort to nurture the creativity of all children.”

This is particularly problematic if the next generation is expected to excel among their foreign competitors in any field, or break new ground and become leaders in the areas that matter most in a global economy that is developing at an increasingly rapid pace. To achieve this goal, America’s youth will undoubtedly need well-developed creative skills. In their *21st Century Skills Map*, members of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (a national advocacy organization that fights for the development of modern essential skills in America’s students) state that, “Communications in today’s interconnected world increasingly emphasize multimedia, and the arts are the media” (2). A curriculum that includes arts education will build students’ understanding and skills in areas like global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health literacy; and environmental literacy (16). Surprisingly, researchers say that there is no need to overhaul current curricula to achieve this goal. Many believe

the same standards that students are struggling to meet today can be achieved if creative skills are stressed not solely in arts classes, but in every classroom (Bronson and Merryman). Ultimately, the way to secure achievement is by fostering a well-rounded education that includes creative learning in math, science, and economics as well as in art, music, and theatre. This goal cannot be achieved by the elimination of arts programs or the over-emphasis of STEM curricula. Our departments of education must build a forward-thinking curriculum that provides creative outlets for expression, and gives students the necessary skills to create on their own terms in all subjects and areas of development.

Lauren M. Stevenson and Richard J. Deasy, authors of *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, illuminate a significant additional element to this equation by touting the arts' ability to positively effect students' self-efficacy, which they believe is another battle in regards to academic achievement. They say that students with exposure to the arts "want to get better, to learn more. In this way, they grow not just in self-esteem—a feeling good about one's self—but in *self-efficacy*, the belief that one's actions can make a difference." One teacher says, "Perceived self-efficacy . . . plays a major role in educational success in terms of both motivation and achievement" (33).

Not only the students need this feeling of self-efficacy. In terms of succeeding in the future, adults must possess it, too—not just for themselves, but to pass down for generations. Many Americans lack this impetus. They might not vote on Election Day because they may not believe that their vote will make a difference. They might not recycle because it is inconvenient and they may not believe that discarding one water

bottle a day will overpopulate the landfills. Many Americans continue to litter by carelessly tossing cigarette butts onto sidewalks because they believe their action is too insignificant to really matter. How can adults hope to instill in their children a sense of self-efficacy when many cannot even make themselves believe that the things they do truly make a difference? How can American children and students learn self-efficacy when they are not exposed to it in their everyday lives?

The school system is not the only stifling oppressor. Some, like Toronto-based psychiatrist Marcia Sirota, say that mainstream media and the entertainment industry are also responsible, but on a grander scale. These industries reach billions of Americans; not only the young, but also adults who are already making their way through the realities of life post-education. Sirota theorizes that reality television programming actually perpetuates creativity repression. “Aside from the fact that the inane behaviour of the participants is exceedingly irritating,” she writes in the Living column of *The Huffington Post*'s Canadian extension, “I’m concerned about the distorted and destructive messages it’s sending.”

Many are aware of the editing that takes place before a reality television program airs, a process during which producers and executives splice together footage to construct the maximum amount of drama in order to attract more viewers. The problem with this practice, Sirota posits, is that “reality TV has no point of view except to reveal the worst aspects of human nature and exploit these for our so-called entertainment. . . . It’s the worst of a flawed medium, rubbing our noses in our own failings.” With programming

stacked to exploit the negative, there are fewer positive influences for American audiences.

Reality entertainment, some may argue, should only be taken at face value and has only ever claimed to be “mindless” leisure, but this is not the only factor that gives the entertainment industry a bad reputation. Even entertainments that are more “artistic” have taken a non-creative turn. Americans are continually subjected to derivative material funneled down by corporate executives who would rather capitalize on a known commodity than explore the depth and possibility of an original concept. Strings of television franchises populate cable television time slots *ad nauseam*. Reality shows like *The Real Housewives* series and the various Kardashian family shows, unstoppable money-makers of late, join a host of scripted crime and medical dramas that are increasingly harder to delineate from one another. And while they are not reality programming, the creative difference between shows like *CSI*, *CSI: Miami*, and *CSI: NY* is unquestionably minute.

Movie studios are capitalizing on chains of comic book films and updated remakes of classic movies and blockbusters from yesteryear: in July of 2012, moviegoers were subjected to a “re-envisioning” of the *Spider-Man* franchise, which America was introduced to only a decade ago. Even so-called “higher art forms,” like live theatre on Broadway, have taken to recycling material that proved profitable in movie theaters or for television, with questionable results. *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*, another derivation of the comic book source material, suffered a clash of creative powers-that-be in 2011 when the Broadway talent hired to conceive and direct could not produce a

product that mainstream America could appreciate (Riedel). To salvage their investment, the show underwent a major overhauling that re-painted it with the rather broad strokes of a novice, creating a well-worn derivative product with which mainstream America is all too familiar. Meanwhile, original works found on the Great White Way are few and far between, and those that do make it to opening night tend to close in mere weeks, like the 2011-2012 season's *Lysistrata Jones*, which featured original book, music, and lyrics, and shuttered after only thirty-four previews and thirty performances (Jones). At least it opened. Some shows never make it to a venue larger than the rehearsal room. Yet *Spider-Man* continues to sell well as late as September 2012, and many audience members (especially first-time theatre-goers) might believe this is what artistic expression is, since it has outlasted many other shows. In reality, however, *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* is the salvaged byproduct of a corporate producer's mandated re-write of a vaguely artistic, yet sadly incoherent concept that was brought to the table solely to capitalize on a popular franchise. With so many powerful forces discouraging creativity in entertainment in America, how could something unknown, yet truly creative survive? It seems that Broadway, once known for inspirational artistic fare, has fallen prey to the commercial influences of box office greed.

Many blame poor economic times for this disinterest in creativity—people rarely want to spend money on something they are unsure of. Perhaps there is merit to this hypothesis. However, it does not seem that the economy is completely to blame here. Americans need to take ownership of the current situation and be proactive in its remedy. Maya Angelou once said, “You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you

have” (qtd. in Elliot). If creativity begets creativity, the arts can still be used for growth and prosperity.

Stephani Etheridge Woodson, in her article “Creating an Educational Theatre Program for the Twenty-First Century,” believes that theatre programs, specifically, can promote self-efficacy and ingenuity in this drought of sorts, by giving members a forum to be heard and respected as human beings. Too often, she says, the educational system does not help students to make sense of their increasingly complicated lives (26), and suggests that theatre can gain relevance in a twenty-first century education system by “protect[ing] and promot[ing] young people’s personal power” (29). Karen LaShelle, executive and artistic director for the Theatre Action Project of Austin, Texas, also believes in the power of theatre to cultivate the self-efficacy of young people. She argues on the company’s blog:

The experience of mounting a show . . . is a unique journey that teaches you how to be part of a team that makes something from nothing. I believe that going through that process helps teach a young person how to be successful, and that they can apply those same skills to anything from rocket science to rock climbing.

She sees theatre as an immersion exercise in listening, sharing, and collaborating for the sake of the end product; skills that are imperative in applied ingenuity in the professional world. Even Bronson and Merryman spend the last third of their article detailing comparable applied creative skills in elementary students (this time, outside the arts classroom), resulting in a similar boost of self-efficacy.

The current study examines a work developed out of a creative workshop designed to stimulate the creative process in this time of need. The New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF) was developed to allow new artists to find a venue for original

material that otherwise might go unseen due to a lack of support, financing, or trust (“History”). *[title of show]* realized the ultimate success of this process by progressing from the festival through several workshop productions, landing on Broadway in 2008. Moreover, the show’s central theme is the creative process itself. It champions the ability to dream, imagine, and create in an era when these aspirations are often stifled, proving that creativity is indeed self-replicating: the creative endeavors of NYMF and two unconventional writers actually did beget further creativity. Now the show is available for licensing by theatre groups around the world, and thanks to a new “apropos” version of the script, students are beginning to be exposed to the creative celebration alive within this piece. They can all benefit from the opportunity to participate in telling a story about fostering one’s own ingenuity and creating something (and actually doing so in the process of theatre-making) in a time when such an endeavor is increasingly challenging.

The purpose of this study is quite simple. Using a piece that champions the ideals necessary to make positive change in our society, our country, and our world, a group of students would engage in those very ideals. But how to do so with freedom and abandon, without being stifled by the outside influences that plague creatives nation-wide? If the goal of this study is to discover how to effectively express one’s authentic self using the words and actions of another without falling prey to the pitfalls of one’s own mind and society at large, then the purpose is to empower students to think broadly and freely for themselves. Without this capacity, students will never acquire the skills necessary to break the ongoing cycle of failing test results, lagging competitiveness, and derivative output that is becoming the norm in our society.

Review of Literature

To inspire creativity using the arts, it was highly appropriate not only to use theatre content that aligns with this goal, but also to use a piece that focuses on the very art of creating theatre itself. *[title of show]*, while unique, quirky, and original, falls into a long line of “backstage musicals,” or musicals about the theatre. Audiences find something charming and exciting in a piece that gives them a little glimpse of the “secret” side of show business that is usually reserved for only those involved in creating the production. To sum up exactly what *[title of show]* encompasses as a theatrical piece, original director Michael Berresse shares:

Literally, *[title of show]* is a musical created by two writers named Jeff and Hunter about two writers named Jeff and Hunter creating a musical called *[title of show]* and periodically in that musical, the characters of Jeff and Hunter (originally played by the writers Jeff and Hunter) acknowledge that they are actually appearing in the finished show that has yet to be written. (qtd. in Bell and Bowen)

Admittedly a “trippy” concept for a show (and it is true that some critics have failed to move past this meta-theatrical convention), it is actually a very classically structured piece with universal themes that audiences over time have shown no trouble relating to. Many box office favorites deal directly with a backstage look at putting on a show for an audience. Among them are: *42nd Street*, the twelfth longest-running show in Broadway history, playing a total of 3,486 performances over eight years; *A Chorus Line*, Broadway’s fifth longest-running show at 6,137 performances over fifteen years; and *The Phantom of the Opera*, which, after opening in 1988, is still going strong as Broadway’s longest-running musical, passing 10,000 performances in February of 2012. *Gypsy* has been revived on Broadway four times since the original 1959 production. *The Producers*,

Crazy for You, and even the lesser-known *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Curtains* fall into this category (“List”). Other shows, like *Alta Boyz*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Dames at Sea*, *Dreamgirls*, *Follies*, *Funny Girl*, *Jersey Boys*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Nine*, *Side Show*, *Sunset Boulevard*, and *The Will Rogers Follies* deal in some way with show business and what happens behind the scenes. Even this is not an exhaustive list; there are too many such shows to name here.

These shows, and others like them, have their roots in the great backstage musical movies of the 1930s and 1940s. *Broadway Melody of 1940*, *Gold Diggers*, *42nd Street*, *Easter Parade* and other Depression-era films satiated the American audience’s need to be transported to a world very different from their own. What better to dream about during an economic downturn than the glitz and glamor of show business? However, in *Hollywood’s America: Twentieth-Century America Through Film*, editors Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts have suggested that these musicals offered more than just the escapism their titles promised. They theorize:

On close examination, *42nd Street*, *Gold Diggers*, and *Footlight Parade* obliquely address broad political and economic issues and anxieties raised by the Great Depression. Their upbeat plots—in which talented newcomers rise to stardom and wealthy bluebloods marry common chorus girls—helped Depression-era Americans sustain a faith that class differences could be overcome and that, despite many obstacles, happiness and success would eventually prevail. (72)

Also, in his *Digital History* online encyclopedia, Mintz goes on to suggest that the simple, yet politically-charged plots of Depression-era films “restored faith in individual initiative, in the efficacy of government, and in a common American identity transcending social class” (“Hollywood”).

This idea—that the entertainment industry helped Americans deal with the state of their social and political welfare—is not dissimilar to the goal of this study. The times have changed, and the circumstances are vastly different, but at the root of both is the notion to better the individual, the culture, and the society by demonstrating the possibility of what could be. In the 1930s and '40s it was about economics, social class, and self-motivation. Today, the focus is toward a creative renaissance in education.

[title of show] differs from these original movie musicals and their on-stage lineage in one distinct way that allows its commentary to resonate deeply with its audience. Those backstage movie musicals offered commentary by exploring, as Julie Steimle argues in her essay, *Stage-World and World-Stages in Hollywood Musicals*, the duality between the aesthetically pleasing “stage-world” story and the complexities of realities on the “world-stage,” wherein the genre served to offer a balance of fantasy and reality (62-63). *[title of show]* holds an additional mirror up to the story, allowing the audience to experience the theatre-makers’ commentary on their own work and the genre itself. The authors are constantly expressing self-doubt and editing sections of their script, which shows how they feel about putting their message “out there” for the world to interpret.

The authors include several sections specific to the goal of inspiring creativity.

For example, in the first scene Hunter and Jeff ponder what to write:

HUNTER. You want to adapt something? Poem...short story?

JEFF. No. I know we can come up with something original.

HUNTER. But what? You and I haven't been writing at all.

JEFF. So let's use this to get us off our asses. It'll be a writing exercise. Let's just make a pact that we'll write for three weeks, right up until the deadline, and no matter what we have, we'll put it in an envelope and submit it.

HUNTER. I don't want to submit something half-baked and get rejected by the festival.

JEFF. I don't think we should worry about whether or not we get into the festival. (Bell and Bowen I-1-5)¹

Here, the authors decide it is more valuable to create for themselves rather than to worry about pleasing a panel of judges. The dialogue progresses into the song "Two Nobodies in New York," where they feel empowered by the prospect of "ask[ing] significant questions" and "writing for art" (I-1-8).

Later, Jeff finds himself rather stuck in the process of conceiving original material for the show. The character Blank Paper appears to help guide Jeff towards his goal, warning him of the kind of fare Broadway producers have been favoring recently:

BLANK PAPER/HUNTER. . . . You see a lot of times musicals are based on plays like *Spring Awakening*, *Vanities*, or *Picnic*, which became *Hot September*. Other times they're based on books, like *Shrek*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Mary Poppins*. But more recently, musicals have been based on movies, like *Shrek*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Mary Poppins*, *Hairspray*, *Billy Elliot*, *A Catered Affair*, *The Lion King*, *Legally Blonde*, *9 to 5*, *Spamalot*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Catch Me If You Can*...

JEFF. Wow, really? Movies make good musicals?

BLANK PAPER/HUNTER. Well, they make musicals. (I-2-18)

Jeff helps Hunter out of a similar writer's block by telling him to "[j]ust start. That's all you have to worry about...starting. Get away from your computer, grab a note pad and a pencil, and just go write. Anything you want. Just play. Doodle. Whatever" (I-3-23). After some soul-searching and playful creative writing during which the girls encourage his creative process, Hunter agrees, saying, "Jeff, you were right. I just have to start writing and then keep writing. And...and even if an idea seems nuts, we just have to keep reminding ourselves nothing we write is a waste of time" (I-4-27).

Time and time again the authors seem to doubt their work or ideas, and the audience witnesses them pick-and-choose which pieces to keep and which to throw out. The additional meta-theatrical layer here, of course, is that ultimately, they did not discard some of the ideas they themselves deemed questionable or unworthy, instead choosing to add them to the final script to detail their own creative process. They have chosen to sacrifice their “bad” ideas to illuminate the intention behind their writing. It is when one begins to break down these meta-theatrical moments of the show that one begins to catch a glimpse of the authors’ intentions. Those moments that are left out of the show, but that obviously took discussion, thought, and careful planning, reveal that ultimately the authors are championing the creative process rather than a perfectly constructed, marketable, and commercially viable end product.

The script is full of moments like these, including a flying dream sequence that gets scrapped (I-7-39) and a song about confronting the “vampires” which lurk around every corner, hindering creative self-expression (I-7-43). As the show progresses, success seems eminent for the cast as their production inches closer to Broadway. This situation brings a whole new set of creative problems, including bad reviews (I-9-65) and trying to instill interest in producers (I-10-71). The authors deal with editing their script to please their backers by altering the content, in order to make it appropriate for families and “gray-haired matinee ladies” (I-11-81).

By the end of the show, the authors know (as does the audience), that what they want to put “out there” for the world to see is not a hacked-up version of what they have created, but a version that aligns with their belief in the power of the creative process.

Heidi encourages them: “[. . .] this is your story, and you should tell it your way” (I-13-90).

Another consideration to remember, explicit with the art of theatre-making and inspiring creativity, is that theatre is a highly collaborative art form. In *[title of show]*, Jeff and Hunter collaborate with each other and their friends, Susan and Heidi, to create their vision. It is very rare to find a theatrical work that features solely the work of one artist. Writers, directors, actors, choreographers, scenic designers, costumers, lighting and sound designers, electricians, stagehands, ushers, and countless others come together to produce theatre. Even if one person were to accomplish the duties associated with each position above, the key collaborator is missing—the audience. The audience must not be forgotten in this collaboration. Without their interpretation of and interaction with the material, theatre becomes a group effort to enlighten only those who are already privileged with having had the opportunity to study the material; those who deconstruct it, dissect it, and analyze it have a deeper understanding of the concept and have a duty to share their enlightenment with others. Arguably, educational theatre experts and even some professional companies can claim that the process is the most important element of theatre-making and learning can be achieved with or without an audience. This is true, but it is not why theatre is done; it is not why the Greeks told their stories in huge amphitheaters. In such educational cases, the audience and practitioners are one, and this first half of the collaborative nature of theatre (the deconstruction and analysis by the theatre-makers) allows them to learn and create. This is why the theatre-making process is an excellent educational tool, offering unique learning experiences for those that

undertake it. Those that pursue theatre outside of the classroom will realize its original purpose by adding the final element of collaboration—the audience.

An excellent resource for those wishing to read a rather scientific approach to the theory of collaboration during the production of a musical is Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro's "Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem," published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, although the language may prove rather prohibitive. Robert Keith Sawyer explores similar material (in a less scientific dialogue) in his book, *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration*. Admittedly, most of us already know theatre-making to be an intrinsically collaborative art, however, this theory is not just relegated to the theatre and other arts communities. The idea is catching on that collaboration is the best methodology to inspire ingenuity. Sawyer explores the same theories as related to the business world in his 2007 book, *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration* (which includes his research on theatre ensembles and music as well). Numerous other authors have written on the power of collaboration in the business world, notably, Peter A. Gloor in his 2006 book, *Swarm Creativity: Competitive Advantage Through Collaborative Innovation Networks*. In regards to the educational process, scholars agree that student collaboration, if used correctly, can be a most effective tool in stretching the mind's creativity, as noted in the article "Students Thrive on Cooperation and Problem Solving: Project-Based Learning Teaches Kids the Collaborative and Critical-Thinking Abilities They'll Need to Compete," by Bob Pearlman.

Therefore, the concept for this thesis was not to alter the story or to update it in any way, but to simply use the authors' own beliefs to make a statement about creativity in America. The moments that deal directly with this theme (with which the authors have been generous) were focused on and emphasized. By not letting any gimmicks take center-stage (personal, or the playful conventions the authors use in their writing, i.e. obscure theatrical references addressed later in this thesis), capitalizing on the genre of theatre-about-theatre that has proven successful over time, and utilizing unique levels of collaboration, keeping the goal at the forefront of this project was easily attained.

Methodology

During this project, it was both a blessing and a curse to be a theatre-maker living in New York City. The resources at one's disposal in the city are innumerable. Reaching out to the authors was incredibly simple, and even while in the midst of mounting a new show (*Now. Here. This.*, featuring the same creative team as *[title of show]*, opened at the Vineyard Theatre in March 2012), they were enthusiastic about this study of their work. With their help, learning more about their own creative process was enlightening.

Yet, as an independent producer (at the time of this writing I was not affiliated as a teacher with any school or theatre organization), mounting a production in the city most widely associated with live theatre presented some very big challenges. Unfortunately, in R&H Theatricals' library, *[title of show]* is a highly restricted title, especially in New York, and licensing the rights for a production—even educational—in New York would have to be heavily considered. This restriction is most likely due to the development of *Now. Here. This.*, and the saturation the city has had with this material: all three original

productions—the festival production for NYMF, the off-Broadway run at The Vineyard, and finally, the Broadway production—have exposed the New York City audience to this material repeatedly. On the bright side, if the show were presented to a strictly invited audience (one which was not charged admission), with minimal performances, and for an educational body, it would qualify for the lowest bracket of licensing fees, and the University of Northern Colorado was able to assume this minimal cost. As a result, several possible venues were researched, in New York (in case the rights were miraculously approved there), as well as outside the city.

Locally, off-Broadway venues at cabaret spots, including the stages at The Duplex (located at Christopher Street and 7th Avenue) and Don't Tell Mama's (46th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues), and more traditional spaces at The Producer's Club (44th Street and 9th Avenue) and The Triad (West 72nd Street between Broadway and Columbus Avenue) were investigated. All of these, to varying degrees, charged some sort of booking fee for the use of their space.

In working in such a professional city, it also became necessary to review the Actor's Equity Association's *Basic Showcase Code*, a set of guidelines and rules that have been set up to allow union actors the opportunity to workshop new material or present material which “showcases” them as actors. The basic production guidelines as outlined in the code include a budget that does not exceed \$35,000 and no more than twelve performances in a venue that seats no more than ninety-nine people (Actor's Equity, 2). These limitations worked well with *[title of show]*, since, as the sole producer, all funds would be my responsibility. Knowing this ahead of time was a contributing

factor in the decision to choose a show with only four actors, one musician, and no substantial set requirements other than four chairs. Of course, if the use of Equity actors could be avoided, the *Basic Showcase Code* could be as well, but skirting around such an issue becomes difficult in a town full of professionals, and, upon further research, it really became a matter of simple paperwork for this small production.

As an alternative option, producing this show in conjunction with the University of Northern Colorado was appealing, and was met with enthusiasm and open arms. A body of undergraduate student actors was available during their summer break from classes while I was in Greeley for my summer graduate school session, July 2 through July 21. All of these students were excited at the opportunity to help with the project (and to have a chance to perform), and a school with such a successful performing arts program had multiple venues available for a graduate thesis production. Worrying about Actor's Equity or paying for an off-Broadway venue was no longer necessary. Still, the challenges this option brought included finding time to rehearse and mount the production. A busy graduate school schedule and the students' demanding repertory theatre schedule posed obstacles. Another issue was the financial burden of extending my stay in Colorado an extra week (to July 29) to accommodate a production.

Ultimately, talks with the authors, R&H Theatricals, and UNC advisors pointed towards the Colorado option, and the final details began to be sorted out. *[title of show]* was mounted in Room 63 of Frasier Hall on the UNC campus, a performance space re-appropriated from a band rehearsal room, a concept that worked well for *[title of show]*, as a majority of the scenes take place in a nondescript rehearsal space. The room also

offered multimedia opportunities and a working sound system that were utilized at various points during the show (see Chapter II, “Applications”).

To focus on expanding our collective creative minds, a large part of the methodology for this thesis has been collaboration. New York connections led to an initial “workshop” cast—a group of very talented actors who were on board with the project before it was even underway—and who agreed to collaborate without the benefit of a final product. This resource has proven uniquely beneficial in this process; in fact, it has shaped its very course. Utilizing the talents of both the workshop cast and the production cast was valuable, especially when trying to mount a show in the limited four-week production schedule afforded to this project since deciding on its Colorado location. The workshop cast was used in New York to mine solutions for the various challenges that arose in mounting the production, from finding a venue to dealing with the technical aspects of the production, to developing staging and choreography, all before formal rehearsals began with the production cast in Colorado in July 2012. This type of collaboration has truly been a defining force in this study, and is a necessary element for anyone wishing to inspire creativity in others.

As is evidenced in the remainder of this study, collaboration has led to nearly every major breakthrough and discovery during the course of this exploration, which has led to an enlightenment of the creative process. By sharing it with others, this study will hopefully inspire more people—in arts-related fields or elsewhere—to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate to bring innovative solutions to their own problems and challenges.

CHAPTER II
DRAMATURGICAL PROTOCOL

Glossed Playscript

All pages below refer to the R&H Theatricals version of Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen's *[title of show]*.

First Responses

Pluses

1. The message of the show is straightforward. *[title of show]* is literally about itself, and the characters within do not hide anything they are feeling or want to say. The script is honest and authentic to its creators.
2. The theme of pursuing one's dreams and "making it" is a universal subject. Whether in theatre or some other field, most everyone can relate to the feeling of wanting to be successful at their endeavors.
3. The opening number has the potential to set the tone for the entire piece. Relationships are established, even before the audience meets the characters, and the humor and sensibility of the work is nicely encapsulated in this concise musical number.
4. The language is accessible and current. "Real people" talk and interact through tangents, sidebars, and inside jokes. This is extremely helpful in allowing the actors to connect with their characters.

5. Composer Jeff Bowen has written wonderful music, with songs that are relevant, funny, and resonate with the audience.
6. Small-scale production values make this show mountable anywhere from a small black box to a full-sized proscenium stage. It could even function in-the-round or in a three-quarters venue, if need be.
7. The song, “Part of It All” is a major climactic moment, when the audience should get excited for Jeff and Hunter as they start to see their dreams materialize.
8. “A Way Back to Then” is a key musical number. It is full of the concrete realities that many people have faced, whether they are a part of the theatre community or not, including playful dreaming, sacrifice, compromise, and finally realizing the reward of hard work.
9. “Nine People’s Favorite Thing” represents grown-up, authentic realizations of childhood fantasies and desires. It is about deciding what matters most, and captures the entire message of the piece quite well.
10. The simple complexity of the finale is a definite plus. The song is full of fear, joy, love, exhaustion, loss, and hope—all in four simple lines.

Minuses

1. The use of adult language, particularly the “f-bomb,” could prove problematic for some viewers, yet using profanity is addressed by the characters in the last third of the play, which may alleviate some of the shock. There is a recently released “apropos” version of the script, also available from R&H Theatricals, which deals with the accessibility of the language, especially for young audiences.

2. The frequent use of obscure Broadway references and jokes, like “Did you hear that Mary Stout got hit by a hot dog cart?” (I-1-3) may wear on some audience members. If too much importance is placed on this type of dialogue, it could alienate an audience member who is not familiar with the inside gossip of the Broadway world.
3. The opening scenes of the play (through scene four) must not seem unfocussed or thrown-together, even though this is what the characters are feeling. If the songs or timing do not affect the audience as intended, there is the potential to lose their attention altogether. While the characters are trying to figure out their journey, the audience should not be confused. Conversely, if the audience gets ahead of the characters, they may get bored.
4. Character/actor listening might prove to be a challenge. Since the dialogue is so honest, it is important to make sure that each character listens intently, so that the piece feels authentic. This may require extensive work with the actors; especially young actors.
5. Over-playing moments that are meant to be merely friendly affection and simple banter can be offensive. The actual antagonist of the piece is not a person, but the challenges the writers face as they try to create and the self-consciousness that accompanies such a task.
6. Flip-flopping between the book scenes and meta-theatrical moments could present a problem. Sometimes the meta-theatrical moments emerge from nowhere and, if handled poorly, can jar the audience out of what could be an honest experience.

7. “Die Vampire, Die” could come across as preachy. Because Susan becomes an “envelope pusher” of sorts, and because the song is directed at the audience and not to Hunter or Jeff, care must be used to win the audience over to her side. If the audience is against her, they may be against the main message of the show.
8. The passage of time needs to be apparent during the montage section, yet it is not explicitly indicated in the script or the lyrics.
9. The delicacy of the arguments that occur around “Change It, Don’t Change It” must be handled with care. The jabs need to be authentic as those involved have been through a great deal. They are at the end of their rope and are now confronting one another. If the audience does not believe in the truth of the fight scene, then the beautiful moment of forgiveness after “A Way Back to Then” will not read as intended.

Questions

1. Who is being addressed in the opening number? Are the characters talking to themselves or to the audience?
2. How long have Hunter and Jeff known each other? When did they start writing together? Very little is known about the past lives of the two characters, except for their mutual love of musical theatre.
3. How should the meta-theatrical moments be handled? There are four explicit meta-theatrical devices used before the second song. It is not a good idea to emphasize every one of these moments, as doing so could prove monotonous for the audience.

4. How experienced of an actress is Heidi? In her first scene, she has just come from an audition for *Mamma Mia!*, and later she says she has been in two Broadway shows. Even later, she says she has been in the business since she was seven years old. How does all this affect her character? Why has she not met Hunter before now?
5. What is the importance of the balance between Susan's hard exterior and her almost simultaneous neediness?
6. "An Original Musical" and "Monkeys and Playbills" fall outside the realm of the reality that the play has established. Why is this important to the story?
7. In "An Original Musical," the character, Blank Paper, tells Jeff that his show does not belong on Broadway. Is this a reflection of the authors' self-consciousness as they wrote the show? How does this change as the story moves forward? What does it say about creativity, and the authors' view of it?
8. Why does Jeff look at song lists from *flop* Broadway musicals as inspiration?
9. What role does the ongoing reference to monkeys play in the dialogue? Is this attached to a certain character?
10. Though "Monkeys and Playbills" may come across as a simple nonsense song, is there a greater message?
11. Where is Hunter's change motion in and/or around "Change It, Don't Change It?"

Clues

1. Broadway is the entire world for Jeff and Hunter. They eat, sleep, and breathe it, even when they reference non-Broadway ideas.

2. The idea of writing about the writing process, is whole-heartedly accepted as a convention by all of the characters. There is no argument from any of the characters that this is what the show should be about.
3. Meta-theatrical moments provide a glimpse at what the authors intended. By deliberately including sections the characters say are not good enough to be kept in the show, the audience begins to understand how the authors constructed their message around the theme of creativity. Moments like this provide clues for dealing with the tone and message of the piece, and they should be explored in depth. This does not mean they should be emphasized onstage, but they do assist in providing an over-arching tone.

Imagery

1. Creation is the central image for the show. In the opening number, the characters refer to “the seed of an idea,” and want to cultivate it into something larger (I-0-1). From this point on, almost every conversation and musical number is about the journey of creation. At the end of the show, Hunter tells Jeff, “This all started out as fun times with friends and now it’s become this whole huge thing. And I want it to be this thing” (I-12-87). The journey allows the audience to travel from Point A (the seed) to Point B.
2. Success is an image used often throughout the show. From the very beginning, there is a sense of foreshadowing that the characters are trying to impress someone or, rather, an unnamed group of people (perhaps their peers and colleagues), which will result in their success as theatre writers and acceptance

into their professional circle. In the opening number, Jeff and Hunter reference making their work “appealing to the judge,” and aim to impress the spirit of Bartok, a renowned composer (I-0-1 through I-1-2). Often times, the characters are caught between creating a successful musical on their own terms (i.e. keeping their integrity intact, steering clear of “cop-outs” like star casting and large-scale special effects), and dreaming of success on a grander, commercial scale. Jeff sings, “But I believe when it comes to makin’ a hit Broadway show, / A good product with talented people is the way to go!” (I-2-19), followed closely by Hunter’s fantasy “Tony Award Song,” in which he dreams, “What if this show won a Tony?” (I-5-28). He goes on to say, after their submission is complete, “I’m proud too, so why does that have to change if they don’t choose us?” (I-9-54). This dichotomy between striving for commercial success and acceptance, while still creating a product with integrity, is what fuels the show’s central conflict and is ultimately what the characters must overcome.

3. Self-consciousness is another image that emerges at various points in the show. In the opening scene, Hunter worries about his writing, saying that he does not want to look like “a total jack-off” (I-1-6), and both Jeff and Hunter express wanting to be liked by their audience in “Two Nobodies in New York” (I-2-10). Heidi deals with self-consciousness in the early part of the show, as she is the new girl thrown into an already-established group of friends. Finally, self-consciousness is apparent through accompanying images when Susan sings, “Die Vampire, Die” (I-7-43). The song details the many ways that self-consciousness can creep

in and effect one's creative self-expression. Even after it has been brought to the characters' attention, they continue to struggle with self-consciousness, suggesting that this "vampire" will not disappear easily; rather, it is something they must continually deal with throughout their lives.

4. The image of Broadway, New York, theaters, shows, celebrities, etc. is prevalent throughout the show.
5. Creating the mold, rather than simply fitting it, is a reoccurring image.
6. The image of a Rice Krispie treat at a cake-baking contest means celebrating uniqueness.
7. The image of giving oneself a space to create is depicted through a bare set, a blank paper, and even the title, *[title of show]*.
8. *School House Rock* images appear during creative moments.
9. Monkey images are strong through drawings and references to other characters.

Concretes

1. Broadway is synonymous with success, even though it may lack creative integrity.
2. Being original is preferred, while being derivative is shameful and is to be avoided.
3. The characters are conscious of what is happening onstage, even when they are not in the scene.
4. The characters are willing to do almost anything for their friends, and to achieve their goal of making sure the show is successful.

Supplements to the Playscript/Areas of Inquiry

Source Studies

[title of show] is an original musical by Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell, which was developed for the 2004 New York Musical Theatre Festival. Although original, the authors have been influenced by Broadway's history, much of which will be explored in detail in the following sections. For specific references to other musicals and literature, see the "Literary Allusions" section below. For the Broadway outsider, a few recommended texts that might familiarize the reader with the context of this study are:

The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen: The Last Twenty-Five Years of the Broadway Musical by Ethan Mordden, which highlights what the genre has produced in the last part of the twentieth century and early part of the twenty-first century; *Broadway Babylon: Glamour, Glitz, and Gossip on the Great White Way* by Boze Hadleigh, which highlights some Broadway folklore; and, for a sardonic look at Broadway aimed at the true beginner, *The Q Guide to Broadway*, written by Seth Rudetsky. The content of these books is most certainly common knowledge to the authors and the characters in the show, and all are written in the same humorous tone and jaunty sensibility as *[title of show]*, which gives the reader a good sense of the world in which the characters live.

Glossary

Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen have been generous enough to publish two glossaries of terms used in *[title of show]*: one is included in the script in "Specific Notes and Hints," and the other is on the show's website, on a page cleverly entitled, "[tos]sary." The list below expands on both glossaries, offering definitions for any term a non-native

New Yorker or Broadway novice might question. Where appropriate, the authors' own words have been quoted from their published glossaries.

I-0-1 *Dixon Ticonderoga*: an office and art supply company in the United States who manufactures the yellow No. 2 graphite pencil, what their website hails as “the world’s best pencil” (“Dixon”). Here, the authors have made the product name synonymous with the company name.

Hell’s Kitchen: a neighborhood in midtown Manhattan adjacent to the theatre district (roughly 34th Street to 59th Street, west of 8th Avenue) that is home to many actors, theatre professionals, and artists (e.g. see fig. 1). The neighborhood has a large gay population.

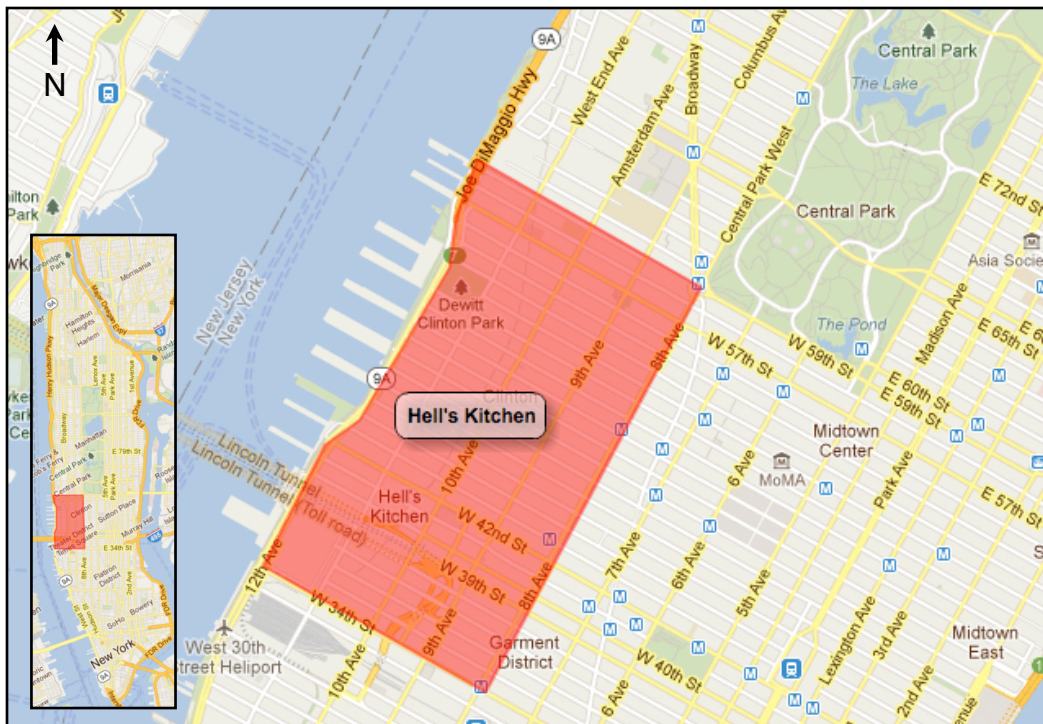


Fig. 1. Map of Hell’s Kitchen, NYC

Hell’s Kitchen is situated near the middle of Manhattan, on the west side, near Times Square and the theatre district. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

I-1-2 *Bartok*: Béla Bartók, Hungarian composer who lived from 1881 to 1945, regarded by some to be one of the greatest composers of the 20th century, who is credited to be one of the founders of the analytical approach known as *ethnomusicology*, or a “study of social and cultural aspects of music and dance in local and global contexts” (“Ethnomusicology”).

trannie: one who identifies as transgendered; in this case, a male-to-female transexual most likely appearing fully as a woman.

I-1-3 *Chelsea*: a neighborhood in Manhattan (roughly from 14th Street to 34th Street, west of 6th Avenue), known for its large gay “gym-toned” population known sometimes as “Chelsea Boys” (e.g. see fig. 2).

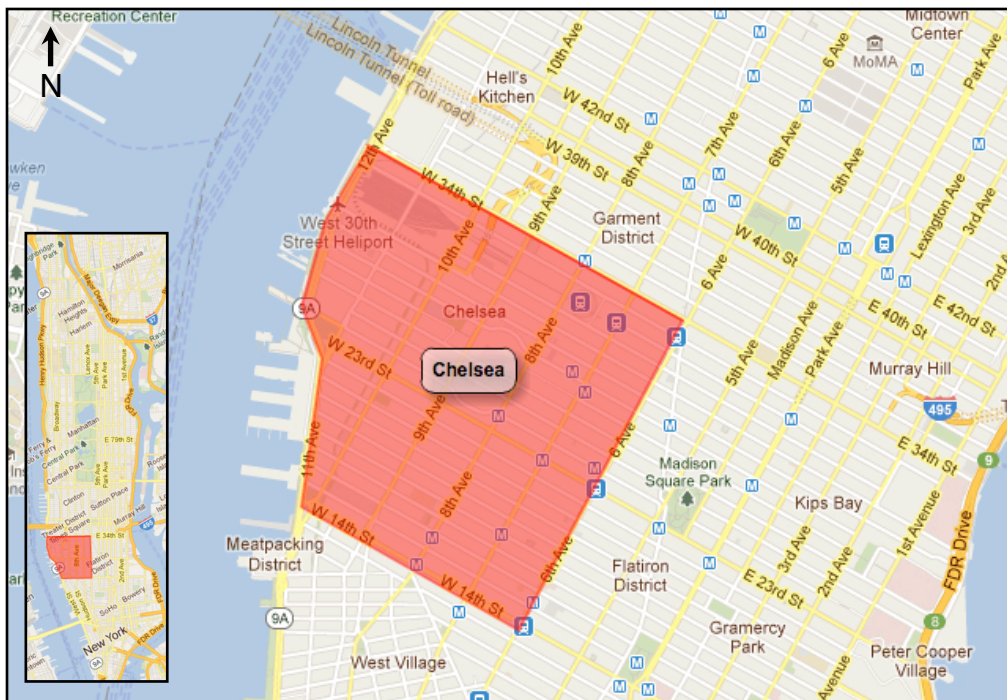


Fig. 2. Map of Chelsea, NYC

Chelsea is situated just south of Hell’s Kitchen, in the central part of Manhattan, on the west side. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

Mary Stout: a “lovely and talented Broadway character actress,” whose credits include *Me and My Girl* and *Beauty and the Beast*. From the author’s notes:

She was indeed hit by a hot dog cart in Manhattan. The moment is not so much about an audience knowing who Mary Stout is, but rather establishes how these two guys talk. They know Broadway so they discuss all things Broadway. If they were baseball nuts...this opening phone call would be about stats and Hank Aaron, but it is about Mary Stout, and Dee Hoty and *Wonderful Town*. (Bell and Bowen, “Specific Notes”)

Henry, Sweet Henry: a 1967 musical based on the book, *The World of Henry Orient*. Choreographed by Michael Bennett, this musical only ran for eighty performances, after receiving a bad review from Clive Barnes of *The New York Times*, despite mostly positive audience reception.

Doc Hollywood: a 1991 romantic comedy in which Michael J. Fox plays a big-city doctor stuck in a small town after a car accident.

I-1-4 *Wonderful Town*: a 1953 musical with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. The musical follows the story of sisters Ruth and Eileen, who move to New York City from Columbus, Ohio in search of love and fortune.

The Bachelor: an American reality dating game show that debuted in 2002 on ABC. The show revolves around a single bachelor (deemed “eligible”) and a pool of romantic interests (usually twenty-five). Early in the season, the bachelor goes on group dates with the women, and as the

season progresses, the women are eliminated on a one-by-one basis until a “match” is made.

Wonder Woman: a popular television series adaptation of the DC comic superheroine that ran on ABC from 1975-1979 and starred Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman.

I-1-5 *mexillent*: from the author’s notes: “There is no hidden meaning. This simply refers to made up words friends well...make up and use” (Bell and Bowen, “Specific Notes”).

half-baked: in this case, literally meaning “underdone,” but with heavy social connotations relating to a state of being after one has smoked marijuana.

I-1-6 *jack-off*: an incompetent person.

Whorehouse Goes Public: refers to *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*, a short-lived (twenty-eight previews; sixteen performances) 1994 sequel to the 1978 musical *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. Set in Las Vegas, the show featured mostly revue-style acts and sketches, and was rather thin on plot. Dee Hoty earned a Tony Award nomination for her portrayal of Mona Stanglely, a role most people associate with Dolly Parton after her popular portrayal of Mona in the film version of the *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.

Dee Hoty: an American musical theatre actor who has starred in such shows as *City of Angels*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, *The Best Little Whorehouse*

Goes Public, and *Footloose*. She has been nominated for three Tony Awards.

Ruthless: The Musical: a 1992 off-Broadway, all-female musical that spoofs Broadway musicals like *Gypsy* and *Mame*, and movies such as *The Bad Seed* and *All About Eve*.

Betty Buckley: an American theatre, film, and television actor. As the original Broadway Grizabella, she sang “Memory” in *Cats*, which established her reputation as a Broadway diva. Perhaps best known for her role as Sandra Sue Abbott (nicknamed Abby) on the 1977-1981 television show, *Eight is Enough*, Buckley has worked regularly in all three entertainment mediums, having won roles in such movies as *Carrie* and Woody Allen’s *Another Woman*.

hot box of crazy: a person who is rather unstable. *UrbanDictionary.com* actually says: “One who is Batshit [*sic.*] insane” and goes on to give this example, appropriate here: “Apparently people don’t like working with Betty Buckley because she’s a hot box of crazy” (“Hot Box of Crazy”).

I-1-9 *sellouts*: the betrayal of one’s principles for reasons of expediency. In urban culture, this stems from artists conforming to the way record labels or managers want them to make money through commercial success, generally gravitating away from the original fan base.

Empty Nest: American sitcom that aired from 1988-1995. A spinoff of *The Golden Girls*, the show centered on a pediatrician (Richard Mulligan) living with his two adult daughters (Dinah Manoff and Kristy McNichol) after the unexpected death of his wife. The sisters regularly bickered and vied for the attention of their father.

Dinah Manoff: see *Empty Nest*.

I-2-10 *Leader of the Pack*: a 1985 musical about the life and times of songwriter Ellie Greenwich, who wrote the title song as well as many other “doo-wop” songs of the early- to mid-1960s. *The New York Times* called the show an embarrassment, and joked about the long-running legal battle the producers engaged in after the closing of the short-lived musical (“Leader”).

Ellen: refers to *The Ellen Degeneres Show*, a television talk show hosted by Ellen Degeneres that has aired in the United States since 2003. The show won twenty-five Emmy Awards in its first three seasons.

Brooklyn: a 2004 musical that, using a play-within-a-play concept, focuses on a group of five ragtag homeless musicians known as the City Weeds, who periodically transform a street corner under the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge into a stage where they present their play about a Parisian singer, Brooklyn, named after the NYC borough where her father was from.

promo CD: a promotional disc given away as a marketing tactic. Often musicals in development will circulate promo CDs to generate interest in the music of a show.

I-2-11 *Mamma Mia!*: a musical that originated in London in 1999, which landed on Broadway in October 2001. Featuring the music of ABBA, the show's fictional plot weaves together songs made popular by the Swedish band without being biographical or historical at all. Regarded by many in the theatre industry to be an example of over-commercialized Broadway that has little artistic value.

I-2-12 *track*: a role in a Broadway show. The term refers to the moment-by-moment physical movement of any given actor throughout the course of a show, meticulously recorded by the stage manager in the show's "bible." Understudies or actors replacing the original will study these notes during rehearsals to learn the actor's *track*, or movements both onstage and off.

read: in terms of an audition, this word means to read a scene or monologue without singing or dancing. Usually actors get invited to "read" after making it through other rounds of auditions.

talky: talkative.

Smell-O-Vision: from the authors' online glossary: "A 60's invention that allows audience members to smell what they're watching. As in,

‘When Susan eats Chinese food, it’s fortunate for the audience that the show isn’t in Smell-O-Vision’” (“[tos]sary”).

I-2-13 *burn out*: long-term physical and mental exhaustion associated with a task (usually monotonous/repetitive tasks or one’s career).

ax: ask, in an urban dialect.

salt mines: operations involved in the extraction of salt from rock salt (halite), a type of evaporitic deposit. While salt is now plentiful, before the Industrial Revolution salt was difficult to come by, and salt mining was often done by slave or prison labor, which is what Susan is referring to here.

Tommy: refers to the 1993 musical based on the 1969 concept album by The Who, which tells the story of a deaf, dumb, and blind child who is abused by multiple family members before a miraculous recovery that launches him to stardom.

I-2-14 *John Cameron Mitchell*: American writer, actor, and director who got his start in the 1985 Broadway musical *Big River*. He originated the role of Dickon in *The Secret Garden*, but is best known for authoring the show, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, which he created with musician Stephen Trask. Mitchell starred in the title role off-Broadway and in the film version. Highly regarded as progressive and creative, he is someone these characters respect.

Michael Crawford: English actor most closely associated with creating the role of the Phantom in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*. He has also been in the film version of *Hello, Dolly!* and the UK production of the musical *Barnum*, about the life and times of circus showman P.T. Barnum.

Jim Dale: an English actor, voice artist, and singer/songwriter. Most known for *Carry On*, a long-running series of comedy farce films in the UK (twenty-nine in all). In the United States, Dale has been nominated for five Tony Awards, winning one in 1980 for *Barnum*. Other Broadway outings include roles in *Scapino*, *Joe Egg*, *Me and My Girl*, and *Candide*.

I-2-15 *me doots*: alternate pronunciation for “my doubts.”

I-2-16 *Dorothy Chandler Pavilion*: one of the halls in the Los Angeles Music Center, home to the Los Angeles Opera. Used here because it sounds like the would-be first, middle, and last name of a hypothetical drag queen.

skin flute: a lesser-known euphemism for *penis*. “To play the skin flute” means to perform fellatio.

Radio City Music Hall: an entertainment venue located in New York City's Rockefeller Center. Home to the Radio City Rockettes, the theatre seats 5,933 people and its stage measures 144 feet across; hardly an “intimate” venue, the audience should understand that Hunter is joking.

I-2-17 *g'nerds*: from the author's notes: "Slang for gay nerds" (Bell and Bowen, "Specific Notes"). *UrbanDictionary.com*'s definition is somewhat different, suggesting it is a combination of *geek* and *nerd* ("G'Nerd").

motherfucker: an insult dating back to the 1300s, accusing one of sleeping with one's own mother. Continued use of this term over centuries has expanded its meaning, and in modern urban culture it can be a crude term of endearment among close friends.

cracker: slang word used mostly by African-Americans to refer to white people of European ancestry. The term is thought to have been derived from the sound of the slave-driver's whip.

I-2-18 *Mazeppa*: originally an opera by Tchaikovsky, this term was borrowed by Arthur Laurents for a character name in the musical *Gypsy*. In the show, Mazeppa, one of the burlesque dancers in a seedy vaudeville house, uses her signature trumpet-bump gimmick to make her brand of stripping stand apart.

Randy Newman: an American singer/songwriter and composer, noted for his raspy vocal quality and satirical bluesy song lyrics. Newman has composed for film and television, including songs like "Sail Away," "You Can Leave Your Hat On," and "You've Got a Friend in Me" from the Pixar movie *Toy Story*.

Kwamina: a 1961 original musical by Richard Adler, choreographed by Agnes de Mille. It is the story of a country in West Africa, soon to win

independence from British rule, torn between its ancient superstitions and its yearning for freedom and democracy. It ran for only thirty-two performances.

I-2-19 *Starlight Express*: a rock musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber that follows a child's dream in which his electric train set comes to life. The actors perform on roller skates, and the story is largely a Cinderella story substituting trains for the characters.

Chess: a musical by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus (formerly of ABBA) and lyricist Tim Rice. The story involves a romantic triangle between two top-ranked chess players (an American and a Soviet) and a woman who manages one and falls in love with the other. The show has had much controversy, with some critics noting its lack of depth and its superficiality. Many revisions over the course of its history—from concept album to West End to Broadway—has left many (including Hunter and Jeff) with the impression that the show was “a big mess.”

jukebox musical: a stage or screen musical that uses previously recorded popular songs as its musical score.

Alice Ripley: Tony Award-winning actress, singer, and songwriter. She is best known for the role of Diana Goodman in *Next to Normal*, however, this show was composed after [title of show], so the authors' opinion that she is “fierce” stems from her appearances in shows like *Tommy*,

Sunset Boulevard, and *Side Show*, which had become a cult favorite by the time [title of show] was written. From the author's notes found on the show's online glossary: "An unbelievable Broadway actress and belter. As in, 'Alice Ripley was fierce in Side Show'" ("[tos]sary").

fierce: a term adopted by many (especially in the gay community) to mean anything of exceptional quality, or anyone who is bold or displays chutzpah.

playa: one who is good at the "game" he/she plays (i.e. usually taking advantage of someone else to get what they want). More often than not this term is used in a sexual context.

Toni Braxton: American R&B singer who has won six Grammy Awards. She has appeared in stunt casting on Broadway as replacements for the title characters in *Aida* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Ashlee Simpson: American pop singer-songwriter, who is the younger sister to Jessica Simpson, and who rose to fame in 2004. She has consistently received mixed reviews from critics, some calling her work "mundane . . . brat pop" ("Ashlee Simpson"). At the time of the authors' writing, she had not appeared on Broadway, but in 2009, she appeared as Roxie Hart in *Chicago*.

Paris Hilton: American socialite whose family owns the famous chain of Hilton hotels. Known for a controversial sex tape and subsequent

reality television shows. Most people in Hunter and Jeff's circle share the opinion that she is "famous for being famous" and has no real talent.

Mame: refers to Mame Dennis, the lead character in *Auntie Mame*, a 1955 novel, 1956 play, and 1958 film. The source material was subsequently turned into a musical by Jerry Herman, simply titled *Mame*, in 1966, which was translated to film in 1974. The story follows an eccentric New York bohemian socialite and her adventures after her late brother's son arrives to live with her. Many notable actresses have portrayed the character, including Rosalind Russell in the stage and film versions of *Auntie Mame*, Angela Lansbury in the Broadway musical, and Lucille Ball in the movie adaptation of the musical.

I-2-20 *ingénues*: actresses who portray young or unsophisticated characters on stage.

Usually these characters are endearing and wholesome.

soubrettes: comic female character actresses, who portray vain, girlish, mischievous, light-hearted or gossipy characters. Often a confidante to the ingénue, the soubrette commonly displays a flirtatious or overtly sexual nature.

I Love My Wife: a 1977 musical by Cy Coleman and Michael Stewart, which celebrates the sexual revolution of the 1970s. A four-person show, the plot details the lives of two suburban couples on Christmas Eve as they contemplate a foursome.

Romance/Romance: a 1987 musical by Keith Herrmann and Barry Harman told as two one-acts. Also a four-person show, the first act is set in nineteenth-century Vienna, while the second act zooms forward to the 1980s Hamptons. The show deals with various socially questionable relationships.

- I-2-21 *holla*: holler; in this case, “holla back at me” means “call me back.”
- demo*: sample recording of a person or group’s music used to book gigs or get auditions. Similar to a promo CD, except used by industry professionals rather than for marketing purposes.
- I-3-22 *Playbills*: *Playbill* is a monthly periodical for theatre lovers. Although available as a subscription through the postal service, most *Playbills* are custom-printed for distribution at the door of Broadway shows, and include specific program notes for the audience. Jeff saves *Playbills* from flop Broadway shows.
- flop*: to be completely unsuccessful; to fail totally.
- Commodore 64*: a home computer that debuted in 1982. Hunter does not use this term literally, but rather to describe his own computer as old or outdated.
- I-3-23 *Apple* “S:” The keyboard shortcut command to save a document while it is still open on the desktop of a Macintosh computer.
- Atari*: an arcade and video game system dating back to 1972, that is impossible to use for word processing.

jack off: here, the term refers to male masturbation.

procrastibator: a fictional word made up from combining *procrastinate* and *masturbate*.

I-4-27 *let the paint dry*: refers to the color change from the time when one applies paint to when it dries. Hunter is saying he needs to let his writing sit for a period of time before judging it.

I-4-28 *Tony Award*: Common shortening of “Antoinette Perry Award,” an honor given to Broadway theatre professionals for excellence in live American theatre.

pandering: gratifying or indulging.

I-4-29 *terlet*: alternate pronunciation of “toilet.”

OBIE: Off-Broadway Theatre Award. Given to theatre professionals in New York City by the *Village Voice* newspaper. Comparable to the Tony Awards for professional shows smaller than Broadway-scale.

doing the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade: Hunter is referring to the live Herald Square performances by invited Broadway casts during the telecast of the annual parade.

I-5-30 *Roma Torre*: a news anchor for the twenty-four-hour news channel NY1, which features local news in and about New York City’s five boroughs. Torre has a theatrical background, and serves as the theatre critic for NY1, contributing to the weekly program *NY1 On Stage*, and hosting the red carpet coverage of the Tony Awards each year.

temping: working a temporary job at the referral of an agency who staffs such positions.

ass-broke: from the authors' online glossary: "Without funds. Used like, 'If I don't get that check from Paper Mill, I'm gonna be ass-broke, y'all'" ("[tos]sary").

British tooth: refers to a stereotype Americans have of the English for having poor dental hygiene and for their lack of pursuing cosmetic orthodontia to correct crooked or unsightly teeth.

opening night: here, it refers to the party that follows a show's opening performance.

Tavern on the Green: a swanky (but now defunct) restaurant on the west side of Central Park, famous for having lavish special events.

Shubert Alley: a three hundred-foot walkway between 44th Street and 45th Street in the theatre district of Manhattan, named for its proximity to the Shubert Theatre. There is a memorabilia store at 1 Shubert Alley that sells theatre souvenirs, including sheet music (e.g. see fig. 3).

homo magazine: a weekly or monthly magazine that promotes the gay lifestyle of New York, usually found in racks near the entrances of gay bars. Short exposés on celebrities or up-and-coming theatre pieces and other events fill out this magazine loved mostly for its coverage of gay nightlife.

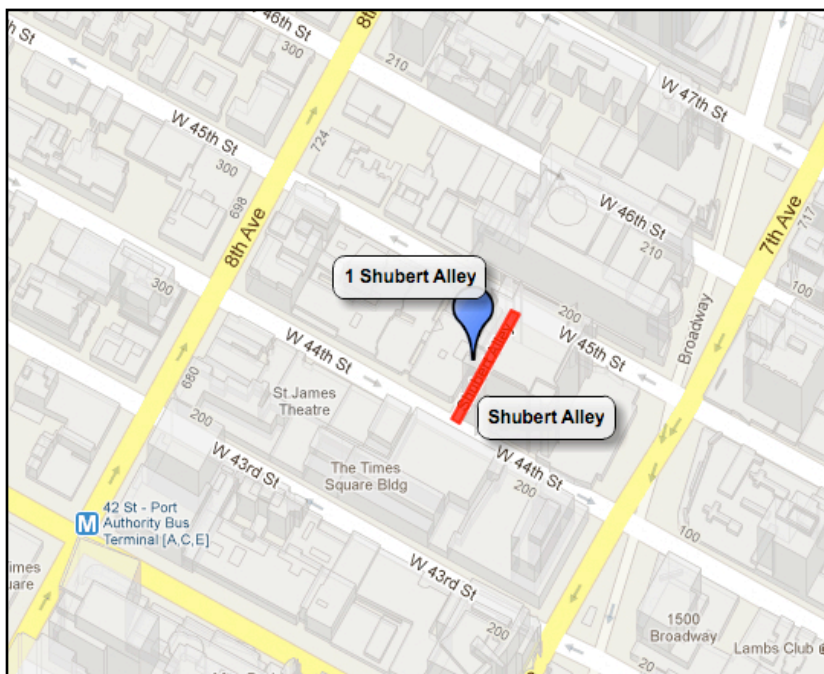


Fig. 3. Shubert Alley, NYC

The narrow passageway connects 44th and 45th Streets in the theatre district. 1 Shubert Alley is in the middle of the block. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

- I-5-31 *gay skills*: homosexuals have been noted throughout history as making large contributions to the arts; refers to the artistic abilities of homosexuals.
- upstate*: Anywhere in New York State north of Manhattan. This probably refers to any number of communities in the Hudson River Valley.
- VIP ticket*: earlier versions of the script substituted this lyric with “house seats,” and both mean generally the same thing: seats reserved for producers to use (or give away) at their discretion. Many times these seats are given to established industry professionals as gifts or favors, or are sold to the public for a grossly inflated price.
- Wicked*: a 2003 Broadway musical that details the backstories of the witches of Oz. Insanely popular, it is very difficult to obtain last-minute tickets

to a performance (especially from 2004-2008, during the time [*title of show*] was written).

Bernadette: Bernadette Peters, legendary Broadway actress.

coat of marmoset: similar to a mink coat, this coat would be made from the skin of pygmy monkeys native to Central and South America.

Sardi's caricature: Sardi's is a restaurant in the theatre district of Manhattan that is known for the hundreds of caricatures of show-business celebrities that are hung on the walls. For some, getting a caricature at Sardi's means making it big.

roar in MGM: refers to the infamous lion's roar that accompanied MGM's trademark and was played before each of its films.

Shields and Yarnell: an American mime team formed in 1972. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, they performed on many television programs in the United States, including *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*, *The Muppet Show*, *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, and in 1977-78, their own variety program, *The Shields and Yarnell Show*.

I-5-32 *screening*: to let a call go to the answering machine (or voicemail) before picking up in order to determine the identity of the caller. Called ID technology has largely replaced this practice.

Arnold Palmer: a drink made famous by the professional golfer of the same name, comprised of one part lemonade and one part iced tea.

mules: a type of shoe or footwear without a back.

- I-5-33 *novelty songs*: nonsensical or lighthearted songs performed solely for comic effect.
- fluff*: a theatre piece that has no “real” message beyond entertainment.
- I-5-35 *Hot Pocket*: a microwavable pastry stuffed with a combination of meat, cheese, and/or vegetables.
- copyright infringement*: the illegal, unauthorized use of copyrighted materials.
- product placement*: a.k.a. embedded marketing, a form of advertisement where branded products are used in a format without an ad. This practice became common in film after Reece’s Pieces were used in the film *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*.
- Great White Way*: nickname for Broadway and the theatre district in Manhattan; gets its name from the section of Broadway between 42nd Street and 52nd Street, which is aglow with lights from theatre marquees.
- I-6-38 *kicky*: exciting or fashionable.
- blows*: to be of unacceptable quality; to completely suck.
- Quel genre de fille est Susan?*: French for “What kind of girl is Susan?”
- ...est Heidi?*: ...is Heidi?
- Je ne sais quoi*: French for “I do not know what.” Implies that there is something special about the subject that the speaker cannot pinpoint.
- incroyable*: incredible.

bourgeois: of or relating to the middle class, especially in reference to its perceived materialistic values or conventional attitudes.

moi: “me,” in French.

downtown: referring to the young, hip crowd that lives/hangs out in and around New York University and the East Village and West Village sections of Manhattan.

uptown: a perceived attitude about those who live on the Upper East or Upper West Side in Manhattan. A “they’ve got it together” kind of a feeling.

showmo: a gay man who works in or associates with show business.

cage match: a type of wrestling match wherein the wrestlers are contained within a steel cage, giving the illusion that escape is impossible.

I-7-39 *guvna*: old British greeting to someone of higher social or political status.

I-7-41 *Project Runway*: a competition-style reality television program featuring contestants that design fashions in weekly competitions, often with tight time constraints.

Tim Gunn: a mentor to the contestants on *Project Runway*.

Heidi Klum: supermodel and the host of *Project Runway*.

Naked Cowboy: Robert John Burck, a street performer in New York City notorious for appearing in white briefs, cowboy boots and hat, and with a guitar. He takes pictures with tourists for tips.

Mamie Duncan Gibbs: African-American Broadway actress who has appeared in *Jelly’s Last Jam* and in the long-running revival of *Chicago*.

Bagels and Yox: a 1951 Jewish musical revue that, according to the authors' online glossary, "ran around the same time as Borscht Capades" ("[tos]sary").

I-7-43 *Je suis whore*: "I am a whore," in a combination of French and English.

Shrinky Dinks: children's activity kit with flexible plastic sheets that are colored with pencils, then baked in the oven, which results in their shrinking to hard, colorful plastic figures.

Tippy Turtle: from the authors' online glossary: "Iconic reptile used as a litmus test for aspiring artists. For example, 'My Tippy Turtle drawing wasn't so good, but my Pete the Pirate totally rocked'" ("[tos]sary"). Part of a home correspondence course in art instruction.

I-7-44 *word*: from the author's online glossary: "Street vernacular. Short for 'word to your mother'" ("[tos]sary").

Van Helsing: character from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, famous for hunting and killing vampires.

baba ghanoush: a thick sauce or spread made from ground eggplant, sesame seeds, olive oil, lemon, and garlic; typical of eastern Mediterranean cuisine. In this usage, it simply serves as a rhyme.

I-7-45 *Precious Moments*: a company that manufactures ceramic figurines of large-eyed, cute children in various scenes and poses.

Renuzit: a brand of air freshener.

- smell-em-ups*: from the authors' online glossary: "any scented room sanitizer" ("[tos]sary").
- I-7-46 *memaw*: a term of endearment for one's grandmother.
- morte*: "die," in Latin.
- I-8-48 *bitches*: from the authors' online glossary: "Friends, pals, loved ones. As in, 'I appreciate you bitches being so supportive at my grandma's funeral'" ("[tos]sary").
- I-8-49 *Your Arms Too Short to Write This Musical*: a play on the musical, *Your Arms Too Short to Box With God*, based on the Biblical Book of Matthew. The original production opened in 1976, and a 1980 revival starred a then-unknown Jennifer Holliday, who is widely known as the original Effie White in the musical *Dreamgirls*.
- Susan With A 'Z'*: a play on *Liza With a "Z,"* a 1972 concert filmed for television starring Liza Minnelli, directed by Bob Fosse.
- I-9-55 *New York Musical Theatre Festival*: inaugurated in 2004, an event held each fall in NYC, showcasing thirty new, original musicals in thirty days.
- I-9-59 *Lily Tomlin*: American actress, comedian, performer, and producer who starred in the hit comedy series *Laugh-In*, and in the movie *Nine to Five* with Dolly Parton, among numerous other roles.
- Christopher Guest*: American actor, writer, and director, widely known for his "mockumentary" films such as *This is Spinal Tap*, *Waiting for Guffman*, and *Best in Show*.

Dan Pessano: from the authors' notes: "Dan Pessano was a theatre director from Heidi's youth. The name represented someone who made Heidi nervous, so while it is seemingly an obscure personal moment, in the actresses' [*sic*] mind, she should be picturing someone that would make her nervous" (Bell and Bowen, "Specific Notes").

Lynda Barry: an American cartoonist and author.

Ricky Gervais: English actor and comedian who created, co-wrote, and starred in the British version of the hit television series, *The Office*.

Winnie Mandela: South African politician married to Nelson Mandela.

Lynda Carter: actress who portrayed Wonder Woman on the 1970s television show based on the popular DC comic.

I-9-60 *s'luck*: from the authors' online glossary: "an appropriate response to 'Wish us luck!'" ("[tos]sary"). Derived from the ambiguous placement of the "s" sound between *us* and *luck*.

I-9-61 *The Lord of the Rings trilogy*: a series of epic fantasy novels written by J.R.R. Tolkien, that follows the adventures of a hobbit, Frodo Baggins, on a quest to set his world free from tyranny.

Frodo: Frodo Baggins, main character of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Samwise: Samwise Gangee, Frodo's best friend and confidante.

I-9-62 *O'Neill Center*: from the authors' online glossary: "Connecticut-based summer camp for grown-up theatre nerds. Hunter may say, 'I made out hard with that dude at The O'Neill Center'" ("[tos]sary").

cotta: panna cotta, an Italian dessert.

I-9-63 *Vineyard Theatre*: an off-Broadway not-for-profit theatre company dedicated to “new work, bold programming and the support of artists” (“Who We Are”). Original home to the Tony Award-winning musical, *Avenue Q*, and the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *How I Learned to Drive*.

Manhattan Theatre Club: off-Broadway theatre venue in NYC; highly renowned for producing small-scale, edgy shows.

Ken Billington: lighting designer of numerous Broadway shows, including *Hello, Dolly!*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, and *Sweeney Todd* (as well as the Broadway production of [*title of show*]).

I-9-64 *crossies*: refers to the crossing of one’s fingers for good luck.

I-9-65 *circle up*: refers to a pre-show ritual done by many actors before a performance, to center themselves and gain focus as a team.

I-9-66 *The Post*: *The New York Post*, less sophisticated than *The New York Times*; verging on a tabloid.

Time Out: *Time Out New York*, a weekly publication detailing events happening in and around New York City.

Variety: weekly entertainment trade magazine based in Los Angeles.

I-9-67 *party line*: a.k.a. multiparty line or shared service line; in the early days of telephone service, two or more customers agreed to be connected to the same local loop, essentially sharing a phone service. Other

subscribers on the line might hear the phone ring and listen in on another's conversation.

The Gray Lady: slang for *The New York Times*.

Broadway.com: Internet site that focuses on all things Broadway (and off-Broadway).

I-9-68 *Joan Rivers*: a brash, loud, raspy-voiced American comedian and television personality.

Kitty Carlisle Hart: American singer, actress, and spokeswoman for the arts, who starred as a panelist on the game show *To Tell the Truth*.

I-10-69 *The Little Mermaid*: refers to the stage production of the classic Disney musical, which opened on Broadway in January of 2008.

I-10-70 *craigslist*: refers to *craigslist.org*, a local online want-ad website.

I-11-75 *roller-skating eel*: in the Broadway production of *The Little Mermaid*, the actors were featured wearing shoes with wheels on the heel, to aid in the illusion that the characters were underwater.

Actors Fund: nonprofit charitable organization that assists American performing arts professionals by providing things like health care and social services.

I-11-76 *green-light*: approve; give the go-ahead.

I-11-77 *Coast of Utopia*: a trilogy of plays written by Tom Stoppard that debuted on Broadway in 2006. The trilogy was nine hours in total, and ran in

repertory on consecutive days, allowing audiences to see the complete experience back-to-back.

preachy: having or revealing a tendency to give moral advice in a tedious or self-righteous way.

- I-11-78 *Talkin' Broadway's "All That Chat:"* an online chat board that discusses all things Broadway, and that is read and contributed to anonymously by many major players in professional theatre.

insider: meant for a specific niche audience; in this case, meant only for people inside the theatre industry.

- I-11-79 *Ursula*: the character Heidi understudied in *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway. Ursula is a sea-witch, and assumes the form of a large octopus.

fitting: costume fitting.

- I-11-80 *Al Roker*: African-American weatherman and television personality who hosts the *Today Show* on NBC.

- I-11-81 *Donna Murphy*: American stage, film and television actress who starred as Fosca in Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*, and as Anna in the 1996 revival of *The King and I*.

f-bomb: a polite euphemism for the word *fuck*. To "drop the f-bomb" means to let this curse word slip out.

Sutton Foster: American musical theatre actress, most known for creating the title role in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* after the original actress left the show late in the rehearsal process. She has proven herself to be a

multi-talented work horse in show business, hopping from one Tony-winning show to the next, to date having taken home two Tony Awards herself for Best Actress in a Musical.

I-11-83 *broken doll*: from the authors' notes: "refers to an awkward bent high fashion model pose" (Bell and Bowen, "Specific Notes").

I-11-86 *passive aggressive*: refers to a name one calls another when they are displaying passive/aggressive behavior. Misused in this case, Hunter is saying one thing (quite non-passively) and meaning the opposite (which is sarcasm).

I-12-87 *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*: from the authors' online glossary: "PC game for lonesome nerds" ("[tos]sary"). It is a theme park-based computer game where the player constructs a virtual theme park to meet certain thrill criteria set by the game's creators.

log flume: an amusement park ride featuring log-shaped cars that float through a track filled with water, featuring steep drops and splashes.

pink sawdust: from the authors' online glossary: "A deodorizing powder developed to absorb and neutralize vomit odors" ("[tos]sary").

golden ticket: refers to the tickets concealed in candy bar wrappers in the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl. Charlie's golden ticket was the key to solving all his family's problems.

- I-12-88 *Aspects of Love*: an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical based on the novella of the same name. It opened in London in 1989 and on Broadway in 1990, ran less than a year, and got mostly mixed to negative reviews.
- twenty four/seven*: twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
- Pepperidge Farm*: a commercial bakery in the United States, founded in 1937.
- A series of long-running, nostalgic television commercials often encouraged viewers to remember simpler times, stating that “Pepperidge Farm remembers” those times as well.
- I-12-89 *Kool-Aid*: a sugary, powdered fruit drink popular among children.
- Andrea McArdle*: Broadway’s original Annie, McArdle is a musical theatre actress who made her Broadway debut at age fourteen.
- Hi-Fi*: High Fidelity, a term adopted by many home stereo listeners of the 1970s and early 1980s to distinguish the sound quality from that of poorer stereo devices. People would refer to their stereo systems as “a hi-fi.”
- Rubik’s Cube*: a 3D mechanical puzzle invented in Hungary in 1974 that retained popularity through the 1980s.
- I-13-90 *bailed*: to have left something or someone behind; ditched.
- East Bound and Down*: a song written for the film *Smokey and the Bandit*, with lyrics that speak about a trucker breaking free and “doing what they say can’t be done” (“East Bound”).

U-Haul: a moving truck company, whose trucks are often simply called “U-Hauls.”

I-13-91 *Gristedes*: a grocery store chain in the New York City metro area.

On The Town: a musical written by Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden and Adolph Green. Originally produced in 1944, the production was a risk because it was inspired by a ballet production by choreographer Jerome Robbins and featured the relatively unknown writing duo of Comden and Green.

Comden and Green: Betty Comden and Adolph Green, the lyricists and book writers of *On the Town*.

I-13-92 *Bock and Harnick*: Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, an important musical theatre writing team in the 1960s, who wrote *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Fiorello!*, and *She Loves Me*, among other shows.

Tenderloin: a 1960 musical by Bock and Harnick, about an 1890s red light district in Manhattan.

Kander and Ebb: John Kander and Fred Ebb, legendary writing team that composed such musicals as *Chicago*, *Cabaret*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, and *Curtains*, among other shows.

The Rink: 1984 musical by Kander and Ebb, starring Chita Rivera and Liza Minnelli as a mother/daughter team who run a roller-skating rink on a boardwalk. The show opened to generally poor reviews and was not received well.

bus and truck: a tour of a musical, usually some time after the first national tour, that usually plays short engagements in many medium-sized or smaller cities. This type of tour gets its name from the fact that the actors ride in a bus, which is followed by a series of trucks to transport the set.

I-13-94 *taint*: the double entendre here is that Hunter is using the term to mean “something affected by an undesirable quantity of something else” and Jeff laughs because the (rather vulgar) urban definition of the word is synonymous with the perineum, or the area between one’s genitals and one’s rectum.

Geographical References and Place Names

Although the script details the setting of the show vaguely, with, “Time: [time]/ Place: [place],” it actually takes place in New York City between 2004 and 2008. More specifically, most of the action takes place in either Hunter’s or Jeff’s apartment, in the neighborhood of Hell’s Kitchen. Various scenes occur in a handful of other locations that are mostly generic in nature. For example, when Susan answers her phone on page I-10-69, she says, “Zehnder-Oliver Capital, this is Susan,” which immediately sets her at her place of employment, even though there is no reference to the location of her workplace, and no supplemental set piece is necessary. The following is a list of New York-centered locations, generic and specific. Corresponding maps follow at the end of the list.

1. Hell's Kitchen is referred to in the opening number (I-0-1); (e.g. see fig. 4).
2. Hunter's living room is mentioned twice, although one is his present living room (one of the show's settings), and one is his childhood living room, which is only mentioned (I-0-1, I-12-89).
3. Chelsea is referred to during the boys' first phone call (I-1-3); (e.g. see fig. 5).
4. Seafood Mare was a restaurant in Chelsea, which closed after the show was written (I-1-3); (e.g. see fig. 5).
5. New York/New York City itself is referred to several times throughout the show (I-1-3, 8, 9, I-2-10, I-7-41, I-13-90); (e.g. see fig. 6).
6. The park is mentioned twice. To local New Yorkers, "the park" usually means Central Park (I-1-4, 5); (e.g. see fig. 7).
7. Broadway is the most-referenced location in the show. For the purposes of this show, "Broadway" means the theatre district in Manhattan rather than the street itself (I-2-11, 14, 19, 20, 21, I-5-29, 31, I-6-35, 36, I-7-41, I-8-48, I-9-62, I-10-71, 72, I-11-73, 74, 76, 78, 81, 82, 83); (e.g. see fig. 8).
8. Radio City Music Hall is jokingly referred to on page I-2-16 (e.g. see fig. 9).
9. Off-Broadway is referred to multiple times, and is one of the various other settings during the montage sequence (I-2-19, I-9-65, 67, 68, 69, I-11-77).
10. Off-Off-Broadway is mentioned on page I-2-19.
11. Tavern on the Green is sung about as the site of an opening night party in "Part of It All" on page I-5-30 (e.g. see fig. 7).
12. Shubert Alley is mentioned in "Part of It All" on page I-5-30 (e.g. see fig. 8).

13. Midtown is mentioned in “Part of It All” on page I-5-31 (e.g. see fig. 9).
14. Times Square is mentioned twice, on pages I-5-31 and I-7-41 (e.g. see fig. 8).
15. Sardi’s is mentioned in “Part of It All” on page I-5-31 (e.g. see fig. 8).
16. The Great White Way is referred to as a glamorization of Broadway on page I-6-35.
17. The subway platform is referred to by Susan on page I-7-46.
18. The post office is referred to on page I-8-47.
19. The Vineyard Theatre is referred to several times, and is the theatre where the show’s Off-Broadway section is set (I-9-64, 68, 69, I-11-81); (e.g. see fig. 10).
20. Zehnder-Oliver Capital is mentioned by Susan on pages I-10-69 and I-11-75, although various references to her “day job” are made throughout the show. Presumably, all the references are to Zehnder-Oliver Capital; these two are the only times Susan is actually there.
21. Gristedes is referred to in “Nine People’s Favorite Thing” (I-13-91).

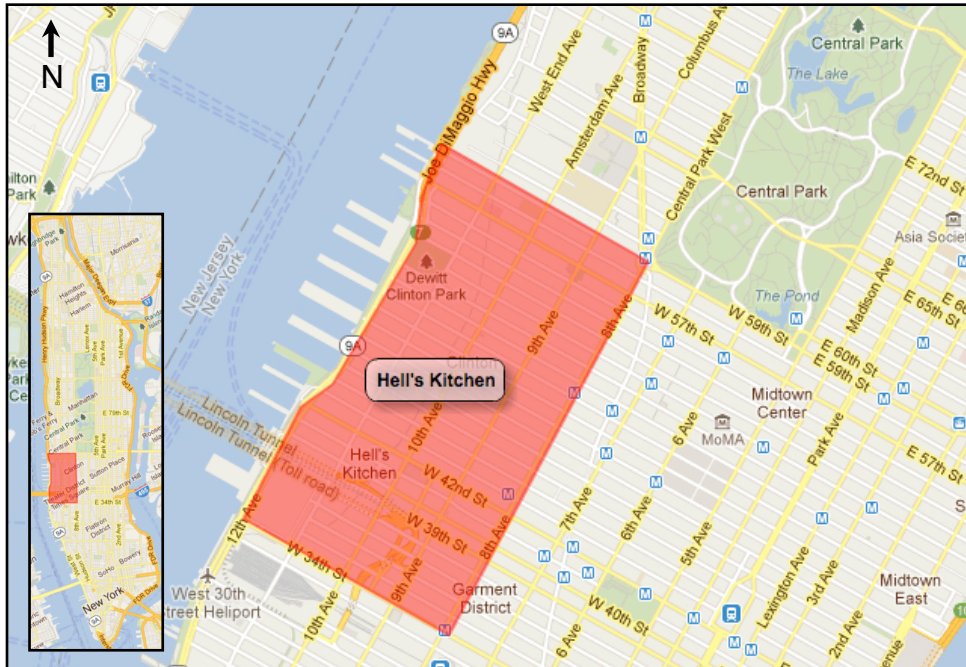


Fig. 4. Map of Hell's Kitchen, NYC

Hell's Kitchen is situated near the middle of Manhattan, on the west side, near Times Square and the theatre district. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.



Fig. 5. Map of Chelsea, NYC, featuring Seafood Mare

Chelsea is situated just south of Hell's Kitchen. Seafood Mare was on the northeast corner of 20th Street and 8th Avenue. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.



Fig. 6. Satellite Image of Greater New York City, including all five boroughs: Manhattan, The Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. A portion of northern New Jersey is visible in the upper left portion of the figure. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

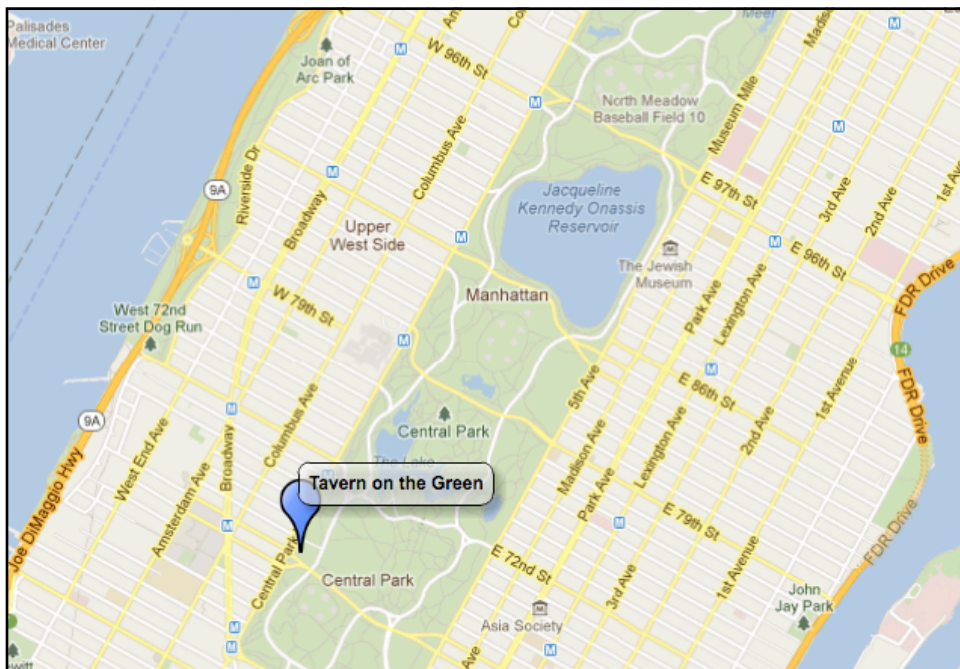


Fig. 7. Map of Central Park, featuring Tavern on the Green (currently closed, although the building remains). *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

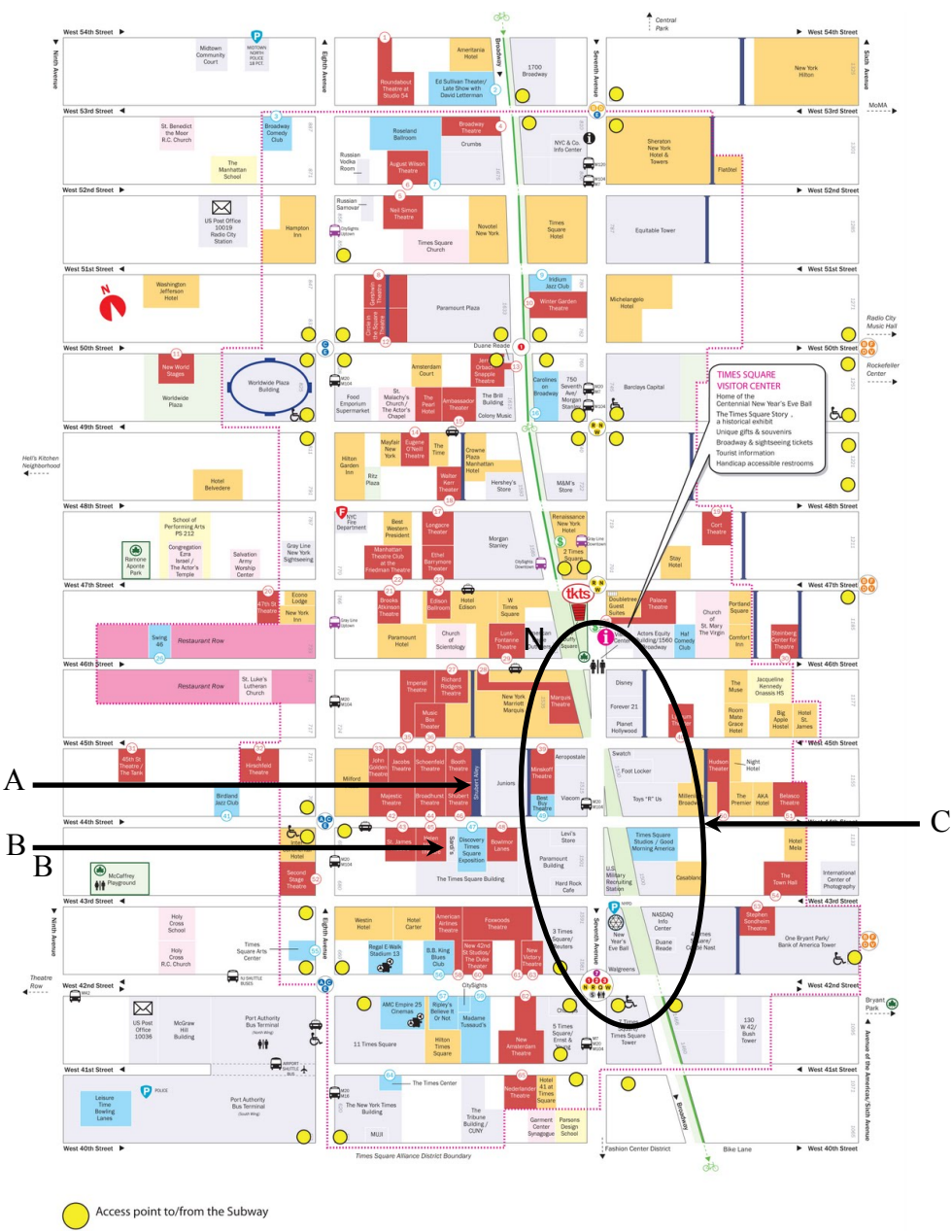


Fig. 8. The Theatre District in Manhattan, a.k.a. Broadway. *TimesSquareNYC.com*. Times Square Alliance. Web. 7 Dec. 2010.

- A. Shubert Alley, connecting 44th and 45th Streets.
- B. Sardi's.
- C. Times Square is situated where Broadway intersects 7th Avenue. The southern triangular sections created by this intersection are technically Times Square, while the northern triangular sections create Duffy Square. However, in popular vernacular, Times Square refers to the entire intersection and nearby sections of the surrounding streets.

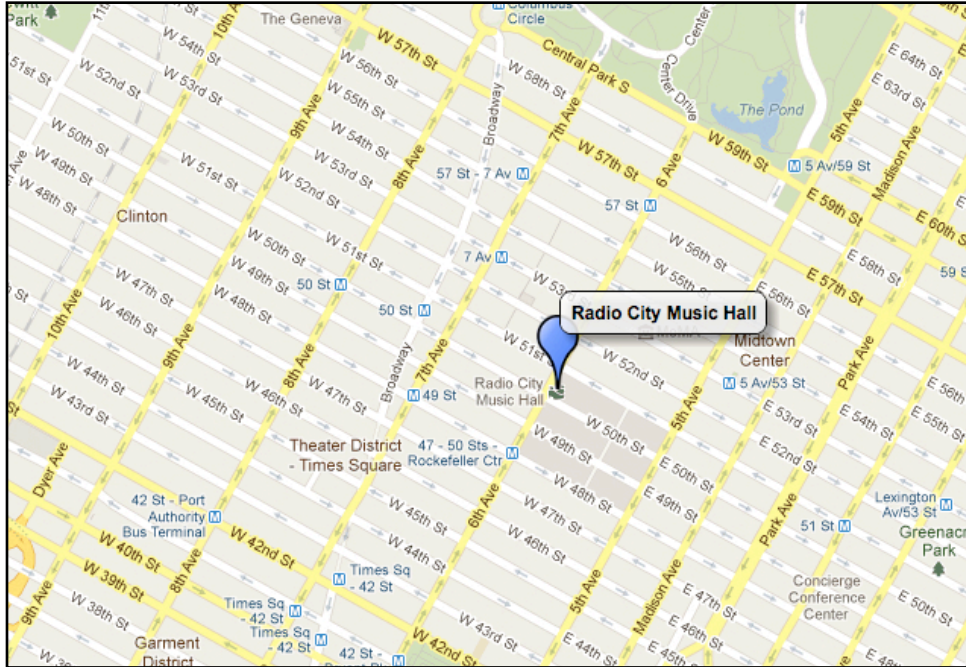


Fig. 9. Map of Midtown Manhattan, featuring Radio City Music Hall. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

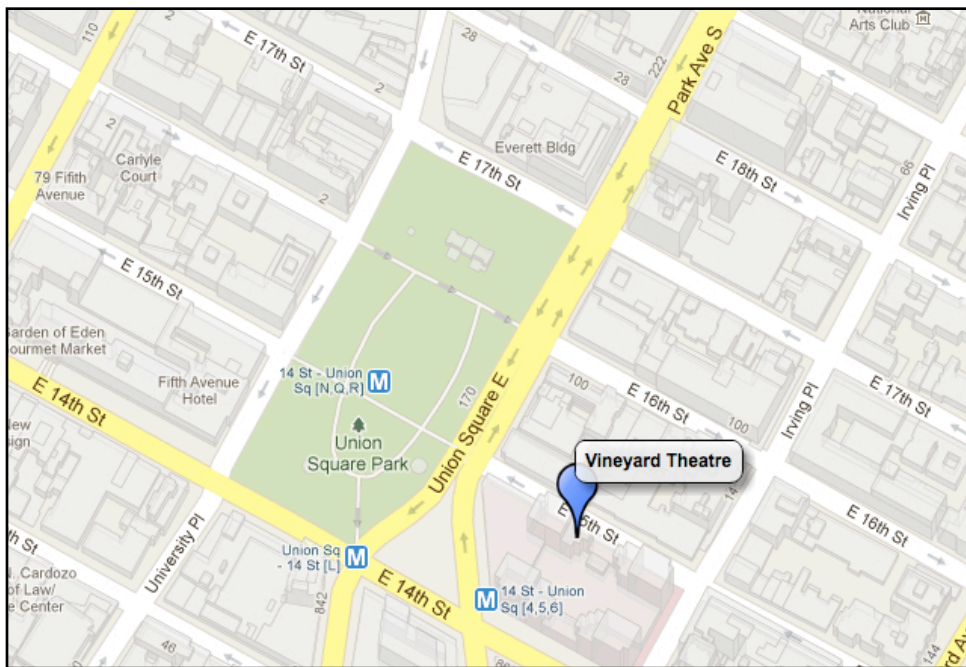


Fig. 10. Map of Union Square, NYC, featuring the Vineyard Theatre. *Google Maps*. Google, 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

As part of the meta-theatricality of the show, the actors regularly refer to stage directions as specific locations (e.g., “We cross downstage toward you” in the opening number). The following is a list of the various stage directions verbally spoken in the text of the show.

1. Downstage is mentioned in the opening number (I-1-2).
2. “Out,” meaning off-stage, is used on page I-5-29.
3. “Just left of center” is sung in “I Am Playing Me” (I-5-32).
4. “On stage” is referred to on page I-9-56.
5. “Out there,” meaning in the auditorium or lobby, is referred to on page I-9-60.
6. “In the wings” is sung in “Secondary Characters” (I-9-61).
7. “In the audience” is referred to on page I-9-68.

The following additional locations, specific as well as vague, are mentioned throughout the script, although none of these places serve as an actual setting.

1. “Out west” is sung in “Two Nobodies in New York” (I-1-9).
2. Brazil is referred to on page I-2-13.
3. London’s West End is referred to on page I-2-14.
4. The fictitious address “123 America Street” is referred to on page I-2-16.
5. Bingo is referred to as a location Jeff’s mom frequents on page I-3-22.
6. Portofino, Berlin, Flanders, and Mother Earth are locations that appear in titles of Broadway musicals sung about in “Monkeys and Playbills” (I-3-25).
7. Upstate (New York) is referred to on page I-5-31.

8. Boston and Bel-Air are referred to in a general way meaning “nationwide,” much in the same way “from New York to L.A.” means “to span the country” (I-5-31).
9. Bethlehem is sung about on page I-5-31.
10. “In the/this world” is referred to a few times (I-7-43, I-13-90).
11. Heidi feels self-conscious about going to state school on page I-7-45.
12. Jeff and Hunter meet with a producer who wants to workshop the show at The O’Neill Center on page I-9-62.
13. Susan jokingly interprets “The Vineyard” to mean “Martha’s Vineyard” on page I-9-64.
14. Heidi sings about her backyard, den, and hometown in “A Way Back to Then” (I-12-89 through 90).
15. Susan mentions growing up in Ohio during “Nine People’s Favorite Thing” (I-13-92).

Pronunciations

Bell and Bowen have worked diligently to make the language of the characters seem natural and authentic. Pronunciations below serve as a guide to terms actors or directors may be unfamiliar with, but the casual tone of the language should never be sacrificed for a meticulous pronunciation. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are included following pronunciation notes.

1. *Bartok*: “bar - tock.” IPA: / 'bar tɔ:k / (I-1-2).
2. On page I-1-3, Hunter is unsure of the pronunciation of the word “mare” in the name of the restaurant he was dining at. His first attempt should sound like the

verb that means “to disfigure”: mar. IPA: / 'mɑr /. His second should sound like the name of a female horse: mare. IPA: / 'mɛər /. Both are wrong. Mare, as it is used in the name of this restaurant, means “the sea” in Italian, and is pronounced in two syllables. The “a” is pronounced like the “a” in “father,” and the “e” is pronounced like the “a” in “say.” The “r” should be trilled. In IPA: / 'mɑr e /, although this is never pronounced onstage.

3. Dee Hoty’s last name is pronounced like “hoe - dee,” with the accent on the first syllable. IPA: / 'hoʊ di: / (I-1-6).
4. Follow the scripted pronunciation guide on page I-1-9 in regards to the word “sweeter.” When Hunter sings it a few lines later, he deliberately makes *sweeter* rhyme with *theatre*, pronouncing it like “swee - a - ter.” IPA: / 'swi: ʌ tər /.
 5. Dinah Manoff is pronounced with the accent on the first syllables of each name. The “i” is pronounced with a long “i” sound, as in “ivory.” IPA: / 'daɪ nʌ / 'mæn ɒf / (I-1-9).
6. Several words are scripted to be pronounced in slang, like Susan’s “Sure do ax a lot of questions, don’t she?” on page I-2-13. These scripted variations should be followed.
7. *G’nerds* should be pronounced with a hard “g” sound like in the words “glisten” and “glitter.” IPA: / g 'nɜrdz / (I-2-17).
8. The accent in *Mazeppa* is on the second syllable. IPA: / mʌ 'zɛ pʌ / (I-2-18).

9. The accent in *Kwamina* falls on the first syllable. The “i” sounds like the “i” in the word “tin,” and both “a’s” sounds like the “a” in “father.” IPA: / 'kwa: mɪ na: / (I-2-18).
10. *Ingénues*, Americanized, is pronounced like “on - zhuh - nooz,” with the accent on the second syllable. IPA: / an 'zə nuz/, or more authentically, the “n” sound becomes silent: / ɑ̃ 'zənuz / (I-2-20).
11. *Soubrettes*: “soo – brets;” with the accent on the second syllable. IPA: / su: 'brɛts / (I-2-20).
12. *Shubert*: “shoo – bert;” with the accent on the first syllable. IPA: / 'ʃu: bɛrt / (I-5-30).
13. *Quel genre de fille est* is French, and one may hear an excellent pronunciation by Heidi on the original cast recording. The IPA for the pronunciation is / kɛl / ʒɑ̃ʁ / də / fiʒ / ɛ / (I-6-38).
14. *Je ne sais quoi*: “zhuh - nuh - say - kwah.” IPA: / ʒə nɔ̃ sɛ 'kwa: / (I-6-38).
15. *Incroyable*: “en - kwai - ah - bluh.” IPA: / ɛ̃ 'krɔwaj a bl / (I-6-38).
16. *Bourgeois*: “boor - zhwah.” IPA: / buʁ 'ʒwa / (I-6-38).
17. *Moi*: “mwah.” IPA: / mwa / (I-6-38).
18. *Je suis*: “zhuh - swee.” IPA: / ʒə / sɥi / (I-7-43).
19. *Baba Ghanoush*: “ba - buh - gah -noosh;” the accent falls on the last syllable alone. IPA: / bæ bə / gə 'nuʒ / (I-7-44).
20. *Gristedes* is pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, like “Gris - TEE - deez.” IPA: / grɪs 'ti: di:z / (I-13-91).

Literary Allusions

1. Jeff reflects on the crazy happenings described in the opening phone call with the line “Only in New York, kids...only in New York” (I-1-3). This is a reference to *New York Post* gossip columnist Cindy Adams, who ends her daily column with the same line. Proof of this can be found at the *New York Post*’s online archive, where sometimes Adams pokes fun at her own catchphrase. One article features her humorous reaction to a negative response to her column in a Santa Fe newspaper, and closes that article with “Only in Santa Fe, kids, only in Santa Fe” (Adams).
2. Jeff eases Hunter’s doubt about completing a new musical in only three weeks by saying “They wrote *Wonderful Town* in a month” (I-1-4). This refers to composer Leonard Bernstein, and lyricists Betty Comden and Adolf Green completing the score to the 1953 Tony Award-winning musical in such a short amount of time. Later, Comden and Green’s sudden success is alluded to in the song “Nine People’s Favorite Thing” (I-13-91).
3. *Into the Woods*, by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, is referenced several times during the show. In the opening scene, Jeff and Hunter worry about being accepted by the New York Musical Theatre Festival, which launches the two into a playful passage by from the opening number of *Into the Woods*: “The festival? / The festival? / The King’s Festival? / And her father had taken for his new wife... / The festival!” (Bell and Bowen I-1-6; Sondheim 5). During “What Kind of Girl is She?” Susan exclaims “I need your shoe!” (Bell and Bowen I-7-39).

This is a direct reference to the Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods*, who exclaims the same thing while in pursuit of Cinderella's slipper in order to lift a spell put on her family (Sondheim 39). Lastly, during the mailbox scene, we hear the same underscore Sondheim uses in the finale of *Into the Woods*. The girls, serving as the subconscious voice of the boys, encourage them to be confident in their work and submit it to the festival, and finally, Susan echoes the Baker's Wife once more when she says, perfectly in sync with the underscore, "Don't say that, of course you were meant to have children" (Bell and Bowen I-9-54; Sondheim 135). The line is completely out of place, and calls our attention to Sondheim's underscore playing beneath the scene. After this line, the underscore cuts out and Susan exits sheepishly.

4. Jeff reassures Hunter by saying that anything they write will be better than *Whorehouse Goes Public* (I-1-6), referring to the musical *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*, a highly-panned sequel to the much more popular *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.
5. The song "An Original Musical" is an allusion to the *Schoolhouse Rock* television specials, which instructed children in grammar, science, mathematics, economics, history and civics. More specifically, the song is an homage to *Schoolhouse Rock* songs like "I'm Just a Bill," which features a talking, singing congressional bill who teaches a young boy the process by which a bill becomes a law in the United States (Frishberg). Here, there is a talking, singing (and cursing) piece of blank paper that instructs Jeff how to create an original musical.

6. Blank Paper tells Jeff his show needs to be big to be on Broadway, and asks if he is “gonna have a turntable” (I-2-20), which is a reference to the massive 1987 production of *Les Misérables*, which featured a rotating turntable that was used *ad nauseam* to the point that it became synonymous with the show itself.
7. Jeff and Hunter sing about their dreams of success in “Part of It All,” referencing the show *Wicked*: “If we need a quick VIP ticket to *Wicked*, we’ll get it ‘cause we’re popular and part of it all” (I-5-31). Not only is this a direct textual reference to the work, it’s also a musical reference, as Bowen has borrowed Stephen Schwartz’s four-note melody from the song “Popular” to use in the same way here (Schwartz).
8. In the dream sequence, Heidi exclaims, “God bless us every one!” (I-7-40), which is a direct reference to Tiny Tim’s line in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* (“Tiny Tim”).
9. Susan tells the boys to “call on Van Helsing” (I-7-44) in order to get rid of the vampires which have crept into their minds and are making them doubt their work. This is an allusion to the character in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, who is an expert on killing vampires. Also in this song, William Shakespeare, Stephen Sondheim, and David Sedaris, all authors, are referred to as having “[done] it before you and better than you” (I-7-45), alluding to the fact that the characters respect and may be intimidated by the work of these three authors.
10. Several shows are referenced when the cast is trying to come up with a title for their play (I-9-49). “*Your Arms Too Short to Write this Musical?*” is a reference to

the musical, *Your Arms Too Short to Box With God*, which is a re-telling of the Biblical Book of Matthew, though whether or not this reference has deeper meaning is unclear. “*RENTT*” is a play on the musical *RENT*, and the authors think it is funny to use the same title spelled differently (presumably because an audience might attend thinking they are at a more popular, well-known show).

Susan suggests “*Susan with a ‘Z,’*” a reference to the Liza Minnelli television special *Liza with a ‘Z.’* In this case, Susan is just trying to make herself feel more fabulous, like Liza Minnelli.

11. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien is directly referenced in the song “Secondary Characters,” as both Heidi and Susan sing, “We’ve been left in charge of it all while the plot’s / unfolding like ‘The Lord of the Rings’ / trilogy.” (I-9-61). They continue the reference a few lines later: “And, like ‘Frodo’ and ‘Samwise,’ / You’ll be my best friend.”
12. Several news publications are referenced as the show becomes more visible. *The New York Times* review is alluded to, as are *The New York Post*, *Time Out New York*, and *Variety*. However, the content of only one review is referred to: “the script is a sign of bad things to come” and “the songs were forgettable” are phrases that Jeff quotes to Hunter (I-9-66), paraphrased from *Broadway.com*. Later, Hunter retaliates against *Broadway.com*, saying that it can “kneel down, open it’s online mouth and suck my...” (I-9-67).
13. The Broadway version of Disney’s *The Little Mermaid* is referenced several times as Heidi learns she has been cast in the ensemble (I-10-69, I-11-74, 75, 79).

14. The Broadway epic *The Coast of Utopia* is alluded to for its sheer length on page I-11-77.
15. The online message board “All That Chat” found on the website *Talkin’ Broadway*, is quoted directly on page I-11-78, as Hunter reads a critical posting by a real contributor to the message board.
16. Jeff alludes to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* on page I-12-87 by saying, “You can’t expect this how to be your golden ticket.”
17. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Aspects of Love* is referred to on page I-12-88, as Hunter and Jeff remember how much fun they used to have thinking about Broadway.
18. The musical *Annie* is alluded to on page I-12-89, when Heidi sings, “Hearing Andrea McArdle sing from the hi-fi in the den.” McArdle was the first Annie on Broadway, and has been closely associated with the role ever since.
19. References to the musicals *Tenderloin* by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, and *The Rink* by John Kander and Fred Ebb are found in the song “Nine People’s Favorite Thing,” as Hunter and Jeff give examples of authors who took risks when writing shows (I-13-92).
20. The musical *RENT* is alluded to a second time, when the writers say that nine people who love their show could grow into “five hundred and twenty-five thousand, six hundred people” (I-13-93), a number lifted from Jonathan Larson’s song, “Seasons of Love:” “Five hundred, twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes” (Larson).

References to the Natural World of the Play

References to the natural world of this play are few and far between. Because so much of the show centers around creation—the authors’ attempt to create a show, and the created works that came before—the show tends to reside in a completely created space.

However, references are made to the following:

1. the park (arguably a “created” natural part of the world) (I-1-4).
2. a star in Bethlehem (I-5-31).
3. a tiny asteroid (I-5-33).
4. fog (though the very next line is “We don’t have a fog machine,” alluding to the fact that even the fog would be created artificially) (I-7-39 through 40).
5. the/this world (I-7-43, I-13-90).
6. gnats (I-7-44).
7. life (I-8-47).
8. tropical plants (I-10-70).
9. snow (I-12-88).
10. the sky (I-12-89).

References to the Social/Political/Ideological Worlds of the Play

References to Creativity/Originality

1. Hunter and Jeff: “We’ll explore the latest trends / and avoid them when we balance / the book with the score...” (I-0-1).
2. Hunter: “We’re trying hard not to duplicate / what we’ve seen and heard before” (I-1-2).

3. Hunter: “I don’t want to submit something half-baked and get rejected by the festival” (I-1-5).
4. Jeff: “I don’t think we should worry about whether or not we get into the festival” (I-1-5).
5. Hunter: “But there are judges. People will be reading our stuff. I don’t want to look like a total jack-off” (I-1-6).
6. Jeff: “Well, look at it this way; anything we write will be better than *Whorehouse Goes Public*” (I-1-6).
7. Jeff: “So I could say ‘Wonder Woman for President’, and that would get into our show?... Wonder Woman for President. I’d watch a show that says that” (I-1-7).
8. The entire song “Two Nobodies in New York” comments on the social ideologies involved in creating theatre. Hunter and Jeff, in the chorus of the song, ask:

We could ask significant questions.
 We could get important points across like:
 “Are we writing for art?”
 And “Is art a springboard for fame?”
 And “Will fame get folks to trust us?”
 But will they trust us if it’s just us,
 Me and you? Two nobodies in New York. (I-1-8)

The authors are considering the social significance of their work, and ponder the possibilities of its impact on society.

9. Hunter says:

Oh, by the way, I’ve been listening to the *Brooklyn* promo CD I got in the mail, and on the inside cover it has this quote that says...wait let me read it to you... “Unlike anything you have ever heard before” ...actually, it was like everything I’ve ever heard before. (I-2-10)

10. Blank Paper/Hunter: “I’m an original musical, / Original musical. / Those other shows can step to the rear” (I-2-18).
11. During the song “An Original Musical” (I-2-18), Blank Paper details for Jeff what it will take to get an original musical produced on Broadway, based on the current industry ideologies concerning what kinds of shows work well commercially. The characters examine what Jeff and Hunter are trying to accomplish, and relate it to what has and has not worked on Broadway before (I-2-17 through 21).
12. Susan: “You can do this Hunter-unter-unter. Stop forcing ideas... eas... eas. That shit is no fun... un... un...” (I-3-23).
13. Hunter: “Jeff you were right. I just have to start writing and then keep writing. And... and even if an idea seems nuts, we just have to keep reminding ourselves nothing we write is a waste of time. We’ve got to let the paint dry” (I-4-27).
14. Hunter: “I don’t know. I feel like we’re breaking new ground and who knows, if we keep it up, maybe one day we could win a Tony Award” (I-5-28).
15. Jeff: “I like that song too, but we agreed that it was just such obvious pandering” (I-5-28).
16. Hunter says:
- Stop what? Daydreaming? Why? So I can think about how lame my real life is? I’m sorry, but I daydream all the time... about being on Broadway... doing the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade... I wanna meet Roma Torre. I am so sick of temping or catering. I mean can you imagine if we got to make our living just writing? Actually making money doing what we love? (I-5-30 through 31)

17. Hunter: “I’m serious, Jeff. I wanna do this. I know I’m a writer. I know you’re a composer. I want the rest of the world to know it too. I just want us to figure out how to be a part of all that” (I-5-30).
18. The song “Part of It All” allows the boys to fantasize about their life after they achieve success. This song is full of social and ideological references to things that Jeff and Hunter (and their Broadway culture, as well as society at large) hold in high regard, like “Being fine with splurging on the cable,” and doing “a trendy photo shoot for a homo magazine” (I-5-30).
19. Hunter: “Actually, I’m starting to think our play is a little ‘donuts for dinner.’ [. . .] you know? It sounds like a good idea but thirty minutes later, you’re hungry for something a little meatier” (I-5-33).
20. Hunter: “I want there to be substance, not just fluff . . . not that there’s anything wrong with fluff, but I want to strive for something that makes people really pay attention” (I-5-33).
21. Heidi says:
- I mean I’ve been so lucky. I’ve been able to support myself as an actress, which is pretty rare. I’ve bowed on a Broadway stage . . . and there is nothing like that feeling. But, being in some giant ensemble or being an understudy I never felt like I got to show off all of me. For once, I don’t have to fit the mold. I am the mold. (I-6-36)
22. Hunter: “My writing is like a drag queen, fabulous late at night, but in the daytime, not so much!” (I-7-42).
23. Hunter: “A lot of our references are so obscure. We’re talking about *Henry, Sweet Henry* and *Bagels and Lox*. People are gonna be like ‘what the hell?’” (I-7-42).

24. Jeff: “Please, I threw out an entire ballad this morning ‘cause I was afraid people would be like ‘oooo, look at him he’s writing a serious song . . . he’s so serious’” (I-7-42).
25. Hunter: “I’ve got these voices in my head saying this whole thing is just weird, self referential, self-indulgent bullshit” (I-7-42).
26. The song “Die Vampire, Die!” allows Susan to address the insecurities plaguing Jeff and Hunter in Numbers 23-25, above. Her ideology allows them to address their insecurities and put them to rest (for the time being). The entire song is full of references to situations that might make one feel stifled when it comes to creative self-expression (I-7-43 through I-8-47).
27. Hunter: “Genre of your show. Is it good or bad that we don’t fit any of these categories?” (I-8-50).
28. Jeff: “We’re not making any cuts. I’m proud of what we’ve done” (I-9-54).
29. Hunter: “I’m proud too, so why does that have to change if they don’t choose us?” (I-9-54).
30. Hunter: “We wrote and completed a show. That’s not nothing” (I-9-54).
31. All: “Did we do enough / To get someone with money / To like us?” (I-9-55 through 56).
32. The scene during the montage in which the cast reads the reviews that have come out about their show reflects the social impact that the media has upon the arts—both those people who are involved in the creation of art and those who observe it (I-9-65 through 67).

33. The following scene—during which celebrities start to come see the cast’s show—is representative of the ideology that fame is synonymous with success: Susan says, “You know what’s fun? When your heroes come see you in a play” (I-9-68).
34. Jeff: “Hunter, we got into the festival, we got a producer and we had an amazing run but we’ve been closed ten months. If it was going to happen, it would have happened. Maybe it’s time to move on” (I-10-71).
35. Hunter: “We just need to get him to green-light a Broadway draft; so the sooner we make some changes, the sooner we’ll hit the big time!” (I-11-76).
36. The entire “Change It, Don’t Change It” section demonstrates how someone with power (i.e., a Broadway producer) can cause one to lose track of one’s goals in order to achieve success (I-11-76 through 82).
37. Hunter: “This all started out as fun times with friends and now it’s become this whole huge thing. And I want it to be this thing. I want it to be everything. I want it to solve my career, my finances . . .” (I-12-87).
38. Jeff: “Of course I care if it happens. I’m just afraid if I let myself care too much I won’t be able to handle being rejected” (I-12-88).
39. The song “A Way Back to Then” represents an ideological belief that what one spends one’s life trying so hard to achieve is really just the basic feeling of freedom and satisfaction one felt by simply being a child (I-12-88 through 90).
40. “Nine People’s Favorite Thing” resolves the conflict set up during the “Change It, Don’t Change It” section. We see that what matters most to the authors is creation,

not commercial success, and the entire cast agrees that they'd "rather be nine people's favorite thing / than a hundred people's ninth fav'rite thing" (I-13-91).

41. Jeff: "Let's just step off. Let's put the show out there and see what happens" (I-13-94).

Broadway Cultural References

1. Jeff: "Well, look at it this way; anything we write will be better than *Whorehouse Goes Public*" (I-1-6).
2. Hunter: "Aw snap, I thought Dee Hoty was good in *Whorehouse*" (I-1-6).
3. Hunter: "I didn't see it either, but I have opinions about stuff I've never seen all the time. In fact, I have a whole riff on *Ruthless: The Musical*, and guess what?" (I-1-6).
4. Hunter: "Might be fun to stalk some Broadway stars, see if anyone would help us out" (I-1-6).
5. Hunter: "Isn't she [Betty Buckley] supposed to be a hot box of crazy?" (I-1-6).
6. Hunter says:

Oh, by the way, I've been listening to the *Brooklyn* promo CD I got in the mail, and on the inside cover it has this quote that says...wait let me read it to you... "Unlike anything you have ever heard before" . . . actually, it was like everything I've ever heard before. (I-2-10)
7. Heidi: "And, can I say that the girl who did get the job, gorgeous, stunning, but she sang a little something like this (*HEIDI sings awkwardly.*) but she did fit that silver, spandex jumpsuit so no job for me" (I-2-12).
8. Susan: "For a lot of reasons: burn out . . . September 11th, which was difficult. I'm a handsome lady, which makes me a tough sell . . ." (I-2-13).

9. Susan: “I see that John Cameron Mitchell is on the board of this festival thing. Do I get to meet him if I do you little show?” (I-2-14).
10. During the song “An Original Musical” (I-2-18), Blank Paper details for Jeff what it will take to get an original musical produced on Broadway, based on the current industry ideologies concerning what kinds of shows work well commercially. The characters examine what Jeff and Hunter are trying to accomplish, and relate it to what has and hasn’t worked on Broadway before (I-2-17 through 21).
11. The song “Part of It All” allows the boys to fantasize about their life after they achieve success. This song is full of social and ideological references to things that Jeff and Hunter (and their Broadway culture, as well as society at large) hold in high regard, like “Being fine with splurging on the cable,” and doing “a trendy photo shoot for a homo magazine” (I-5-30).

References to Other Social Ideologies

1. Hunter: “She was a zesty mess in a dirty dress.... But, it kind of freaked me out” (I-1-3).
2. Jeff: “Well, trannies need their protien too” (I-1-3).
3. Hunter: “Trannies stealing shrimp, Mary Stout hit by a hot dog cart . . . it’s all too much sometimes” (I-1-3).
4. Jeff: “Only in New York kids . . . only in New York” (I-1-3).
5. Susan: “For a lot of reasons: burn out . . . September 11th, which was difficult. I’m a handsome lady, which makes me a tough sell . . .” (I-2-13).

6. Susan: “Um . . . I’ve got nothing to complain about. I make good money. It’s not like I have to work in the salt mines” (I-2-13).
7. Heidi: “Is it just me or did it get like three degrees gayer in here?” (I-2-14).
8. Susan: “When we come up with a good drag queen name we text it to each other” (I-2-15).
9. Hunter: “And, apparently people don’t like having surf and turf spilled on their formal wear. *(Sigh.)* Total nightmare. Can we please get rich and successful soon? Me no likey catering” (I-2-17).
10. Jeff: “Did you just call me a cracker? Is this character black?” (I-2-18).
11. Heidi: “She’s [Susan is] so downtown and funky and sassy” (I-6-38).
12. Susan: “She’s [Heidi is] so uptown and fancy and Broadway” (I-6-38).
13. Hunter: “My writing is like a drag queen, fabulous late at night, but in the daytime, not so much!” (I-7-42).
14. Hunter: “Both of you take off your fucking shirts, so we can sell some tickets to the show” (I-9-56).
15. Hunter: “I’m putting out a video ‘press release’ on YouTube that *[title of show]* is gonna open on Broadway” (I-11-73).
16. Jeff (in reference to Number 15): “Well that should seal the deal” (I-11-73).
17. Hunter: “Someone from New York One must be watching the *[title of show]* show, because during this week’s ‘OnStage’ telecast they actually mentioned that we might be moving to Broadway” (I-11-73).

18. Susan: “I’m gonna go on YouTube and announce that I want a golden pony” (I-11-74).
19. Jeff: “This morning we got an invitation to perform at this Garden Party event to kick-off Gay Pride Week, and I think we should do it” (I-11-74).
20. Hunter: “We’ve got another invite. [. . .] It’s to perform at the Actors Fund black tie gala” (I-11-75).
21. Jeff: “You guys, episode six of the *[title of show]* show has over 10,000 hits” (I-11-76).

The Authors and Their World

The interesting thing when exploring the authors and their world is that *[title of show]* is about its authors. Not only that, it is about its authors and their world during the time that the musical was written. One’s first instinct is to look at the text itself, which is full of references to real-life events and circumstances that touched the lives of the authors, which gives excellent insight into what was happening in their world (one can argue that if they decided to include bits and pieces of real life in their own play, then those bits and pieces are most important). Also, to some degree, I am able to speak of the world of the authors from experience, as they began work on *[title of show]* in the spring of 2004, when I was graduating college and preparing to move into their “world”: New York City. In many ways, I was discovering this world with fresh eyes and can comment on it with confidence and authority.

Also helpful in researching the world of a show written in the early part of the twenty-first century is the Internet. While there are few books (perhaps none) written

about the lives of these particular authors and their time period, since the early 1990s our history has been documented more completely on the Internet than ever before, and while authoritative, definitive texts have yet to surface on the world of the authors, one can easily find access to this world by searching the Web. An excellent place to begin is the *[title of show]* website.

Jeff Bowen was born on August 30, 1971, in Baltimore, Maryland, and says he “started goofing around on the stage in 7th grade” (qtd. in Parson). Although he never really considered making a it profession, Bowen received a BA in theatre and music from Stetson University in Deland, Florida. He only pursued acting as a career for “a few years in the early 1990s,” and was successful enough to work with organizations like The O’Neill Center, Manhattan Theatre Source, Ars Nova, the Vineyard Theatre, and the Actors Fund (“Who’s in Show”). He also found himself on a South-American tour of *The Who’s Tommy* (Bell and Bowen 1-2-13) before making the difficult decision to pursue other areas of the theatre business. Bowen says,

My ego wanted to stay in the ring so badly, but at the end of the day, I just was not feeling fulfilled as an actor back then. But, deep down I knew that acting never goes away. The opportunities would always be there and having made the decision to fully commit to different career paths made performing fun for me again. It was a tough decision but one that I’m so thankful I made. (qtd. in Parson)

As a result, he worked in talent management, at Davis Spyllos Managment, for several years. He also started his own “theatrically focused” Internet design company, Late August Design, which he still runs today. Before *[title of show]*, Bowen composed music for several productions at New York’s PS 122, Dixon Place, and for the film, *Boat Mime*. He is also an avid birdwatcher.

Hunter Bell was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and was raised in Wilson, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia. Bell says he “did plays in high school and it’s just where [he] felt most comfortable.” When asked when he made the decision to pursue it professionally, Bell cannot cite a clear-cut moment in time, but says, “. . . I ended up at Webster University in a conservatory, and began working on my BFA so I guess in my decision to go through that program, that was a choice to give this a try” (qtd. in Parson).

Like Bowen, Bell worked in regional theatres across the country, including an appearance in the 1999 Paper Mill Playhouse productions of *Rags*. He began writing plays opposite his day job (packing book boxes) because he was uninspired by the kind of work people were paying attention to. Broadway was entering a trend, which brought “juke-box musicals” and adaptations of blockbuster films to the stage, and creativity seemed to be lacking in the industry by many actors, authors, and theatre-goers:

[. . .] A lot of artists whose work I admire is sort of self-generated, Eddie Izzard, Margaret Cho, Ricky Gervais, Lily Tomlin, Christopher Guest, Rosanne [*sic.*] . . . these are all people who inspire me because they create great material for themselves . . . they didn’t necessarily wait for someone else to do it for them . . . (qtd. in Parson)

Bell says he enjoys the ownership of creating his own material, and has written numerous scripts for the stage, television, and film (“Who’s in Show”).

Conveniently included with the script are eight pages of notes from the authors on the show in general, and specific moments of the script that may need clarification for some actors and directors. Bell says that Bowen and he made an agreement to write up until the deadline of the New York Musical Theatre Festival, much as it is laid out in the first scene of the show. Bell remarks, “We just began to write. In my tiny New York

apartment, Jeff and I would meet and brainstorm and write. Very early on we found that what made us think and laugh and write the most was writing about writing. So we kept on writing . . . and writing . . . and writing” (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”).

Bell admits that the process of getting the show to Broadway was “a dream come true,” and that ultimately, *[title of show]* “is about friendship and that dream.” When pondering what the show is about, Bell gives a plot synopsis: “[. . .] At its heart, this show is about four friends. It’s about how friendships are tested and changed when life happens, when new opportunities are revealed. [. . .] It’s about risk and learning to be true to yourself and to your friends . . . your chosen family” (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”).

Admittedly, he says the show is not a documentary, but a dramatization of the events that happened in the spring and summer of 2004. There are moments of creative construction that help to make this story “work” onstage as a musical. Bell cites author and cartoonist Lynda Barry as a major influence on the genre of the piece, and borrows her word, “autobiofictionography” to describe *[title of show]*.

Additionally, one piece of commentary stands apart from that of other authors, actors, and directors. Bell says that he and Bowen took painstaking effort to capture the natural flow of conversation in their script: “We wanted to explore if there was beauty and entertainment and humor and life in the seemingly mundane. The original cast worked extremely hard on stripping away performance habits and gimmicks and things we had relied on in the past that ‘worked’ for us as actors” (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”). The original authors/actors took note on what a task this was for them, and it will be an important step to follow in any subsequent production.

In looking at the parallels between the world of the authors and their playscript, it is first important to begin with what life was like for them before they started to write this piece. Both Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen were actors who had let their passion for performance slide to the background of their lives. This is not uncommon for actors who are trying to make a living in New York City, and it certainly is not a testament to a lack of talent or dedication. Many actors find the audition circuit to be challenging, and may wait several years before receiving even a callback. During this time, it becomes necessary to make money to support oneself, not only to pay for the basics like rent, food, and utilities, but also to pay for the costly rituals that go along with honing one's acting craft (i.e. voice lessons, dance classes, etc.). Often times actors end up doing what they are not passionate about just to get by: waiting tables, temp work, or even working inside the theatre industry in jobs like merchandise retail, ushering, dressing, or management.

For actors like Bell and Bowen, who were lucky enough to find regional work that repeatedly took them outside of New York City, instability and the lack of a feeling of "home" may be two reasons some choose to pursue other avenues of fulfillment. In the early part of the twenty-first century, with modern conveniences like smart phones and the rise of the Internet, it is rather easy for a regional or touring actor to still feel a sense of home in New York City. It was not long before that—as recently as the mid to late 1990s—when booking a regional job meant dealing with inconveniences like finding a respectful, reliable person to sub-lease one's apartment, who would forward mail on a regular basis so that checks could be sent to pay bills on time. Also, living out of a

suitcase without the comforts of personal space can start to wear on even the most dedicated of actors after a time.

This kind of reality sets in for actors who are trying to “make it” in New York, and many lose their creative drive. Some leave the city altogether, and make a fresh start in other parts of the country, perhaps back in their hometown. Luckily, Bell and Bowen did not. Their lack of enthusiasm for their careers only fueled a desire to create something by themselves; to create a show that they could star in—to ensure work for themselves; whether or not this was their goal, it was the result.

Also at this time, the Broadway community was suffering a staggering setback after the events of September 11, 2001. Tourism was down, and show tickets were not selling. Producers were (and still are, to some degree) frightened to put their money behind anything that was not a recognizable commodity. Musicals with little creative integrity like *Good Vibrations* and *Mamma Mia!* were funded, based on their songbooks’ already-established popular appeal, while unknown works like *Bare: A Pop Opera* (a completely original musical that offers a chilling social commentary) were left without the backing they needed to survive. Members of the Broadway community were frustrated—even angry. Many feared the commercialism of Broadway was going to suffocate the creative nature of the art form’s origins.

Textually, these themes are evident in the script right from the start. Heidi and Susan, upon meeting each other, share sobering stories of their deteriorating involvement in the theatre community:

HEIDI. So you've stopped auditioning?

SUSAN. Pretty much.

HEIDI. Do you perform at all anymore?

SUSAN. I do stuff with these wieners, and stuff I write, but I sort of stepped off the showbiz ride.

HEIDI. Really? Why?

SUSAN. For a lot of reasons: burn out . . . September 11th, which was difficult. I'm a handsome lady, which makes me a tough sell, plus, I've got the paralyzing stage fright and the insecurities. (1-2-12 through 13)

Right away, the authors introduce shared feelings about “the business” for all the characters, including themselves. The exposition describes why the characters ended up in this position, and why the show was written: to combat an over-commercialized, limiting industry whose workers grow steadily unhappy.

In the show, real-life circumstances fuel the creation of a new musical, and this is exactly what happened in the spring of 2004, as the conditions in the authors' world had created the perfect storm for what the authors were about to create. There are countless other parallels between the authors' world and the play's, but to analyze each textual parallel between the authors' world and the one they have created in *[title of show]* would require one to launch into a script analysis, which is featured in other areas of this dramaturgy (see “World of the Play” section, below). This section explores the authors' state-of-being as well as the circumstances in their world that influenced them to begin work on a new project.

World of the Play

Connections

The first connection I made to *[title of show]*, during its off-Broadway run at the Vineyard Theatre, was its immediate reference to my personal life. Looking back, what

initially struck me was the fact that, for the first time in my knowledge of and history with musical theatre, a piece about my world had been written. The current events mentioned, the real-life people the actors gossip about, and the chat boards they become obsessed with were familiar. As much as I loved *The Phantom of the Opera* growing up, I do not know what it was like to work in an opera house in Paris at the turn of the century. I was not present during the student conflicts that led to the events portrayed in *Les Misérables*, nor was I a mine worker in depression-era Nevada like the characters in *Crazy for You*. However, I do know what it feels like to move to New York to pursue the dream of theatre. I know how crazy people can accost you while you dine on an outdoor patio in Chelsea, and I know the plight of the actor who continually falls short of getting that “understudy/ensemble/off-stage singer/dance captain/assistant stage manager track” (I-2-12). The connection I made right away was: this could be me.

Some have called [*title of show*] too “insiderly” (see “Production History,” below). Perhaps it is. Few people outside the theatre industry would recognize the references, but for me, these connections have allowed me to develop a deep affection for the piece. Within the first five minutes of witnessing replicas of myself onstage, I knew the musical would become more than just a favorite. This is a musical about me—about all of us in the theatre—and it is definitely a story worth telling.

My next personal connection occurred a few months later, while working in a restaurant in Hell’s Kitchen, near the theatre district. Heidi Blickenstaff, one of the original cast members, who, at the time, was part of the original cast of *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway, began to frequent our local hangout after her performances, and

it was not long before I began to talk to her, in the familiar way that waiters converse with their best patrons. Heidi was more than happy to indulge my enthusiastic questions about being part of the show, and since the show had not yet made it to Broadway, she was excited herself about the possibilities of its growth and development.

This connection, on a human level, is responsible for escalating my respect for *[title of show]* even further. It is one thing to watch something incredible occur on stage, but to be close to someone who was a part of the experience offers a new perspective on a show's labor of love. It is a way to look at the material from the inside; to see the piece not just as "a fun show that I relate to," but as a journey still in the process of reaching its climax. It serves as another "way in" to the "insidery-ness" of the show.

Lastly, to watch the piece achieve its own dreams was astounding. Empathizing with the dreams of the creators, who composed an original show that made it to Broadway, was natural. To be there during the first Broadway preview to welcome the actors to success—actors who are representative of my friends and me—made me feel like a part of the piece. These deeply personal connections to this musical are what attracted me to looking at it as a piece worthy of a thesis production.

Peter Felichia, of the *Star-Ledger* in Newark, New Jersey, offered this connection in a review of a recent regional production of *[title of show]*: "[this show] is the great-grandson of those Mickey-and-Judy 'Let's put on a show!' movies." As previously discussed, *[title of show]* is a musical about a musical, and it has been very interesting to explore the connections between it and other pieces about theatre. Among my favorite shows are several that reference the theatre. Even two that have already been mentioned

in this section are implicitly theatrical: *The Phantom of the Opera*, the show that first inspired me to pursue musical theatre, is about the mysterious ghost that haunts the Paris Opera House; *Crazy for You* is about a New York producer stepping in to save a decrepit theatre in Deadrock, Nevada. Other connections are found in shows like *Curtains*, *Applause*, *Noises Off*, and *Kiss Me Kate*. All contain the “Let’s put on a show!” inspiration.

Relevance of this Work to a Contemporary Audience

The relevance of this piece to a contemporary audience may seem obvious, since it is such a new piece of theatre. Not much has changed since the show’s journey, which began in 2004 and came to a climax on Broadway in 2008. It could be argued that, due to the show’s rather short run on Broadway, it is still finding its apposition to today’s audience. However, whether or not the show is new or old is not material. It still has relevance to today’s audience, perhaps even more so, since it was *written* for today’s audience. *[title of show]* “holds a mirror up to nature” for its audience. Some of the specifics in the piece may be too obscure for the average audience member to appreciate, but the themes are universal and should be familiar to most anyone.

First, each character onstage is a true “average Joe.” There are no kings and queens or talking animals. *[title of show]* deals directly with average people making their way through the world, while trying to fit in and stand out at the same time. They perform common tasks: talk to each other on the phone about current events, support each other in crisis, come down hard on each other when someone’s bubble needs bursting. Additionally, the intricately casual feel of the language supports the characters.

The writers used great caution to ensure that the words each character uses are actually his or her own. Listening to a well-executed scene from the show should resemble listening in on a friend's free and casual conversation. This allows the audience to immediately relate to the characters, whether or not they understand the subject matter, which in turn guides them deeper into the world of the show.

Next, *[title of show]* addresses problems that are relevant to most modern audiences. None of the characters is wealthy, or feels ambiguous about money. One even says that he is "ass-broke" (I-5-30) and has taken to searching *Craigslist* for random jobs just to get by (I-10-70). In a weak economy, with relatively high unemployment rates, contemporary audiences will understand their situations. The show's message to keep pursuing one's dreams even when times get difficult offers comfort that, while this specific case highlighted in *[title of show]* may be atypical, things are going to be okay (see connections to Depression-era movie musicals in "Review of Literature," Chapter I).

Also prevalent is the idea that the closer one becomes to being successful, the more one's integrity is challenged. Should one "sell out" to people that might bring success? Would it be easier to alter one's dreams slightly for the sake of "getting it right?" Whether one is talking about writing a Broadway show, or climbing the corporate ladder, the idea is universally present. Ultimately, the writers' failures in their own integrity begin to tear their friendship apart, and they realize that it is better to have integrity than to compromise their values for success.

Finally (and perhaps unintended by the authors) is the show's positive depiction of non-traditional relationships. With recent outbreaks of teen bullying attached to sexual

identity, and teen suicide as a result, this nation's battle for equality is reaching a tumultuous boiling point. Organizations like The Trevor Project and the It Gets Better Project encourage citizens to put an end to this kind of discrimination and hatred. There is no longer one idea of the family unit. One by one, more states are recognizing the constitutional discrimination concerning same-sex marriages, and are changing the law to right this injustice. In today's world, Americans must be accepting—tolerant, at the very least—of everyone's relationships. While none of the characters in *[title of show]* are in a relationship with one another, the friendships depicted are exemplary for an audience dealing with tolerance and equality. The two lead characters are best friends, and homosexual. Together with their two female friends, the cast offers the love, support, and respect that should be representative of the majority of relationships in America.

Production Updates

This production was not updated, in terms of setting or time period, to align with the concept and intention. The original setting (one sparse room) is ambiguous enough, which allows not only for the show itself to utilize multiple locations, but also for each audience member to mentally set the show wherever he/she would like. With numerous New York references in the script, it is important that the audience believe the show takes place somewhere in New York, even if the specific address is left undetermined.

Other Explorations

This script is laden with real-life references to people, places, organizations, etc., and it is important that the director, actors and production team are familiar with all of the references. It is much more important that the actors understand every reference, whether

or not the audience does. In order to play the text as realistically as possible, and to give an honest delivery, the cast must comprehend each nuance of its text. General definitions are included in the glossary, but a complete understanding will call for deeper exploration into these terms and references. A few of the major categories are listed below.

Modern Musical Theatre Performers

The list of people referenced in the script that the average audience member will not recognize is long (and also included in the glossary). It will be important to know just as much about these people as the characters do, or the references will seem artificial and forced, which should be avoided at all costs.

Esoteric New York Theatre Productions

Almost fifty flop Broadway musicals are rattled off in the lyrics to “Monkeys and Playbills” alone. Jeff’s character certainly has an appreciation for these shows, and whether or not he has seen them, he knows a little bit about each one. The actors should know just as much about each show, especially the musicals referenced outside of the song lyrics to “Monkeys and Playbills,” which are given more weight. Heavier references require deeper understanding.

YouTube Postings by the Original Cast

The [title of show] Show is a first-hand account by the authors and cast that documents the challenges faced in trying to get a show to Broadway, and is critical to the overall understanding of the piece. The material is briefly dramatized, yet highly condensed and adapted, in the second half of the play. A deeper understanding of the

impact *The [title of show] Show* had on the fate of the musical requires a viewing of the episodes.

Organizations

Complete knowledge of how the organizations mentioned in the script function to promote the development of new musical theatre pieces is necessary. It not only provides the actors with a realistic view of their world, but it helps them facilitate the feeling of immediacy and urgency needed for the lofty endeavors of the characters. The audience must get a sense of “if-this-play-doesn’t-get-picked-up-it-is-over,” which drives the characters to push onward. The authors and original cast have put a great deal of themselves into the work, and its survival means a lot; not only in terms of their success, but also on a personal level as well. The actors and production team need to take the time to learn how the show moved through its different incarnations, from theatre group to theatre group, in order to build on and layer the script during the rehearsal process.

Pop Culture (1970s—Present)

Understanding that popular culture is commonly (even overly) referenced in typical New York gay vernacular is important, especially when it comes to placing too much emphasis on each and every reference. It is not only important that the actors know what they are talking about, but they must also know that not every reference is necessarily important—or even relevant. This is part of the authors’ exploration into how people speak to each other, and should be dealt with using great care.

Production History

The production history of *[title of show]* is incredibly intriguing as there have been three major, yet surprisingly unique, productions of the show by the original team. Written and developed during the spring of 2004, the show's first major run was during the inaugural season of the New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF) in the fall of that year. Its next step was an extended run at the Vineyard Theatre in New York City from February through October of 2006. Lastly, it enjoyed a short Broadway run of thirteen previews and 102 performances from July until October, 2008. Below, the development of each of these three major productions featuring the original creative team is addressed.

[title of show] was conceived by writers and friends Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell after Bowen received information on a new musical theatre festival taking submissions for its first season. As found on its website, NYMF's mission is:

[To provide] a launching pad for the next generation of musicals and their creators to ensure the continued vitality of America's greatest art form. [They] discover, nurture, and promote promising musical theatre artists and producers at all stages of development, and inspire a diverse audience through vibrant, accessible, powerful new work. ("Mission," *New York Musical Theatre Festival*)

NYMF's mission statement also gives credit to the independent film movement for inspiring its creators to develop a venue where new musicals and up-and-coming talent can find the support needed to "hone their craft and their musicals, by realizing their shows in three dimensions before a live and responsive audience [. . .]"

Going back even earlier than the independent film movement, NYMF's history really began in the early 1980s, when a struggling economy threatened the future development of musicals. Broadway producers leaned heavily toward star-driven British

imports and revivals of well-known classics, and unrecognized writers found almost no work in the professional industry. This dire situation led to the 1983 foundation of the National Music Theater Network, by actor Tim Jerome, which touted lofty goals to organize a “grassroots” network of musical theatre professionals who could identify new writers and scripts, and breathe life into them by offering a public reading series to attract potential producers.

While this approach helped to save a threatened industry for the next two decades, in 2004, another major dilemma hit the commercial musical theatre industry:

The cost of producing a Broadway musical now frequently exceeds \$12 million, with the price of a single orchestra ticket climbing to \$120 [million] and beyond. Readings—now endemic to the theatre industry—can no longer be counted on to attract the notice needed to lift a project to production. Musical theatre, a collaborative and three-dimensional art form, needs to be seen, not just heard. (“History”)

The National Music Theater Network rose to the challenge again, and created the New York Musical Theatre Festival, which gives a home to thirty new musicals for one month every fall. The endeavor effectively allowed fledgling musical theatre artists to showcase work—live, onstage, in a fully-mounted production—to the paying public and industry professionals, who could further the life of these new, original musicals.

It is important to remember that the first draft of *[title of show]* was written in three weeks—between the time when the authors found out about NYMF, and the time submissions were due. So, striving to be accepted by a platform that was fighting to give a voice to young, creative, and original talent, *[title of show]* was developed, quite literally, from that same backstory. Whether Bowen and Bell kept NYMF’s mission at the forefront of their writing consciously, or if their two agendas merely paralleled

coincidentally due to common frustrations in the theatre world, they tried to break tired musical theatre conventions whenever possible. They created an original piece for this new forum that was aimed at separating the industry from the detrimental familiarities that were fast preventing it from stretching its legs onto new developmental ground.

A workshop of *[title of show]* was held at the Manhattan Theatre Source the summer before the festival, produced by Laura Camien, featuring Jeff Bowen, Hunter Bell, Susan Blackwell, and Stacia Fernandez, each playing themselves. Fernandez was subsequently offered another acting job and was unable to continue with the show's development into the NYMF performances (Berresse). Heidi Blickenstaff was brought in to play the role of Stacia for the six festival performances, beginning September 22, 2004, at the Belt Theatre on 37th Street, and the authors would later re-write the role to focus on her persona completely (this event did not find its way into the final script, although similar replacement subject matter did).

After its successful run, and the success of NYMF's initial season, producer Kevin McCollum agreed to further the life of the musical. After a year of development and revision, including performances at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut, and Ars Nova in New York City, the Vineyard Theatre invited *[title of show]* to be part of their 2006 season line-up.

During this developmental period, many changes were incorporated. Five songs had been added since the festival performances in 2004 and one additional song had been re-worked from a duet into a solo. The plot progressed to include what had happened during the show's run at the New York Musical Theatre Festival, including a conflict

between the two female characters in the show, and general tensions among cast members as they were pressured by the uncertainty of the development of the show off-Broadway.

By the end of *[title of show]*'s scheduled run at the Vineyard (a nearly two-month run, from February 26 to April 24, 2006), the administrators at the Vineyard announced that it would enjoy an extended run after the season was complete, and would re-open on July 14, to run through October 1. It was during this extended off-Broadway run that I had the pleasure of seeing *[title of show]* for the first time.

Several months after closing at the Vineyard, creators Bowen and Bell, unhappy with the progress of the show following its off-Broadway run, decided to do something innovative and perhaps a little risky: they created a web series called *The [title of show] Show*, which featured the original cast members as well and friends and fans of the authors and their show. On its pilot episode, Bowen and Bell announced preemptively that the show was transferring to Broadway. At the time, however, it was actually not transferring to Broadway, and developmental talks had ceased. Nevertheless, Bowen, Bell and the rest of the team started researching their "mission:" to find an available Broadway theatre and funding for the show's transfer. Word started to spread amongst New York theatre professionals, and soon the show garnered the interest of enough producing players that it was announced (on Episode 8) that *[title of show]* would indeed transfer to Broadway, largely due to the underground success of *The [title of show] Show*, and the interest it generated within the industry ("Episode").

The web series continued as the team rehearsed for their Broadway debut, developing the show further to include the events that transpired between the off-

Broadway run at the Vineyard and its Broadway opening at the Lyceum Theatre on 45th Street, including the creation of *The [title of show] Show*. Finally, after four years of development, *[title of show]* began previews on Broadway on July 5, 2008, and officially opened on July 17. Many of those who helped the show grow along the way returned as producers: Kevin McCollum, Laura Camien, The Vineyard Theatre, Kris Stewart (founder of NYMF). Roy Miller, who was familiar with producing little-known works on Broadway, after producing *The Drowsy Chaperone* in 2006 (“Roy Miller”), came on board to offer additional support as producer.

The cast, from NYMF to Broadway, has always been the same, featuring Jeff Bowen, Hunter Bell, Susan Blackwell, and Heidi Blickenstaff. Also, Larry Pressgrove, the show’s sole on-stage musician and musical director, is an ever-present character, who delivers several lines from behind the piano, while Michael Berresse, Jeff Bowen’s life partner, has served as director of all the show’s incarnations.

Conventions used in all three of the show’s developmental productions have been consistently simple. The set conjured the image of a rather bare New York space—either an apartment or empty rehearsal room. Furnishings include, as quoted in the song “Nine People’s Favorite Thing,” only “four chairs and a keyboard,” each with its own distinct character to match one of the four actors, and limited appropriate props that come and go as necessary, all realistic in appearance.

One playful convention used during the three productions was the recorded voiceovers by various New York stage celebrities on an answering machine. Used during transitions between scenes and songs, the recordings depict messages left by Broadway

stars who continually decline Bowen and Bell's offer to star in their show. Celebrities who loaned their voices to the recordings include Idina Menzel, Marin Mazzie, Sutton Foster, Emily Skinner, Victoria Clark, and Christine Ebersole. This convention was written out of the licensed version of the script, and was replaced with voice messages from the cast to each other as the show advanced from stage to stage. This allows regional productions to utilize the same transitional conventions without having to license the voice recordings from R&H Theatricals. While this choice is functional, it may be far less entertaining than hearing, say, an angered Christine Ebersole berate the show's authors for tracking her down to bother her about starring in their unknown show. Legally and financially, though, the decision to cut the celebrity voice-overs makes sense, especially since the show is now being produced all over the world, and many audiences outside of the New York theatre crowd may not know the Broadway celebrities.

The reviews for the three productions of *[title of show]* have been generally mixed, with the positive reviews leaning toward an appreciation of the craft and genre: "Fanciful metatheatrics aside, *[title of show]* is at heart a postmodern homage to the grand tradition of backstage musicals like *Babes in Arms*, *Kiss Me, Kate* and *A Chorus Line...*" (Isherwood). Negative reviews have often criticized the show's somewhat fictitious depiction of its own creation, branded to the public as truth:

In the climactic anthem to individuality, Bowen sings, 'We can either follow our instinct / Or take advice from every Joker / We can either be distinct / Or wind up merely mediocre.' Powerful sentiments, but empty ones given the nature of the bargains time has shown Bowen and Bell willing to broker to get their break on Broadway. (Murray)

Distance from the original production provides the ability to understand exactly what the musical is really about; all conventions aside. As the authors say in their notes, *[title of show]* does not celebrate mere self-reflection, but a loftier message altogether: “It’s about not being afraid to dream out loud and killing Vampires. It’s about risk and learning to be true to yourself and to your friends . . . your chosen family” (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”).

With the commercial licensing of the show, other casts and productions have been able to develop the positive themes of this show further. While the original cast’s message may have been lost somewhat in the novelty of the production, an alternate cast is not obscured by the novelty that the praxis of “actors-as-themselves” creates. New casts are able to root out what the show is really about and celebrate the core message. Since being commercially licensed in 2009, *[title of show]* has been produced in cities as far away as Sydney, Australia. Other productions include Brisbane, Australia; Toronto, Canada; Sacramento, California; Denver, Colorado; and, most closely to New York, New Brunswick, New Jersey (“Current”). Productions range from professional regional theatre companies to community theatre productions on the local level to educational production in colleges. Most reviews reflect the mixed feelings of New York reviewers, perhaps leaning towards the side of appreciation. It seems a lack of insider understanding of the New York theatre industry references seems to stop critics from giving the show outright praise.

Overall, *[title of show]* is still finding its relevance in the musical theatre world, but has the potential to offer an amazing commentary on what it means to put oneself

“out there” in the world as a creative person, including the challenges and rewards that come with such an endeavor; sentiments which align nicely with the goal of this study. Whether people understand each obscure reference, or whether they just go along for the ride, this larger message of self-discovery, creative exploration, and celebration can ring true and clear, and is what should be intended in any production of the show.

Production History Pictures



Fig. 11. Photos from the Original Broadway Production, 2008. Rosegg, Carol. [title of show]. 2008. [title of show] - Official Site. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 12. Photos from the George Street Playhouse Production, 2010. Erickson, T. Charles. [title of show]. 2010. George Street Playhouse. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 13. Photos from Other Regional Productions

(top) Saperstein, Mark L. *[title of show]*. 2010. *SpeakEasy Stage Company*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(middle) Cooper, Karin. *[title of show]*. 2010. *Signature Theatre*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(bottom left) Tim Fuller. *[title of show]*. 2010. *Downtown Phoenix Journal*. 26 Feb. 2010. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

(bottom right) *[title of show]*. 2010. *Unicorn Theatre*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

Problems—Perceived and Otherwise

Problematic Moments or Scenes

1. The opening scene should have excellent pace and energy to start off the show, but not at the expense of establishing a real, relaxed connection between these two best friends who share everything with one another.
2. Be attentive to the tempo in “Two Nobodies in New York”; each new idea must be authentically heard by the two characters.
3. The break down “sweeter” section in “Two Nobodies...” needs to feel as real as possible, even more real than the feel of the opening phone call.
4. Pace is extremely important in “Scene 2: Meet and Greet.” There is a lot of exposition laid out in the midst of quick and casual banter. The audience should not get ahead of the actors. Also, this scene should pose a constant challenge for the actors to make sure they are *really* listening and truly reacting to each moment. It can get very burdensome to watch actors who are not listening to each other, and whose timing is not dead-on.
5. “I Am Playing Me” should not be “performed” for the audience, but rather for the amusement of Jeff and Larry (the accompanist). It should not come across as well-rehearsed at all, as this is the first time she is singing the song with the sheet music. Keeping it fresh is the challenge.
6. The “drop down” moment in Susan’s song “Die Vampire, Die” should be treated with great delicacy. Susan should not play any of this for laughs, even if the audience finds humor in her lines. They are very real and very serious to her.

7. A sense of urgency/fear/excitement should push the “Fillin’ Out the Form” scene.
8. During Part 3 of the Montage, the audience sees the first major shift in the maturation of the four main characters. These are now four adults who have worked hard to get their show to an off-Broadway production.
9. During “Awkward Photo Shoot,” it is important that the emotions the characters endure are the priority of the scene.
10. There is no resolution to the conflict that arises toward the end of the script when Heidi is cast in another Broadway show. The audience knows she is already committed to *The Little Mermaid*, and that Jeff and Hunter are considering replacing her. There is no clean resolution to this problem, so it must be made clear to the audience during her song “A Way Back to Then” that she is on board with this production, even though the audience is never told exactly how she is going to make it work.

Problematic Actions

1. The handling of the *Playbills* in “Monkeys and Playbills” needs to be simple, and clear. There is a lot of dialogue in this song, and it goes by fast. The props cannot get in the way.
2. The flying dream sequence must not be too “real.” The miming should remain simple.
3. Do not mire down the “lean in and kiss” moment with subtext about Jeff and Hunter. They are friends who do strange things to make each other laugh. Jeff’s

“What are you doing?” as he pulls away should be funny, and should not come from disgust, but surprise and confusion.

4. “Awkward Photo Shoot” must come across as a photo shoot clearly, even without a photographer on stage.

Problematic Character Interpretations

The greatest concern in the interpretation of each character is the idea of portraying a real person. The actor should not expect, or even strive for, a carbon copy of the real person, but stereotypes, broad character traits, or anything else that seems like an act must be avoided. Finding a balance between the personality of the actor and the character he/she is portraying is the key. There should be as much of each actor in their performance as possible, in order for the script to seem “real,” while still delivering someone else’s words and speech. This task may require many lengthy coaching sessions with the director.

Jeff, while a stickler for grammar and form, is highly concerned with how people perceive him, but must not be played as a “stick in the mud.” If played this way, the audience will not connect with him, and may end up disliking him.

Hunter’s humor and off-kilter way of behaving must stem from his comfort in his friendship with Jeff. The audience should be able to relate to his behavior, and never dislike Hunter despite the references to his laziness, tendency toward procrastination and affinity for reality television, nor should they reduce him to a simple homosexual stereotype, or dismiss him in any way because of the way he acts.

Susan cannot be played as “hard” all the time. The actor must find the vulnerability that the character is ever careful to hide in her awkward humor, which will provide a deeply layered, three-dimensional character.

Heidi’s commitment to another Broadway show must not make it seem that she is giving up on this show, or these people, or that she does not care. She must take the job because she is a working actress, and the future of her friends’ show is uncertain. It really hurts her to have to turn her friends down. If the actress only plays defensive as this conflict arises toward the end of the play, the audience will end up disliking her for it, which will skew their interpretation of her song “A Way Back to Then.” This song is meant to be completely sincere, and if the audience does not like her or her delivery of this key moment, they will not end up liking the show as a whole.

Problematic Character Interpretations by Actors Who Have Previously Done This Role

Very few actors have actually done these roles, since the show is so new. However, the act of listening and keeping the text fresh may become a problem for someone who has done the show before. Conversely, they may have mastered this technique. Also, establishing a bond with the new cast so this group authentically feels like four best friends could be a challenge, especially since the original actors were best friends. Attempting to recreate that feeling with new people might be challenging and take time and care.

Problems Posed by Casting Difficulties

Finding a cast who are the appropriate age and maturity levels may be difficult. These characters are not young, fresh-faced kids just out of college, but seasoned theatre

professionals, who bring a level of authority and maturity to the show, however silly they might act. It will be important to find this maturity in a cast that might be younger and not have the same mentality toward show business.

Problematic Representations of Race, Gender, Religion

While race plays no part in this story, and it is unimportant when casting the show, gender identity is written into the characters. We are to understand that Jeff and Hunter are gay, and Heidi and Susan are their straight female friends, but this is never to be made an issue for the audience. It is accepted from the very first moments of the show. This is not to say that straight males cannot be cast in these roles, but straight actors should avoid “playing gay” and should not play into any stereotypes whatsoever. It will be best to find the natural relationships and let the text do the talking, so to speak, when it comes to “playing gay.” Similarly, religion is not an issue addressed in this show, and is best avoided in imagery and staging. Again, it is not that these characters do not practice religion, it simply lies outside the relationships developed on stage and the storyline that unfolds there.

Problems Posed by the Themes of the Text

As mentioned before, it is important that the audience is not lost in the mountains of obscure Broadway references presented in the text. The story is about four friends, and the challenges they face as they realize their dream. It is not about having to know everything about Broadway to understand the show.

Although creative expression is the central theme of the text, audiences may not understand the universality of this theme. On the surface, the show seems to be about

people who make theatre. Perhaps an extension of the theme is easily afforded to other “creative types”—artists, musicians, etc. The intention, however, is much more ubiquitous. The focus should be on *what happens* during creative expression, not the specific outcome of that expression. This process and the resulting relationships, joys, fears, and outcomes should explore a very basic level of humanity that is present in everyone. Creative expression is experienced by all people, and this show allows us to look at its effect on the human experience. Keeping this in the forefront as the production is mounted will be very important.

Problems Posed by Genre

This piece is a musical about a musical, which is very appropriate. However, people may tend to view the musical genre as pure entertainment and may not be used to exploring deeper content within a musical production. Whatever preconceived notions about the genre an audience enters with will be a challenge to overcome in the storytelling. If the audience fails to absorb greater meaning than the literal action onstage, the full scope of what could have been drawn from the performance will not have been realized. Again, keeping the themes mentioned above at the forefront will help make sure an audience is with the show every step of the way.

Problems Posed by the Status of the Text

There is only one version of the text available, and no mainstream movie adaptations or revivals to cloud the audience’s mind with images they might remember from a previous version. Revised licensed versions of the text may include subtle changes, but none that are detrimental to the actors’ understanding of the piece.

Problems Posed by Dialects

The use of dialects is not necessary for this show. Casting someone with a natural dialect is perfectly acceptable, as very little backstory is told about the characters before the play begins, and each character could be from any number of places. What is most important is that the audience feels the “realness” of the characters, so embracing whatever is the natural cadence for each actor is best.

Problems Posed by Pronunciations

The small number of French phrases that occur at various points in the show could be troublesome for actors not fluent in French, but the occasions are so limited that minimal amount of work with the actor should be sufficient to produce a believable pronunciation. A second possible issue could be found in the pronunciation of names of real people mentioned in the script. A simple *Google* search (or a director who knows the named people) will be adequate to help with any pronunciation questions, and several have been included above, in the “Pronunciations” section of this chapter.

Problems Posed by Need for Adaptations

With the stationary setting of one sparse room, which can be any bare playing space that accommodates five people, four chairs, and a keyboard, the setting presents no problems that need to be adapted.

If possible, content should not be edited (i.e. vulgar language), as this would alter the authors’ message about creative expression. This censorship is addressed near the end of the show, during the “Change It, Don’t Change It” number, and the characters decide to forgo censoring themselves to achieve their desired tone. For those productions for or

by young people, a licensable “apropos” version of the script is available from R&H Theatricals, offering author-approved edits to improve accessibility to the show by a young audience or actors, including the removal of curse words and the restructuring of scenes and songs.

It is possible that some of the shows named during “An Original Musical” may need to be updated to convey appropriate information to the audience about what it is Jeff is trying to write, and the authors address this issue in the notes included with the script.

Problems Posed by Unusual Linguistic or Rhetorical Styles

There are a few times in the script when characters make up words or use slang. For example, in “Scene 2: Meet and Greet,” Susan says, “...I have me doots about doing a musical” (I-2-15). It is clear here that she is saying that she has her *doubts* about doing a musical, and is speaking in a casual, humorous style. Many of these moments include annotations by the authors to clarify any incorrect interpretation or pronunciation.

Problems Posed by Music or Need for a Musical Score

One musician is needed to play the part of the accompanist and music director, Larry. This is extremely accessible, especially for a musical, most of which call for small bands or large pit orchestras. The script suggests re-naming the character “Mary” if the musician is female.

Problems Posed by Scenic Requirements and Special Effects

The script does not require any explicit scenic elements or effects. In fact, the script makes it exceedingly clear that the set is dressed with “four chairs and a keyboard.”

The characters sing about it, so to add more would be to sabotage the piece itself. The majority of the scenes take place in one of the boys' apartments, with various other non-specific locations used as well. An open, generic space with lots of room and perhaps a few levels is best, without many scenic elements to get in the way of an audience's ability to suspend their disbelief that the characters are moving through the different locales.

Aside from sound cues (cell phone ringing, answering machine messages, etc.) there are no special effects needed. Actually, the authors note that during the flying dream sequence, "as much as [they] would have loved to be flown by Foy, extending [their] arms in front of [themselves] ala Superman represented the flying. [. . .] Probably best to leave the flying to Peter Pan and just get creative in [*title of show*]," which indicates that there is no need for special effects (Bell and Bowen, "Specific Notes").

Problems Posed by the World of the Play

The play takes place in contemporary Manhattan; hopefully the class structure and customs of the characters will be familiar to the actors. If the production is mounted outside of New York, it will be important for the actors to understand the pace and confidence of New Yorkers' lives, especially the life of an actor. The way they carry themselves, even when not at an audition, is important to capture in the show, and may be challenging for actors who have never been to New York. The fast-paced dialogue is an extension of these people's lives and the world they live in. It is also important to remember that these are not wealthy people by any means. They are struggling artists who dream of someday "splurging on the cable" (I-5-30). Keeping this in perspective will

help the actors play the change motion as the characters suddenly start to realize that their dreams are coming true.

Visual and Textual Responses to the Playscript

Non-Literal



Fig. 14. Non-Literal Collage by Mathew Hagmeier

Literal



Fig. 15. Authors Hunter Bell (left) and Jeff Bowen (right)
 (left) Mahoney, Michael. *Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen*. 2009. *SpeakEasy Stage Company*.
 Web. 9 Dec. 2010.
 (right) Rosegg, Carol. *Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell in [title of show]*. 2008. *Playbill.com*.
 Web. 9 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 16. People Used as Models for the Characters: Heidi, Susan, Jeff, and Hunter
 (top left) *Heidi Blickenstaff*. n.d. *Playbill.com*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(top right) *Susan Blackwell*. n.d. *SusanBlackwell.com*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(bottom) Berresse, Michael. *[title of show] Rocks*. n.d. *BlogwayBaby.com*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 17. Settings of the Play

(top left) dbeards3. *The Tenements of Hell's Kitchen on the Westside of New York City*. 2003. *WebShots.com*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(top right) *Vineyard Theatre*. n.d. *TheatreMania.com*. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

(middle) Minn, Michael. *Vineyard Theatre with [title of show] Poster*. 2006. *MichaelMinn.com*. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

(bottom) Schalchlin, Steve. *The Belt Theatre*. 2004. *BonusRound.com*. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.



Fig. 18. Images of Inspiration to the Play

(top left) *Tippy Turtle*. n.d. *CreativePro.com*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.

(top right) Collins, Andrew. *Seafood Mare, 8th Ave*. n.d. *About.com* Web. 10 Dec. 2010.

(middle left) Zielinski, Peter James. *Mary Stout at the [title of show] Premiere*. 17 July 2008. *BroadwayWorld.com*. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

(middle right) *Dinah Manoff*. n.d. *Fox Movie Channel*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.

(bottom left) Shepard. *Shubert Alley*. 2007. *Digital Alley*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.

(bottom right) Zielinski, Peter James. *Roma Torre*. 2008. *BroadwayWorld.com*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 19. Original Marketing Design of the Play
 [title of show] Logo. 2008. *BroadwayStore.com*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010.



Fig. 20. Regional Productions' Marketing Designs
 (left) Hovitch, Michael. *Title of Show Poster*. 2010. *The Ringwald Theatre*. Web. 20 Oct. 2012.

(right) *tos Final Poster*. 2010. *Yale Drama Coalition*. Web. 20 Oct. 2012.

*Applications***Technical Preparations**

After deciding this production of *[title of show]* would be sponsored by the University of Northern Colorado, it became necessary to pin down a performance venue on campus. A few options were explored, in and out of the College of Performing and Visual Arts—a lecture hall in Kepner Hall, home of the business school; the Norton Theatre black box in Gray Hall; and the production's eventual home, Frasier 63.

Frasier 63 is a concert band rehearsal room, with three curved tiers of built-in risers wrapped around one half of the room, surrounding a large open space (about twenty-four feet by twenty-four feet) suitable for arranging chairs for a concert rehearsal. At the front of this space is a Smart Classroom multimedia hub, including a stereo sound system, speakers, projector, and an automated screen that rolls up and down with the touch of a button, and accompanying input ports for computer connectivity. The room is carpeted and blue curtains hang on all walls, acting as a damper for the sound in the room, which, during band rehearsals, would be quite uncontrolled and reverberative if the cinder block walls were left uncovered. Also present is a locked storage closet, fire exit door leading directly outside, instrument lockers, and a grand piano.

A volunteer student stage manager was enlisted early on in the process, shortly after UNC was decided upon as the host of the production, and was incredibly useful in early technical preparations, providing pictures of the room, including a rough ground plan and detailed notes about the Smart Classroom technology. Through collaboration with the stage manager and other performing arts faculty, details were finalized about the

layout of the performance space to be created in Frasier 63. The tiered risers would be used as stadium seating for the audience, who would face the front of the room, thus creating a thrust theatre space of sorts, where actors could either play a proscenium-type scene upstage, or move downstage and be surrounded on three sides by audience members. It was decided early on that the appearance of the room needed little masking, as *[title of show]* is set largely in un-defined spaces and locales jump quickly from one place to the next, often with few or no obvious textual indications. On Broadway, this was accomplished with a minimalistic set reminiscent of a dingy New York City rehearsal room, so in this production, an open band rehearsal space would serve the same purpose nicely (e.g. see fig. 21).

An early problem encountered was the lack of a “backstage” space allowing for entrances and exits. The storage closet was an early option, but was discovered to be too full of expensive band equipment to house even one actor safely, and it was suggested that the production team avoid any liability of moving or re-storing this equipment in order to make the closet work as a viable off-stage space. This left the two doors provided by the room’s architecture: the entrance from the hallway (two sets of double doors on each end of a twelve-foot inner hallway, to prevent sound pollution into the outer hallway), and the fire exit to the exterior of the building. The fire exit did not sound an alarm when opened, but light pollution from outdoors posed a problem as it would interfere with onstage blackouts during performances (e.g. see fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Stage Manager's photo of Frasier 63

In collaborating with the head of the Musical Theatre department at UNC, three black bi-fold theatre flats were borrowed, which were used upstage left and right to mask the Smart Classroom hub and create an backstage space that could not only house off-stage actors, but served to mask the stage manager and the production's one crew member, who needed access to the Smart Classroom hub and light switches in order to run their cues. Various configurations of these flats were experimented with, and their final positioning was solidified only after the production team was able to move into the performance space in July (e.g. see fig. 22).

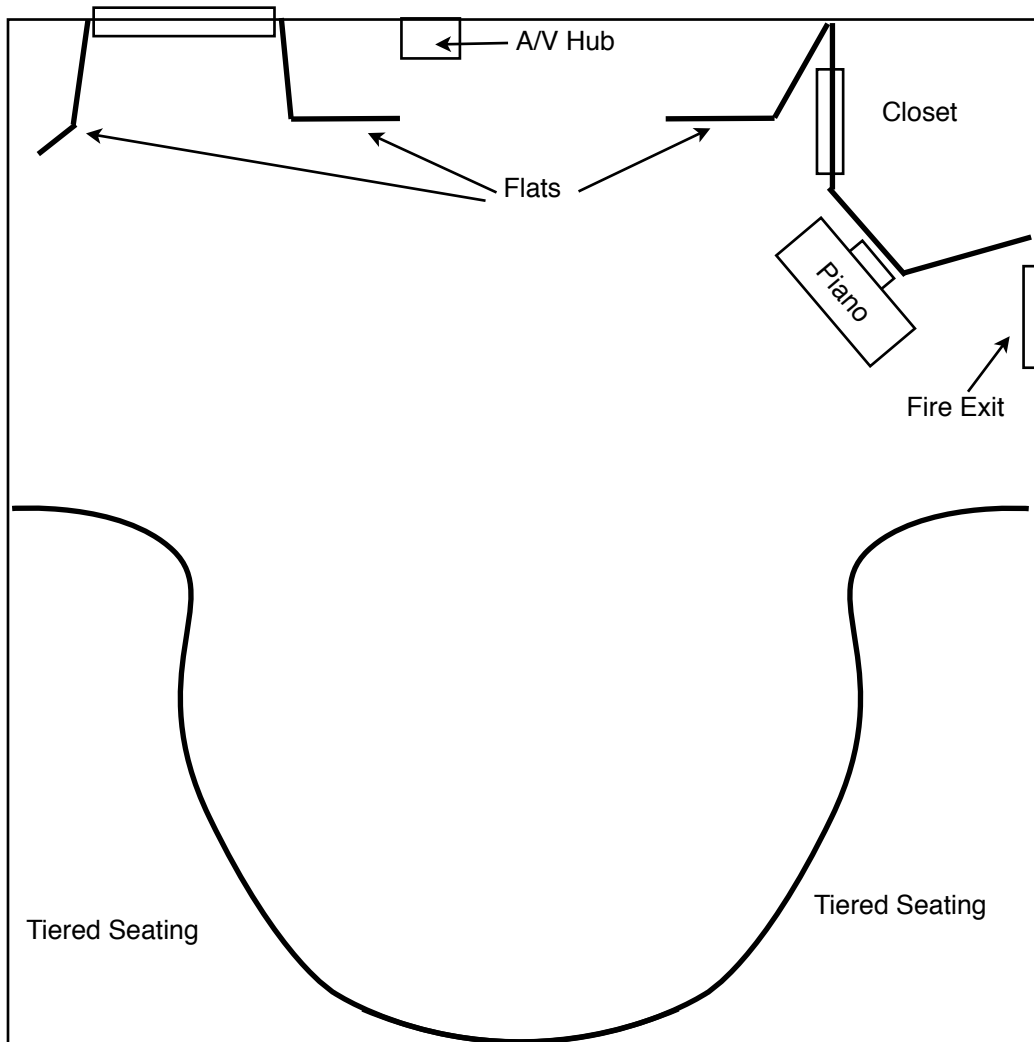


Fig. 22. Layout of Performance Space in Frasier 63

With the layout of the created performance space coming into focus, other technical preparations began remotely from New York City. As director and designer, it became necessary to prepare for the rushed production schedule from afar in order to allow as much time with the student actors as possible. This meant assembling sound cues, props, and designing the audio-visual components before traveling to Colorado. The Internet became a great search tool and allowed for easy assembly of most of the technical aspects. The few hand props necessary were either made, purchased cheaply, or

gathered from the homes of the production team. After downloading the necessary materials (sound files proved relatively easy to locate for free online, while assembling the covers to the forty-nine *Playbills* from flop Broadway musicals was the most daunting task), the cloud-based educational presentation-building tool *Prezi.com* served as the primary resource for incorporating unique audio-visual components to be used during the musical number “Monkeys and Playbills.” This component was completed in whole before rehearsals began, and featured an animation of the forty-nine *Playbill* covers mentioned in the song as well as custom drawings relating to the song’s narrative. The production stage manager then ran the presentation from a personal computer backstage in time with the live music during the production, utilizing the room’s Smart Classroom projector and screen.

Perhaps the most important element—vital to the show’s success—was finding a musical director who could also portray the show’s on-stage accompanist, Larry. With so little rehearsal time in July (four weeks to mount a musical is unusually fast, even by professional standards) it was necessary to enlist a musical director who could work with the students prior to the July rehearsals, so that they could start the process well-versed in the musical score. Through collaboration with Colorado contacts, a UNC staff member was introduced to the production team. This person was familiar with the student body in the musical theatre program, having taught vocal technique classes and private voice lessons at UNC for the previous two school years. After several emails and personal recommendations, it appeared that the production had secured a knowledgeable and talented musical director with a passion and fondness for the script and a rapport with the

students. She was available to work with the students several times during the month of June to teach them their vocal parts and to begin the process of orchestrating the musical direction of the show, and after reviewing the score, she felt comfortable being the show's on-stage accompanist (as suggested in the script, her character's name was changed from "Larry" to "Mary").

The one drawback outlined from the beginning of our collaboration was her previous commitment during the first two weeks of July, rendering her unable to attend rehearsals until halfway through the production period. This was problematic because to forgo music rehearsals with the cast during half of the production period would mean they would suffer vocally after a two-week break from exercising what they had learned with the musical director in June. A search began for a way to block and rehearse the show in its entirety without a live accompanist. Luckily, in a city full of musical theatre talent, finding an experienced accompanist to lay down rehearsal tracks was not an issue, and a recording of the score was made in full for the production team to rehearse with. These were immediately mailed to the musical director for review and to use as a reference while teaching the cast their music. The attention to detail with which the tracks were recorded was particularly impressive, and the musical director agreed they would serve as an excellent resource in her absence.

Also in collaboration with the musical theatre department, a keyboard was located and loaned to the production. It was determined that although Frasier 63 came equipped with a baby grand piano, such an extravagant instrument would not service the storytelling or the music in the best way possible. The electric keyboard and amplifier

were brought in, and the grand piano was moved out of the way to the extreme stage right side of the room, near the entrance.

During rehearsals in July, the cast were involved in character development conversations and were invited to brainstorm costume ideas for their characters based on clues given in the script. The casual realism of the show and its setting enabled the cast to supply the costumes for the show from their own closets, although final decisions were left to me, as director. Not much editing was needed, however, and for the most part the suggestions offered geared toward creating an acceptable color palate onstage.

For Hunter and Jeff, jeans were deemed most appropriate, although the cast determined that Jeff's wardrobe might lean toward a more put-together style than Hunter's due to his success as a web developer and his anal-retentive demeanor. To help translate this character contrast into their wardrobe, the cast chose to put Jeff in dark jeans, a crisp blue plaid button-down shirt, and new tennis shoes, whereas Hunter wore faded, worn jeans, a red t-shirt, a gray zip-up hooded sweatshirt, and fun plaid slip-on canvas shoes, indicative of what that cast thought one might wear in the comfort of one's own home on a day off from work.

The cast agreed that Susan and Heidi's wardrobe both should be dressier than the boys'. Susan is an office manager for an investment firm, and often has just come from there when she appears onstage. Instead of simply choosing plain business attire, the cast agreed that Susan's quirky sensibility and fun-loving demeanor would translate into her wardrobe much the same way Jeff's anal-retentiveness and Hunter's "slacker" mentality did. Thus, they chose to dress her in a purple and black, loudly-patterned blouse and

black slacks. Susan often discards her shoes, preferring to go barefoot, but the consensus was that she would wear a pair of black office pumps that she could slip on and off during the performance. Choosing which scenes she would wear them during, and tracking her footwear became a daunting, but laughable task.

The script indicates Heidi has just come from an audition upon her first entrance, so the choice was made to make Heidi as adorable, likable, and marketable as possible. The actress provided many options, which were tried at various points during the rehearsal process. Ultimately, it was decided what suited the character best were a pair of bright white jeans and a teal top which accentuated the actress' cleavage (references to this aspect of the character's anatomy are referenced in the script during the number "What Kind of Girl is She?"). Under this, the actress wore a nude, full-coverage bra necessary for the moment when Heidi is told to take her top off by Hunter. The moment lasts only a second, but special care was taken to make the actress feel as comfortable as possible, including letting her choose her own undergarment. For shoes, the actress wore pink wedge heels, accentuating her trendy, smart look.

Allowing the cast this expression of character through costuming helped in the overall goal of enabling an authentic self-expression onstage. While certain traits of the characters' personalities may have differed from or conflicted with the actors' own personality traits, each actor met the challenge to find an aspect of their own personality (i.e. their clothing) that related to their character's. For example, the actor portraying Jeff (a straight male college student) didn't know what it was like to be a gay, grammar-obsessed, book-smart composer-turned-web developer, but when he put on his crisp

button-down and new shoes, a creative parallel was drawn between the two; the actor was able to use his personal wardrobe as a grounding point for his character. Likewise, when the actress playing Susan put on her business attire and the actress playing Heidi donned her cutest, most eye-catching outfit, they behaved differently than they normally had, and each used this to authentically express herself creatively. As a director, this was an important and effective way to help the actors relate to their characters and to guide them toward developing their own personal expression of the material and the characters rather than succumbing to another's opinion, an impression, or stereotype of the character. In taking ownership of their character's clothing, then, the actors had a tangible relativity to the characters they were portraying that came from their own authentic life—one way to genuinely express themselves through their characters.

The four chairs used by the characters were chosen in much the same manner. After scouring the many rooms in Frasier Hall, faculty offices, and the students' own homes, the production team assembled a myriad of chairs with distinct design qualities. From this collection, the actors and production team chose a different chair for each character that fit their personality, character, and backstory. For Jeff, a professor's padded leather office chair with wheels was used, which spoke to his web-design background; the actor could easily imagine Jeff sitting in such a chair at a desk designing web pages all day. Hunter's chair had a wooden frame, curved back and green leather upholstery. Its unique look and classic, yet whimsical shape felt right for Hunter's character, who experiences major conflicting opinions and emotions during the show. Also, this chair's lack of wheels made moving it around on the carpeted floor laborious and awkward,

which, the actor decided, might be exactly how Hunter feels about developing the script throughout the show. Susan's chair was a different brand of rolling office chair, with burgundy-mauve upholstery and black arms. Heidi's chair was shiny pink plastic, and also had wheels. The actress borrowed this chair from her roommate, and felt that its bubblegum appearance fit Heidi's charming and effervescent personality.

Allowing the cast to be involved in these major technical preparations for the show (as much as possible) was an effective way for them to approach creative expression with a relatively small amount of the pressure they might feel during the tougher acting and scene work moments later on in the process, when they started to breathe life into the characters' dialogue. This proved to be a fun, open, and safe way to foster creative expression without the cast really even being aware that they were working on it, and would later serve to remind the cast of their personal connection to the material when they became frustrated and stuck as opening night neared.

Technical Resource Materials



Fig. 23. Stage Manager's reference photos of Frasier 63

Table 1: Scene Breakdown

Scene/Song	Jeff	Hunter	Heidi	Susan	Notes
Music 1: Untitled Opening Number	1	2	3	3	Numbers indicate the order in which the characters speak in the scene.
Scene 1: Phone Call 1	1	2			
Music 2: Two Nobodies in New York	1	2			A black line under only the character's name indicates an exit, while a black line under the entire scene indicates a Blackout.
Answering Machine Message 1		1			
Scene 2: Meet and Greet	4	1	2	3	
Answering Machine Message 2		1			
Music 3: An Original Musical	2	1			
Answering Machine Message 3			1		
Scene 3: Procrastibating	2	1			
Music 4: Monkeys and Playbills	3	3	2	1	
Scene 4: Post Monkeys	4	1	2	3	

Table 1: Scene Breakdown, continued

Scene/Song	Jeff	Hunter	Heidi	Susan	Notes
Music 5: The Tony Award Song	2	1	*	*	*In the scene, but frozen.
Scene 5: Pre "Part Of It All"	1	2	*	3	*In the scene, but with no lines. The women exit at the top of I-5-29. Mostly, this is a scene between the boys.
Music 6: Part Of It All	2	1			
Answering Machine Message 4				1	
Music 7: I Am Playing Me	2	4	1	3	
Scene 6: Bench Scene	1	3	2	4	
Music 8: What Kind of Girl is She?	*	*	2	1	*In the scene, but with no lines.
Scene 7: Dream Sequence; Music 9: Fying (Dream Underscore)	3	2	4	1	
Music 10: Die Vampire, Die!	2	2	2	1	
Answering Machine Message 5	1				
Scene 8: Filling Out the Form	1	2	4	3	

Table 1: Scene Breakdown, continued

Scene/Song	Jeff	Hunter	Heidi	Susan	Notes
Music 11: Filling Out the Form	1	2	1	3	
Scene 9: Mail It! Mail It!; Music 11A: The Mailbox	2	1	3	4	
Answering Machine Message 6					Kris Stewart (TDB Female voiceover)
Music 12: Montage Part 1: September Song	1	1	1	1	
Music 12A: Montage Part 2: Secondary Characters	*4	*3	2	1	*Tack the boys' entrance onto the next scene; rehearse the women alone.
Music 12B: Montage Part 3: Development Medley	2	1	3	3	
Scene 10: What Now?	4	2	3	1	End scene on I-10-70, before Hunter calls Jeff.
Music 13: Keeping the Ball in the Air	1	2			Rehearse this scene from page I-10-70, without the women.
Scene 11: Meet and Greet 2	1	3	2	4	
Music 14: Change It, Don't Change It	1	1	1	1	Scene ends <i>after</i> Answering Machine Message 7
Answering Machine Message 7	*	*	*	*	Sutton Foster voiceover *Actors are onstage, but frozen.

Table 1: Scene Breakdown, continued

Scene/Song	Jeff	Hunter	Heidi	Susan	Notes
Music 15: Awkward Photo Shoot	1	3	4	2	
Scene 12: Final Phone Call	1	2			
Music 16: A Way Back to Then	1	2	3	4	Heidi can rehearse the singing alone, and be added into the scene later.
Scene 13: Pre-9	3	1	2	4	
Music 17: Nine People's Favorite Thing	1	2	3	3	
Music 18: Finale	1	2	3	3	

Table 2: Props Schedule

Scene	Prop	#	Actor who brings it onstage	Page #	Actor who strikes it	Page #
Scene 1: Phone Call 1	Cell Phone	2	Hunter Jeff	1-1-2	Hunter Jeff	1-1-5
Scene 2: Meet and Greet	NYMF Info Packets	5	Hunter (holding from top of scene)	1-2-14	Jeff Hunter Heidi Susan	1-2-17
	Cell Phone	2	Susan Hunter	1-2-15	Susan Hunter	1-2-16
Scene 3: Procrastibating	Cell Phone	2	Jeff Hunter	1-3-22	Jeff Hunter	1-3-23
	Box with Playbills	1	Jeff (preset in blackout)	1-3-22	Heidi	1-5-29
	<i>Golden Apple</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Big Deal</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Hurry, Harry</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Marilyn</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Oh, Kay</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Sail Away</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>The First</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Band in Berlin</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Carrie</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Mother Earth</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Soon</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Working</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29
	<i>Wild and Wonderful</i> playbill	1	in box	1-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	1-5-29

Table 2: Props Schedule, continued

Scene	Prop	#	Actor who brings it onstage	Page #	Actor who strikes it	Page #
	<i>Dude</i> playbill	1	in box	I-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	I-5-29
	<i>Got Tu Go Disco</i> playbill	1	in box	I-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	I-5-29
	<i>Come Summer</i> playbill	1	in box	I-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	I-5-29
	<i>Censored Scenes from King Kong</i> playbill	1	in box	I-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	I-5-29
	<i>Merrily We Roll Along</i> playbill	1	in box	I-3-22	Heidi (in discard box)	I-5-29
	Box for Discarded Playbills	1	Jeff (preset in blackout)	I-3-22	Heidi	I-5-29
Music 4: Monkeys and Playbills	Writing Pad	2	Susan Heidi	I-3-23	Heidi (in box)	I-5-29
	Pencil	2	Susan Heidi	I-3-23	Heidi (in box)	I-5-29
Music 7: I Am Playing Me	Sheet Music	1	Heidi	I-5-32	Larry (Heidi gives it to him)	I-6-34
	Coffee Cup	1	Hunter	not in script	Hunter (in blackout)	I-7-39
Scene 6: Bench Scene	Take-Out Container w/ Burger, Fries & Pickle	1	Jeff	I-6-35	Jeff (in blackout)	I-7-39
Scene 8: Filling Out the Form	Writing Pad	1	Hunter	I-8-47	Hunter (in envelope)	I-9-54
	Pencil	1	Hunter	I-8-47	Hunter (in envelope)	I-9-54
	Copy of Script	1	Jeff	I-8-47	Hunter (in envelope)	I-9-54
	NYMF Application	1	Jeff	I-8-47	Hunter (in envelope)	I-9-54
	Legal Sized Manilla Envelope	1	Jeff	I-9-52	Hunter	I-9-54
	Cell Phone	2	Jeff Heidi	I-8-49	Jeff Heidi	I-8-49

Table 2: Props Schedule, continued

Scene	Prop	#	Actor who brings it onstage	Page #	Actor who strikes it	Page #
	Demo CD	1	Heidi	I-8-49	Hunter (in envelope)	I-9-54
Music 12: Montage Part 1: September Song	Cell Phone	2	Jeff Hunter	I-9-55	Jeff Hunter	I-9-55
Music 12B: Montage Part 3: Development Medley	Cell Phone	4	All	I-9-65	All (in pockets)	I-9-67
Scene 10: What Now?	Cell Phone	4	All	I-10-69	All (in pockets)	I-10-70, I-10-71
Music 13: Keeping the Ball in the Air	Video Camera/Tripod	1	Hunter	I-10-71	Hunter	I-11-73
Scene 11: Meet and Greet 2	Cell Phone	4	All	I-11-75	All	I-11-76
Music 14: Change It, Don't Change It	Feedback Notes	1	Hunter	I-11-77	Hunter	I-11-78
Scene 12: Final Phone Call	Cell Phone	2	Jeff Hunter	I-12-87	Jeff Hunter	I-12-89

Table 3: Technical Cues

Scene	Lights	Sound & A/V	Page #	Notes
Music 1: Untitled Opening Number	Lights up		I-0-1	Lights up at the top of the show.
Scene 1: Phone Call 1		Jeff's Ringtone	I-1-2	Ringtone plays when applause climaxes after opening number.
Music 2: Two Nobodies in New York	Blackout		I-2-10	Blackout after song.
Answering Machine Message 1		Message 1	I-2-10	Message plays during blackout.
Scene 2: Meet and Greet	Lights up		I-2-10	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
	Blackout		I-2-17	Blackout at the end of the scene.
Answering Machine Message 2		Message 2	I-2-17	Message plays during blackout.
Music 3: An Original Musical	Lights up		I-2-17	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
	Blackout		I-2-21	Blackout after song.
Answering Machine Message 3		Message 3	I-2-21	Message plays during blackout.
Scene 3: Procrastibating	Lights up		I-3-22	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
Music 4: Monkeys and Playbills		Screen down	I-3-24	Heidi presses the button to bring the screen down upon entering, during Susan's line, "You can do this, Hunter...unter...unter."
	Lights to half		I-3-24	Lights dim for slideshow on Susan's line: "Stay behind the image and write down what you see on your monkey ski trip. Ready? (cue) Go!"
		Slide show begins	I-3-24	Slide show begins on Susan's line: "Go!"
	Lights up		I-4-27	Lights back to full after the last line of the song: "And Playbills!" (cue).
Scene 4: Post Monkeys		Screen up	I-4-27	Susan cues the screen to go up after the group line: "Yay! We're here now! (etc.)"
Music 6: Part Of It All	Blackout		I-5-32	Blackout after song.

Table 3: Technical Cues, continued

Scene	Lights	Sound & A/V	Page #	Notes
Answering Machine Message 4		Message 4	I-5-32	Message plays during blackout.
Music 7: I Am Playing Me	Lights up		I-5-32	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
Music 8: What Kind of Girl is She?	Blackout		I-7-39	Blackout after song.
Scene 7: Dream Sequence; Music 9: Flying (Dream Underscore)	Lights flicker		I-7-39	Immediately after Blackout, lights begin to flicker as music starts.
		Flying Sequence	I-7-39	Flying Sequence sound cue begins on Hunter's line: "Cue the fog!"
	Lights up	SFX out	I-7-42	Lights return to normal and SFX abruptly stop on Hunter's line: "Oh fuck it."
Music 10: Die Vampire, Die!	Blackout		I-8-47	Blackout after song.
Answering Machine Message 5		Message 5	I-8-47	Message plays during blackout.
Scene 8: Filling Out the Form	Lights up		I-8-47	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
Scene 9: Mail It! Mail It!; Music 11A: The Mailbox	Blackout		I-9-54	Blackout after Heidi's line: "If the finished script is in that envelope, should we still be talking?"
Answering Machine Message 6		Message 6	I-9-55	Message plays during blackout.
Music 12: Montage Part 1: September Song	Lights up		I-9-55	Lights up after answering machine beeps.
		Laughter SFX	I-9-55	Laughter sound cue begins after Hunter's line: "So last night, a trannie stole my shrimp."
Music 12B: Montage Part 3: Development Medley	Blackout		I-10-69	Blackout after song.
Scene 10: What Now?	Lights up	Susan's Ringtone	I-10-69	Susan's phone rings once during the blackout, then once after the lights come up.
		Jeff's Ringtone	I-10-70	Jeff's ringtone plays a beat after Susan's line: "Bye." It only rings 1 1/2 times.

Table 3: Technical Cues, continued

Scene	Lights	Sound & A/V	Page #	Notes
Music 13: Keeping the Ball in the Air		Camera On SFX	I-10-7 2	Camera On sound cue plays after Hunter says: "Okay. Camera on..."
		Camera Off SFX	I-11-7 3	Camera Off sound cue plays a beat after Jeff says: "Bye Jeff."
	Blackout		I-11-7 3	Blackout after Jeff's line: "Well that should seal the deal."
Scene 11: Meet and Greet 2	Lights up		I-11-7 6	Lights up after measure 6 of "Keeping the Ball in the Air"
Answering Machine Message 7		Message 7	I-11-8 1	Message plays after Susan's line: "I think they can handle me dropping the f-bomb in a musical."
Music 15: Awkward Photo Shoot		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 3	Flash bulb/Single Camera Flash SFX plays after Susan's line: "I'm giving you 'broken doll!'"
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 3	The same cue plays after Heidi's line: "It's all right. He's just ABH."
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 3	Again after Hunter's line: "Packets for Broadway investors. Read your email."
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 4	Again after Susan's line: "...what each of our contributions to this piece was and how we should be compensated."
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 4	Again after Susan's line: "I didn't say it had to be this second, ace."
		4 Camera Flashes	I-11-8 4	Light and sound cue plays during measures 13-14 of "Awkward Photo Shoot"
		2 Camera Flashes	I-11-8 4	Light and sound cue plays during measures 17-18 of "Awkward Photo Shoot"
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 4	Cue after Hunter's line: "Well maybe she'd fully commit to doing this show."
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 5	Again after Heidi's line: "Are you sorry I heard it, or sorry that you said it?"
		Single Camera Flash	I-11-8 5	Again after Heidi's line: "For Christ's sake I'm the mold!"
		4 Camera Flashes	I-11-8 6	Light and sound cue plays during measures 42-43 of "Awkward Photo Shoot"

Table 3: Technical Cues, continued

Scene	Lights	Sound & A/V	Page #	Notes
	Blackout		I-11-8 6	Blackout after Hunter exits.
Scene 12: Final Phone Call	Lights up	Jeff's Ringtone	I-12-8 7	Jeff's ringtone beings during the blackout, lights come up after the 3rd time it rings.
Music 18: Finale	Blackout		I-13-9 4	Blackout after song.
Music 19: Bows	Lights up		I-13-9 4	Lights up on measure 4 of "Bows"

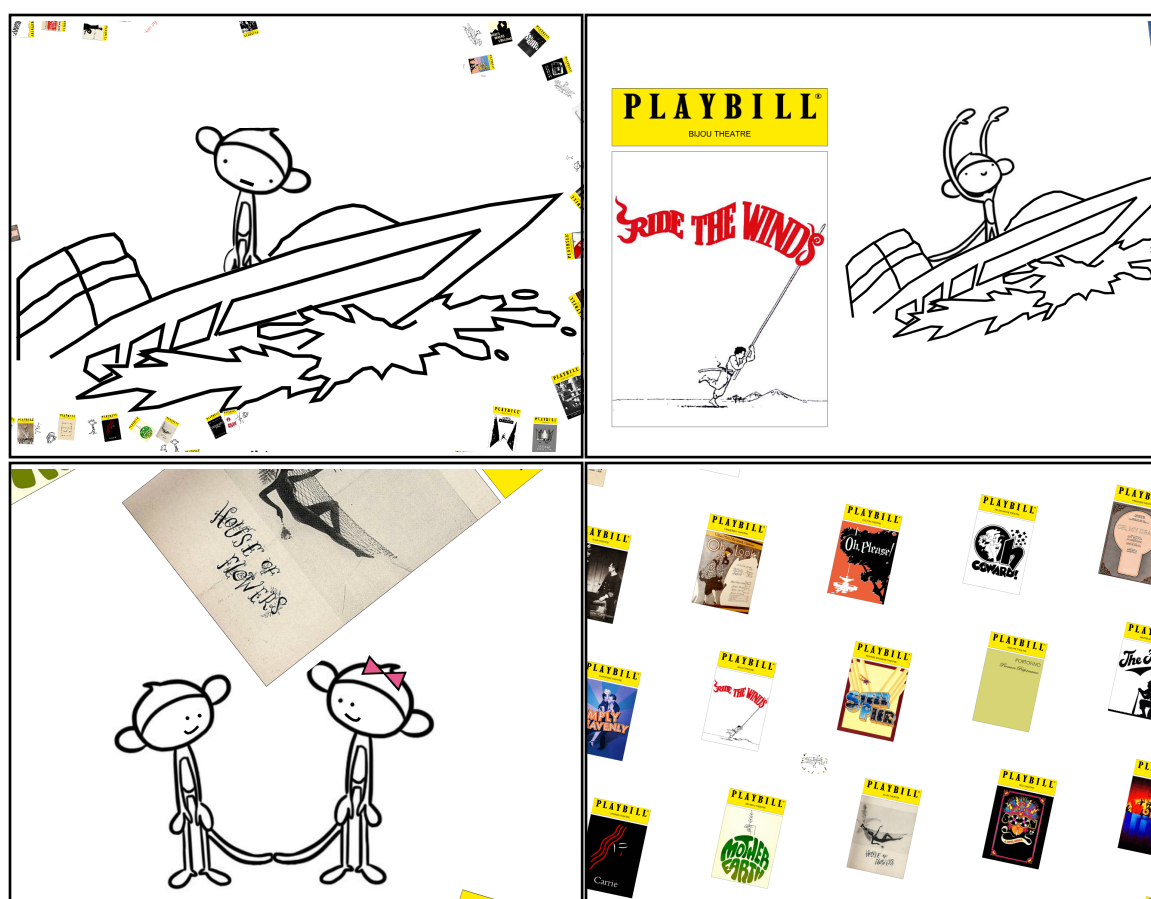


Fig. 24. Screenshots from “Monkeys and Playbills” Projection
 Hagmeier, Mathew. *Monkeys and Playbills*. 2012. *Prezi.com*. Web. 21 June 2012.
 Playbill covers courtesy of *PlaybillVault.com*.



Fig. 25. Postcard Designs



Fig. 26. Facebook Promotional Design

Casting and Rehearsal Process

Almost immediately after deciding upon *[title of show]* for this study, several friends and colleagues in New York expressed interest in being a part of the production. Before learning of R&H Theatricals' restriction on the script in the New York City area, a group of excited and willing participants had been assembled. After it became necessary to move the production to Colorado, this group of enthusiastic individuals remained a vital part of the development process, as much of the direction (specifically, blocking and choreography) needed to be well thought-out and solidified before the rehearsal process began in July with the cast of UNC student actors. While much organic staging ended up taking place in July, it was only because, as a director, I came with my research and

vision clear and concise, and offered it to the actors, who, together with the rest of the production team, were able to shape and mold it into their own unique piece. Had I not come prepared with a clear directorial vision and much of the work done ahead of time, valuable time would have been wasted developing my own artistic vision before allowing the students to influence it, shape it, and make it their own.

This is certainly another point worth noting in the exploration to foster authentic, free creative expression. Because theatre is such a collaborative art, it is important that all parties involved take care to bring to the table complete, studied, and flushed-out ideas. As director and educator, this was even more important in the process, because these students were still learning and honing their craft, and leading by example and being able to offer input when the cast needed it was of utmost importance. This is not to say it was my intention to shape their artistic expression or pretend to hold the solutions to the creative enigmas that surround personal expression. Being able to offer thorough, clear and learned input was crucial to the success of this study, and in doing so, the students were better equipped to understand their own creativity and could find solutions to the creative challenges they experienced along the way. That being said, there is no question that a director's input shapes the creative outcome in the process of theatre-making. It is a director's job to develop this vision and to execute it onstage with his actors. However, a good director listens to, works with, and even relies on the creativity and personal expression of his cast and production team, and allowing them the freedom to explore and question, develop their own ideas, and incorporate them into the production was kept at the forefront of this rehearsal process.

To this end, working with the New York-based “workshop” cast was crucial. Working mostly late-nights, after-hours in the restaurant industry, choreography was created, tested, and refined; musical staging was discussed and theorized upon; and the nuts and bolts of the production were given general shape so that the cast had a solid jumping-off point come July (e.g. see fig. 27).

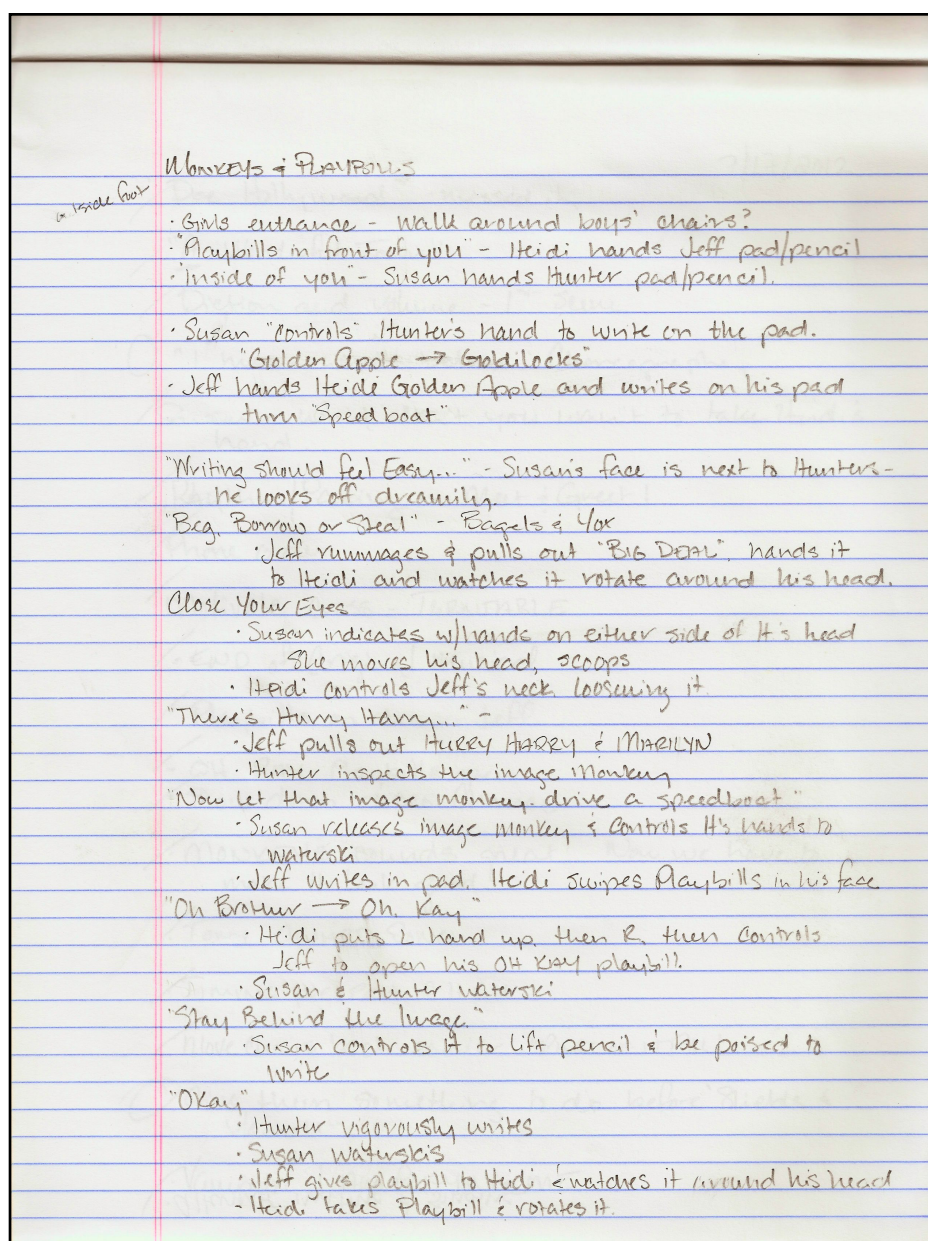


Fig. 27. Preliminary Choreography Notes for “Monkeys and Playbills.”

Enlisting help from the UNC faculty, a group of student actors was assembled in April. This group was comprised of three student actors who were cast in summer repertory shows on campus in the Little Theatre of the Rockies summer stock company, and one UNC student who was working on campus as well as commuting about an hour to work at Elitch Gardens, a theme park near downtown Denver. A list of their names and e-mail addresses was provided, and, having never met any of these students previously, it was necessary to find out as much as possible about them before assigning them specific roles. *Facebook* became a helpful research tool, allowing a glimpse of each student's personality through photos and personal postings by the students. Working with the music director, who was familiar with the four students, characters were easily assigned and the students were contacted and offered their roles.

In the initial email, the students were informed about the goal and purpose of this unique study, informed of the project's budget and production venue, given an outline of the process as it was to unfold in June and July, and asked to provide conflict information if they accepted the role:

[. . .] I will be working a lot with you guys to give honest, authentic performances, which might initially make you feel vulnerable on stage, but I PROMISE, will help you be the best in the role, and will be a valuable tool for you as an actor. We'll talk more about this when I get into town.

I am so excited to work with each and every one of you, and I hope you guys are excited as well. I am always here to answer any questions you might have, and to help you along the way. So, if all that seems good to you, and you're ready to commit to the process, please send me an email back accepting your role, and informing me of any conflicts you might have in June and July. This will help me develop a rehearsal schedule [e.g. see fig. 28]. (Hagmeier)

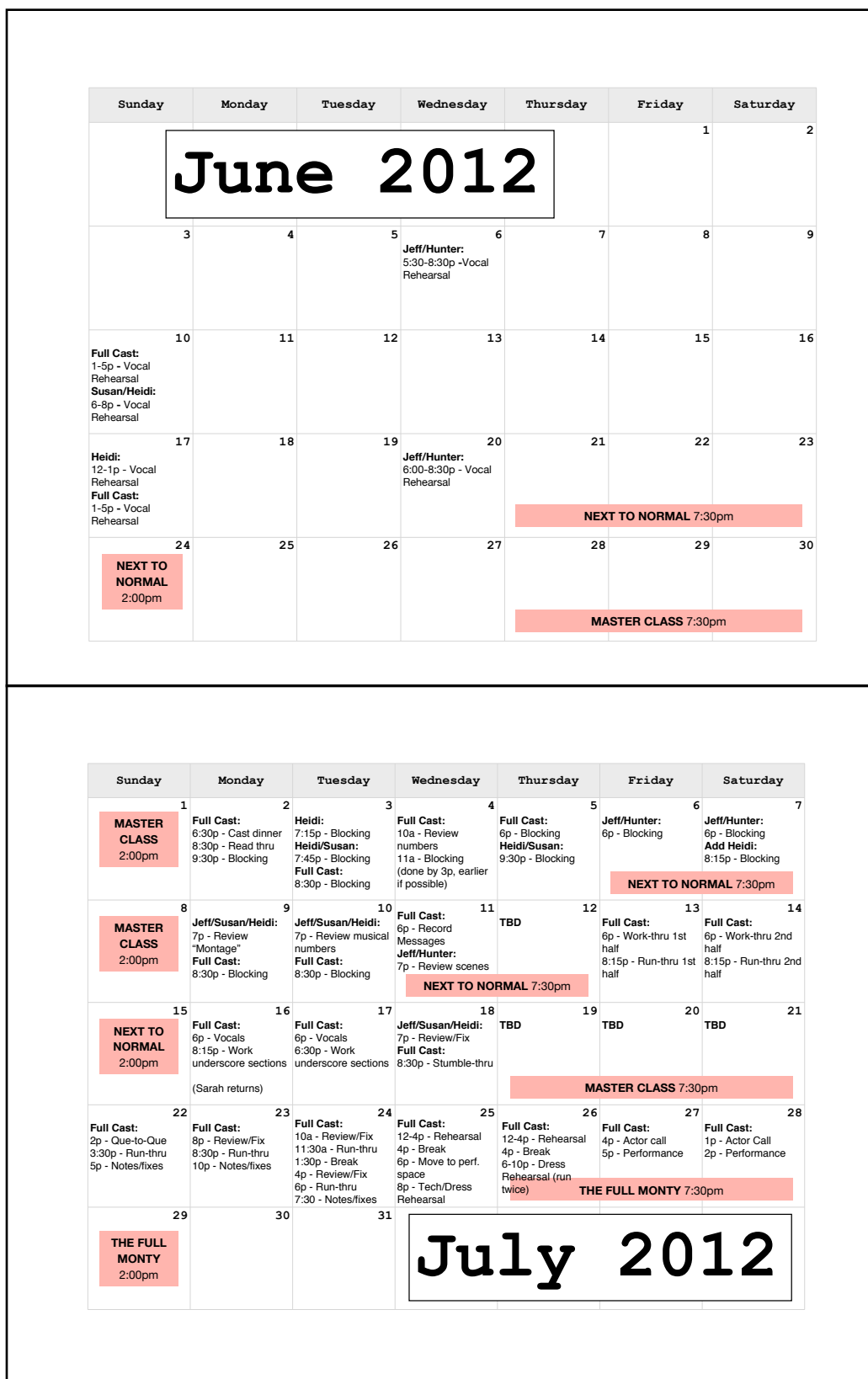


Fig. 28. Preliminary Rehearsal Schedule, featuring performance conflicts (in red)

When each actor had accepted their role and conflict information was relayed, a working rehearsal schedule was developed (e.g. see fig. 28). The musical director scheduled four “boot camp” music rehearsals in June, before her departure in the early part of July, which began with blocking and choreography rehearsals for the first two weeks (in order to accommodate the musical director’s absence) followed by a few more days of musical “boot camp” rehearsals before beginning work-throughs and run-throughs.

Early on during the June rehearsals, the musical director expressed concern about the actor playing Jeff. He was showing up for rehearsals underprepared and distracted, with low energy, and his commitment to the project was questioned. She felt he was holding the rest of the cast back, because she was required to stop and review music that was previously taught when the rest of the cast was ready to move on. This behavior was disturbing, but full control was given to the musical director regarding how to deal with the situation. Replacing the actor was discussed, but the musical director felt that she could speak with him and produce results. He revealed he was going through a personal struggle in the form of a break-up, but assured the musical director that he was working hard to catch up and would be fully committed to the project moving forward, which was relieving because most students had already made summer commitments by then, and replacing the actor was sure to be a difficult task.

Also during these rehearsals—even without the presence of a director—the students were encouraged to make their own acting choices about the material. For example, the stage manager sent a text message from the first music rehearsal relaying

that the actor playing Hunter wanted to know how to deliver a certain line of music in the “Untitled Opening Number.” Particularly ironic, the lyric in question was, “We’re trying hard not to duplicate / What we’ve seen and heard before” (I-1-2). This line was delivered in a rock-sounding character voice by Hunter Bell on the original cast recording, and the actor playing Hunter in our production wanted to know what character voice he should employ to replicate this sound. The response I gave was simply, “Try hard not to duplicate what you’ve seen or heard before.” Even from afar, the goal to achieve authentic creative expression was kept at the forefront of the entire process, and the actors ended up experimenting with many of their own choices before a final one was decided upon for the performance. In this specific instance, the actor playing Hunter chose to make the phrase sound more modern with an urban, hip-hop style, and working together, choreography was developed to accentuate this—a subtle departure from the original actor’s delivery, but authentic to the student actor’s creative mind.

Upon arriving in Colorado in July, the first priority of the process was to meet the cast. The goal was to meet outside of a rehearsal setting, in order to get to know each other better and foster an open conversation about the show, this production, our goals, and to answer any questions they had about any of the above. Care was taken to organize a meeting in a casual location (over dinner at a pizza restaurant) to alleviate any stress the students had surrounding the project. The actor playing Hunter, unfortunately, could not attend this initial dinner meeting because of his schedule at Elitch Gardens. He was able to join later, after the production team had moved into Frasier 63 for rehearsal, which was

not optimal, but necessary, as from that day forward the countdown clock to the performances was ticking, and no time could be wasted.

At this initial dinner meeting the goals highlighted in the introduction of this thesis were shared with the cast and production team, so that everyone involved would have a clear understanding of the framework of the study. The actress playing Susan confided that she was nervous about the project because she had never really considered herself an actor, but foremost a singer. Having just completed her freshman year in the Musical Theatre program, she had received lackluster feedback on her acting and was trepidatious about the demands of this process, doubtful of her ability to provide what was being asked of her. She was reassured that all involved would be completely supportive and were only concerned with allowing her the freedom to explore her creative self through acting. This actress was also cast as Natalie in the Little Theatre of the Rockies' production of *Next to Normal*, so despite her own self-consciousness surrounding her talent, I was confident that she at least possessed some capability and was excited to work with her to strengthen her self-perception in the field.

Also addressed at this dinner was the actor playing Jeff's personal struggles which had been affecting his behavior during the June rehearsals with the musical director. He offered almost immediately that, unlike the rest of the cast, he did not feel that he was as knowledgeable about the material as everyone else. He confided to the group his recent break-up and reassured everyone present that despite his lack of preparedness, he would work hard to catch up. His lack of knowledge about the material became apparent when he learned, for the first time, that his character was homosexual. While his shock at this

revelation was humorous to the group, he expressed concern about portraying a stereotype on stage. To this, he was told flat-out to not be anything but himself on stage. Homosexual men come in all shapes, sizes, brands, and models, and as director, I wanted him to know that he need not worry about “playing gay” in this production, a choice that I believed would diminish the three-dimensional human qualities of the character. The actor was assured that special care would be taken to make his character as well-developed as possible, without verging on an overplayed stereotype of a singular aspect of this character’s multi-faceted persona. He breathed a sigh of relief, but it was obvious that attention would need to be paid to make sure he stayed comfortable and on-board with the production.

The actress playing Heidi confessed that until recently, she had lived a very sheltered, yet pleasant life, surrounded by the constant love and moral values given to her by her family. Some of these moral values, she admitted, conflicted with parts of *[title of show]*, and she told the group that her parents would not be invited to attend the performances because they would object to the content of the show. More specifically, to two physical moments in the show—when Heidi removes her top for thirty seconds and the female-female kiss that follows. The actress was asked if being in this show made her feel uncomfortable at all, and she responded with quite the opposite reaction. She expressed excitement that she was given the opportunity to stretch her acting in directions she previously hadn’t been able (or allowed) to before. She did not feel bad that her parents would not be in attendance and saw this production as a way to grow her craft.

After dinner, the production team moved to Frasier 63 for the first rehearsal. By some miracle, the team was granted access to Frasier 63 for all but three rehearsals during the production period. This was a massive win for the team, as it made a “move-in” rehearsal unnecessary, and the cast could learn most of the staging in the actual performance space. With the actor playing Hunter now present, the cast began their first table read and sing-through. While beginning with a table read is not always necessary, especially in an educational setting and with larger musicals, the size of this cast and the amount of stage time each of the four characters is given made this table read very valuable. The cast was instructed not to “act” any of their roles, but to just be themselves and focus on the language of the play and telling the story through their lines. This allowed the cast to make the language their own, without worrying about bigger acting choices, and it allowed me as director to hear each of the four actors authentically deliver the dialogue as themselves, which was something the cast would be instructed to return to later on in the process. It was also an opportune time to see how the rehearsal tracks were going to work in the process, and after guiding the cast through them with little difficulty, it became evident that the tracks would work out better than anyone could have imagined. Afterwards, the only feedback given to the actors was that pacing was going to be essential in delivering dialogue based in such realism. The lines in this script are meant to be spoken on top of one another in a very realistic, energetic way, the way people converse together every day, and it was clear that this aspect would need attention during the rehearsal process.

The rehearsal ended after the cast learned the choreography to the “Untitled Opening Number,” another important learning experience not only for the cast, but for me, as director. Without the benefit of having a live audition for this show, it was important that I gain insight to the movement capabilities of the cast and how they were going to learn the movement and choreography for the show. This would be an important determining factor in how further rehearsals would proceed and while it felt a little bit like jumping into the deep end on the first day, ultimately, teaching the cast this choreographed piece from the very top worked in the favor of the production, as by the time of the performances, this number was polished, crisp, and very clean, which set the tone for the show perfectly.

With some very valuable information gathered from our first rehearsal day, a plan of action was set into motion that would lead these four individuals toward creating a masterful production in which each actor was able to express fully and openly. The four each required attention in different ways and areas, which was not particularly surprising, but was a reality that was not planned for ahead of time. How could I work with four varying actors to realize each’s own artistic potential in only four short weeks? Luckily, there was also an unforeseen benefit to this group: they each benefited from the others’ strengths and weaknesses. Due to our open discussion policy set in motion during the meet-and-greet dinner and our creation of a safe working space, the cast was really able to let go of much of the baggage they brought with them into the process. Each was able to lean on the strengths of others and each rose the occasion when one of their castmates needed boosting up. This amazing display of support and care allowed me, as director, to

work on specific areas of concern relating directly to the production and self-expression as they arose throughout the rehearsal process.

Special attention was given to the actress playing Susan during scene work, when she lacked confidence in bringing about the authentic quirkiness of Susan's character. For example, the actress struggled with some of the dialogue in "Scene 2: Meet and Greet." This scene is the audience's first introduction to Susan's awkward, funny, and quirky personality, and the actress's delivery of the lines was not feeling authentic. One line reads:

[. . .] I'm actually starring in a little play called *Corporate Whore*, where I play the role of 'Office Manager.' It's a compelling drama, Heidi. And apparently, today's show was in Smell-O-Vision. Damn! I cleaned out a closet full of marketing materials this morning, and I smell like a combo platter of kitty litter box and hot dog water. (I-2-12)

The actress was having particular trouble with the addressing of Susan's body odor. At first, she was stopping the dialogue to give two large, exaggerated sniffs before continuing with the line. Not only was the pacing of the scene derailed, but the gesture looked forced and cartoonish. It was suggested that the actress deliver the line without sniffing at all, which helped the pacing, but now felt inauthentic to her. I offered to the actress, "Do you always have to sniff deeply to know when you have body odor?" The answer was, of course, no. What was missing for the actress, learned through discussion, was the moment when Susan realizes she has body odor—motivation for her to call attention to it and make a joke at her own expense. I agreed, but insisted that such a discovery could be made without pausing to "tell" the audience of the discovery, which makes for labored and sophomoric acting. We engaged in a conversation about why

Susan does this, and explored other times in the show then Susan exploits herself to bring humor to an awkward situation. The actress determined that Susan's social awkwardness must have always been an internal struggle for her, but by commenting on it, she was able to make herself more accessible to her peers, and over the years, this is has become second nature for the character.

With much learned about Susan's character (or, much created by the actress about Susan's character), the actress was asked to go back and look at this first troubling bit of dialogue again. A moment of discovery was added for the actress, who, after putting a hand on Heidi's shoulder on the line, "It's a compelling drama, Heidi," could then subtly notice her body odor without a simplistic, cartoonish gesture. The actress and I determined that such a gesture worked much better on the next sentence, when Susan is trying to determine the individual components of her smell, and some comical and obvious sniffing was a choice made by the character to draw attention to the joke she was making. The subtle difference between the actress indicating action to the audience, and the character indicating action to the people in the scene made all the difference, and a valuable lesson was learned. In the end, the actress agreed that the placement of such a gesture is crucial in defining the realism of the scene, and the line ended up getting an awkward laugh from the audience on opening night, indicative that Susan's personality was clearly communicated through the choices the actress was making onstage.

As the process continued, it became clear that what this actress was struggling with was not acting, like she had been told in her assessment, but only developing the tiny nuances and timing that made her acting more realistic. After discussing her

character and the deeper motivations for her behavior, the actress actually eased into the role almost effortlessly, and started to make appropriate, educated, and often hysterical choices on her own. What this actress needed to fully realize her creative expression was simply the tools with which she could understand character. Once her homework was done, once she understood the character arc, and as she became more comfortable with the staging, blocking, and choreography, watching the actress realize her own brand of Susan's quirky, lovable personality was truly a joy.

The actress playing Heidi revealed not long into the rehearsal process just how "sheltered" she was. Her fellow castmates were shocked (and somewhat delighted) to hear her curse on stage, and they soon confided to the directorial team that this actress was known to possess a pure, naive persona. The phrase "goodie-two-shoes" was tossed out. The longer the rehearsal process went on, however, it was clear this actress was eager to break this perception. It took little encouragement for her to try new things, and after the first week or so of the process, she really began to grow into the role. This is not to say that Heidi's character is gratuitously dirty or raunchy at all, but as the process continued, the actress began to show the comfort, self-confidence, and ownership of one's opinions, beliefs, body, and language that someone of Heidi's age possesses. In effect, the actress "grew up" during the process and it was a pleasure to watch her come into her own.

The development of this coming of age was, of course, not without its kinks. As rehearsals progressed, I became aware that the actress was "checking in" with me multiple times during any given scene to gauge a reading of what I, as director, was

thinking of her performance. She was not being overly needy, stopping the flow of the scene to ask how she was doing; rather, she was subtly letting her eyes wander toward the director's chair to visibly check my directorial reaction. It occurred so often during one scene, that during a break taken to fix another problem, I asked her, "Are you aware that you look at me every time you make a choice on stage?" Somewhat embarrassed, the actress stammered over her response before finally admitting that she hoped this had gone unnoticed, but that yes, she was aware of the habit. Not wanting to make her feel wrong, but needing to break her of the habit, I made a joke: "You don't need to check in with me so often—if I hate something that much, my reaction will be big enough that you will notice." The cast laughed, and I assured her that what she was bringing to the table was exactly in the right direction.

Moreover, keeping the goal of this project in mind, I let everyone know that all actors possess subtle ticks and habits like this one, and they are things that every actor should be aware of so that they do not affect the craft and process of one's acting. To this end, I began pointing out every one of these moments apparent onstage. This particular habit was a sign of self-consciousness, which was to be expected from an actress stepping so far outside her comfort zone to stretch and grow. However, this is a major blockage point in authentic artistic expression, because if she remained too concerned with the director's opinion of her work, she would not be free to fully express all she could as an artist.

The entire cast was then invited to run with their instincts and play around with any ideas they had in their heads, without the need to ask the director first. I reassured the

team that I was there simply to guide the process and to focus the entire group's creative expression toward telling the story, but that did not mean I possessed all the answers. I encouraged the cast to play and physicalize everything they had in their heads while the group was still in the rehearsal room—an invitation that allowed me many creative options to choose from. Together, the cast and production team were able to sort through these options to choose the best ones to tell the story of *[title of show]*. This was a major turning point for this actress and the entire cast, who began, in the last week and a half before the performances, to make the leap from being “in their heads” to being physically present in the room—to not pre-evaluate an acting choice, but to execute it, and witness how it affected the scene and the performance. Afterwards, the discussion, dissection, and re-working of specific moments allowed the entire team to solidify the choices made during a rehearsal and commit them to their performances from that point forward.

Another block to this realization was the actors' preparedness to be off-book. In working with college-aged actors, I had not expected this to be an issue, especially since each cast member was forwarded the script and score months ahead of time. For some, there were no issues, but it was apparent as we moved into off-book rehearsals that the actor playing Jeff was struggling. After a particularly troublesome rehearsal, I spoke with the actor privately and asked him if everything was all right regarding the personal issues he confided to the group earlier in the process. He admitted that he was feeling incredibly over-worked and had no time to fully commit to this production. It was necessary for him to keep a job over the summer in the I.T. department for the university's computer labs. He was working eight- to twelve-hour shifts, trying to patch things up with his girlfriend

after their break-up that occurred at the beginning of the process, and attempting to learn his lines, staging and choreography on top of it all. He flat out said he should have opted out of the production the very first day when he was asked about his behavior, that he did not care for the show because he did appreciate the writing, and that he regretted not showing up the way he would have liked to because of his personal issues and time commitments to his job and his girlfriend. It was obvious that this poor student was exhausted and frustrated.

Terrified that the show was about to lose an actor only one week out from the performances, I tread lightly around the subject. First, I reassured the actor that I had no doubt that he would be able to memorize his lines and staging without problem. He was a hard worker and progress was being made even under these strained circumstances. I let the actor know that I respected his opinion of the work and its quality. Obviously, I happened to disagree since this show had become the basis of this rather lengthy thesis project, but it is the nature of art to speak to individuals differently. At this point, I told the actor I was a stand for him to stay with the production and stretch himself one more week to see it through. His talent was obvious and there was no doubt he was going to shine in the role. Vocally, his controlled, mature tenor voice and his polished musical skills were grounding the group's vocal sound during the musical sequences. It was clear he had valuable contributions to make to the production and its process. I offered to him that sometimes in working on a project that one does not connect with or appreciate, one can grow in a different way than by working on a piece one adores. If an appreciation for the material was out-of-reach, at the very least this actor might learn how to work on a

production he did not value—a very real-world lesson for a young professional actor to learn. The actor told me he would see the project through, mostly because he wanted to honor his commitment and would feel terrible abandoning the cast and production team so late into process. He ended up taking a few shifts off work to memorize his lines and focus more intently on the show, a sacrifice I had not wanted him to have to make (it was not my goal to inconvenience these students financially), but one he was insistent on.

This heart-to-heart conversation was followed closely by an invited dress rehearsal, after which the head of the Musical Theatre department offered notes to the cast and production team. His help was invaluable, but the students took his notes (delivered rather sternly) as a reprimand. They felt their teacher, director, and mentor was unimpressed with their efforts (especially the actor playing Jeff, who was singled out several times in the notes session, mostly for his under-preparedness). The cast was told that their professor only wanted them to be successful and shine onstage in the performances, and was passionately giving them very constructive notes. Perhaps the directorial team was more willing to see things in this light as colleagues of this intimidating impresario; the students were convinced he loathed the production, despite reassurances he did not. Whichever way they interpreted his reaction, the cast was doubly motivated to work hard and scheduled group rehearsals outside of the scheduled rehearsal times to run lines and work on character development.

Troubled that the cast would be too hard on themselves after this critique, I was cautious entering the next rehearsal. Surprisingly, it seemed that this last-minute scare was exactly what the cast needed to kick their efforts into high gear, especially the actor

playing Jeff, who attended the next rehearsal completely off-book, confident in his staging and choreography, full of new and thoughtful acting choices, and with an overall optimistic demeanor that he lacked the entire process until that point. Re-energized about the show's potential, the decision was made to begin in-depth acting rehearsals working scene to scene to capture the cast's new-found energy and enthusiasm.

What seemed to be needed to free up creative expression for not only the actor playing Jeff, but the entire cast (to varying degrees), was a motivation beyond simply the rapidly approaching performances. It is impossible to determine whether the performances alone would have been enough of a motivating factor for the cast to ramp up their creative efforts and produce performances equal to the caliber of those they were able to execute after this intense note-giving session. That is simply not the way the events unfolded during the process of this project. What can be said, however, is that an added element of personal investment, outside motivation, or perhaps even pressure to succeed from an authoritative figure allowed this group of students—one actor, particularly—to achieve incredible results. One can only speculate, but perhaps it was a re-focusing of each student's purpose in the Musical Theatre program and with this project in particular; a realization that the manner in which they present themselves for one challenge in their life is directly related to how they tackle every challenge in life, or certainly within this collegiate program. Questions arise to be explored further about what might work as motivational inspiration for other groups of actors: elementary or high school students, professional actors, even non-actors. In any case, for this group of students, not wanting to disappoint the head of their department—a professor, director,

mentor, and authority figure who is largely responsible for granting these students their degree as well as offering them roles in future university productions—was a motivational impetus large enough to garner impressive results.

The actor playing Hunter stood out as a leader in this process from early on. This actor had familiarity with the material, having played Jeff in a one-act production the previous school year. With this knowledge in mind, casting him as Hunter was not only a natural choice based on his personality and talent, it was a necessary choice to prevent him from recycling a performance crafted by another group of theatre-makers.

It was particularly interesting to work with this actor during this process because it never seemed his creative expression was blocked. He showed up free, open, and ready to work every day, despite a crazy schedule that involved him driving an hour or more to and from Denver to attend the rehearsals (often choosing to drive back to Denver the same night to be closer to work the next day). His willingness to go above and beyond in terms of his preparedness, processing his character, and providing multiple solutions to challenges in each scene was welcome and quite professional, and his ability to have fun while developing a connected, thoughtful performance was a testament to his unencumbered self-expression and creative drive.

While an enigma in terms of this study, what became obvious was that having a leader aided in producing results with the rest of the cast. The production team could, without singling him out or spotlighting him, rely on his behavior during the process to pull other actors up to his level. Even on a personal level, the actor was a stand for his classmates to succeed. He spent several late nights running lines and working with the

actor playing Jeff, who was struggling to find the path towards creative expression, and who appeared at times to be merely tolerating the production process rather than affecting it, harnessing it, and making it his own. In this way, his contributions to the project were greatly appreciated.

By opening night, the cast had worked so hard and was so ready to share their efforts with an audience. They had settled into their roles beautifully despite the challenges each faced, and no matter how early or late in the process, each was able to access an authentic creative expression surrounding the material, their respective characters, and the overall message of the piece.

CHAPTER III
PROMPT BOOK

Given Circumstances

Environmental Facts

Geographical Location

[title of show] takes place over a four-year period in environments real and imagined around New York City. Because the authors often change settings mid-scene, the following list is organized by setting rather than scene number:

1. Here and Now; The Present. “Untitled Opening Number” is set in the theatre in which the production is being presented. It is a prologue of sorts, in which the as-of-yet unnamed characters present their task—to create a new original musical—to the audience. The characters proffer which techniques they will use and avoid, and lay the scene for the rest of the show.
2. Jeff’s Apartment/Hunter’s Apartment. “Scene 1: Phone Call 1” begins in Jeff and Hunter’s respective apartments in New York City. Hunter’s apartment is in the neighborhood of Hell’s Kitchen, and Jeff’s is in a undetermined location, presumably nearby.
3. Hunter’s Apartment, Hell’s Kitchen. On page I-1-5, the scene shifts to Hunter’s apartment exclusively.

4. Jeff's Mind. "An Original Musical" is not set in any specific location, but due to the presence of the character Blank Paper (a walking, talking sheet of paper), it is safe to say this scene is set inside Jeff's mind as he works on composing the show, most likely in his apartment in New York City.
5. Jeff's Apartment/Hunter's Apartment. "Scene 3: Procrastinating" takes place in the boys' respective apartments as they continue writing.
6. Hunter's Apartment. Including a nod to the power of stage "magic" that allows them to all be present after absolutely no time passage from the previous scene, "Scene 4: Post Monkeys" and "Scene 5: Pre 'Part of It All'" take place in Hunter's apartment exclusively.
7. Piano Room/Park Bench. "I Am Playing Me" is set in a room with a piano, whether that is Jeff's apartment, Larry's apartment, or an unnamed rehearsal studio is left unspecified. The dialogue between Hunter and Susan takes place on a park bench somewhere else in the city.
8. Park Benches. "Scene 6: Bench Scene," a continuation of the previous scene, takes place on two park benches at two different locations in the city. Each couple is unaware of the other couple. Note that Hunter and Susan do not change locations between these two scenes. Rather, Jeff and Heidi leave the piano room and find themselves on a park bench as well.
9. Dream World. To quote the authors, "Scene 7: Dream Sequence" takes place in a "nonsensical 'dream world'" (I-7-39).

10. Hunter's Apartment. After the dream sequence ends, the characters find themselves abruptly back in Hunter's apartment (I-7-42).
11. Piano Room. "Scene 8: Filling Out the Form" and "Scene 9: Mail It! Mail It!" take place in the same unspecified piano room where "I Am Playing Me" is set.
12. The Belt Theatre, 37th Street. "Montage Part 1: September Song" and "Montage Part 2: Secondary Characters" take place on and offstage at the show's NYMF performance venue.
13. Hunter's Apartment. Setting-wise, the most confusing scene in the show is "Montage Part 3: Development Medley," which begins in Hunter's apartment, but quickly shifts to:
14. The Vineyard Theatre, 15th Street (on and offstage). This was the home of the show's off-Broadway run.
15. Phone Calls. On page I-9-65 the setting shifts again, featuring the four friends, each in a different environment: Hunter and Jeff are in their apartments, and Heidi and Susan are in undetermined locations (Heidi, having just recently read their review in the *New York Times*, probably either near a newsstand or in her apartment). After the phone call (I-9-67), the scene shifts back to:
16. The Vineyard Theatre. The "Development Medley" ends onstage during the final performance of the show's Off-Broadway run.
17. Phone Calls. "Scene 10: What Now?" features Susan at her day job, a fictitious investment company called Zehnder-Oliver Capital, and Hunter, Jeff, and Heidi in their respective apartments.

18. Jeff's Apartment. On Page I-10-72, the phone calls end, leaving the characters in Jeff's apartment only, and the setting remains there through "Scene 11: Meet and Greet 2."
19. Phone Calls. On page I-11-75, the scene shifts back to the phone calls—four different environments: Susan at her day job, Jeff and Hunter in their respective apartments, and Heidi at a rehearsal hall, working on *The Little Mermaid*.
20. Hunter's Apartment. Page I-11-76 brings all four back together in the same setting, most likely Hunter's apartment, although this is unspecified.
21. "Change It" Chant Land/Hunter's Apartment. "Change It, Don't Change It" features movement into and out of a negative space that the authors refer to as "Change It' chant land," in which the actors recite the "Change It, Don't Change It" chant that indicates time passage and development on the script. The actors alternately find themselves in Hunter's apartment, with the exception of Jeff, who, on page I-11-81 makes a phone call to Hunter from an undetermined location, most likely his own apartment.
22. Photography Studio. "Music 15: Awkward Photo Shoot" takes place at an unspecified photography studio in New York City.
23. Jeff's Apartment/Hunter's Apartment. "Scene 12: Final Phone Call" mimics the phone call settings from earlier in the show, while Heidi begins singing "A Way Back to Then" in her own world (although the characters are aware of her). On page I-12-89, the boys slide their chairs together and the setting changes to:
24. Hunter's Apartment.

Date

[title of show] begins in the spring of 2004, and follows the show's journey to its opening night on Broadway on July 17, 2008.

1. Present. "Untitled Opening Number" is set in real time, as the audience watches the show.
2. Spring 2004. "Scene 1: Phone Call 1" through "Scene 9: Mail It! Mail It!" take place over a three-week period in the spring of 2004 between when the authors find out about the upcoming musical theatre festival and when submissions are due. Each time an answering machine message plays during a scene change, the story moves forward a few days.
3. September 2004. "Montage Part 1: September Song" and "Montage Part 2: Secondary Characters" move the story along through the six festival performances later that year.
4. Some time later; 2005. "Montage Part 3: Development Medley" begins after a rather large jump in time, although this is not expressly indicated in the script.
5. February 2006. On page I-9-65, the story zooms forward even further to the opening night of *[title of show]* off-Broadway at the Vineyard Theatre in February 2006, and by the end of the "Development Medley," the characters reach the end of the show's Vineyard Theatre run on October 1, 2006.
6. August 2007. "Scene 10: What Now?" jumps ahead ten months after the show closes off-Broadway (I-10-71).

7. April 2008. Right before “Change It, Don’t Change It,” the characters learn that their show is transferring to Broadway (which, in real life, they announced during an April 4, 2008 episode of *The [title of show] Show*). The rest of the show moves the story along through April, May, June and into July of 2008, as the show undergoes further development for its Broadway debut.
8. July 17, 2008. By the end of “Nine People’s Favorite Thing,” the story has chronicled the show up until its opening night on Broadway, when the authors decide to step back and put their show “out there.”

Economic Environment

1. National and Regional Economics. The general economic environment in New York City between 2004 and 2008 was one of economic surplus. In the years after September 11, 2001, when employment rates in the city took a sharp drop, New York saw incredible recovery in employment rates and wages paid (Scanlon). This was to take a dramatic turn for the worse after the financial fallout in the fall of 2008, but this lies beyond the world of the play.
2. New York Theatre Economics. The economic world of Broadway theatre has always been a unique entity in itself, laden with high risks, but in successful cases, returning enormous profits. Broadway itself contributes a great deal to the economy of New York City—in the 2006-2007 season alone the industry contributed \$5.1 billion in Broadway-related spending to the New York City economy, and employed an estimated 44,000 full-time professionals (Broadway League). This may seem impressive and strong, however, Gerald Bordman and

Thomas S. Hirschak paint a more realistic picture of the economic world of Broadway in the third edition of the *Oxford Companion to American Theatre*, going back to Broadway's rather humble beginnings. They say that as inflation has risen and workers' unions have gained in strength, the number of productions that recoup their initial investment have decreased:

No small part of the problem derived from the absurdity of union demands. Union bonds alone, which had to be figured into initial costs, were in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Nor were union demands conducive to reasonable weekly running costs. Actors' Equity, for example, negotiated contracts in which a performer's minimum salary per week was \$850 (1990) at the same time that the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the average American's weekly salary at \$399. Ever more questionable were such practices as the musicians' union frequently requiring producers to pay musicians who were not used. Many smaller theatres, especially on the road, became uneconomical, and producers, who now demanded huge guarantees from playhouses instead of simply a percentage of the gross, sought out grotesquely large old film-houses and convention halls as auditoriums for their attractions. At the end of the 1980–81 season, *Variety* recorded that only three of the forty–odd productions were commercial successes, although one or two others were expected to prove profitable eventually. (Bordman)

In 2004, with ticket prices sitting at right about one hundred dollars, audiences no longer considered Broadway “casual” entertainment as they had in the past. Add all these circumstances together, and the result is less profit to be gained from a Broadway investment, so producers have become more wary of the projects they put their money behind, thus resulting in fewer theatrical offerings opening on Broadway each season, with investors preferring to back only large projects with a wide variety of marketability (tours, merchandising, etc.). In the early part of the twenty-first century, producers have begun relying heavily on known

commodities: adaptations of popular Hollywood films, revivals, or productions with large-scale celebrity stars attached that can power box office sales. This does not bode well for those wishing to create an original musical, like Jeff and Hunter. Finding funding to workshop and develop their work is a real challenge, and programs like the New York Musical Theatre Festival have been developed to help unknown works receive stagings that might lead to further development (see also Chapter II: “The Authors and Their World” and “Production History”).

3. Hunter. Hunter’s economic status may be the lowest of the four characters. On page I-2-17, he laments about his cater-waiting position, and wishes to “get rich and successful soon.” On page I-5-29, he tells Jeff that he daydreams to avoid thinking “about how lame [his] life really is” and that he is “so sick of temping and catering.” He goes on to elaborate on how his bank account is empty and how he cannot afford dental insurance. As the show progresses, it is understood that he begins to live the life he dreams of to some degree, getting paid to be a part of his show’s off-Broadway run. This change is not exponential by any means, and Hunter’s economic status most likely only changes from “poor” to “stable.”
4. Jeff. Jeff’s economic status is somewhat higher than Hunter’s. At the show’s start, he works for himself, designing websites for business clients (I-1-3). While the journey of the show may not elevate him in economic status, it allows him to find economic stability primarily from composing rather than designing websites. If anything, his status may inch toward “comfortable,” especially if one assumes that he continues to supplement his artistic endeavors with web design.

5. Heidi. Heidi is able to support herself by working as a professional actress (I-6-36). This does not, by any means, indicate that she is a powerful force in the industry or an economical success. The minimum weekly salary for a Broadway ensemble member in 2004 was \$1,354 (Pincus-Roth), which, figuring in the cost of living in New York City, is not overwhelmingly glamorous. Also, considering Heidi says she has only “done two Broadway shows” (I-6-35), one can surmise that the majority of Heidi’s income is made on tours or in regional productions, for which Actor’s Equity does not require parallel compensation to that of a Broadway production. One might deem her economical status equivalent with Jeff’s—“stable.”
6. Susan. Susan embodies the highest economical status in the show, and is also the character we know most about, financially. As she has “stepped off the showbiz ride” (I-2-13), she no longer fits the “starving artist” cliché that the other characters (especially Hunter) may seem to represent. The script directly addresses this on page I-11-85, when Susan barks at Hunter, “When are you gonna stop borrowing money from me?” She works as an office manager at a capital investment firm (I-2-12, I-10-69) and owns her own apartment (I-6-38), which, in New York City, is a profound statement about anyone’s economic status. This success outside of the artistic realm does seem to have its cost, and in Susan there is a sense of nostalgia and loss about her absence from the world she loves so much, despite her financial affluence.

Political Environment

While the general American political environment is not dealt with in the play forthright, politics play an indirect role in influencing events of the story.

1. National and Regional Politics. The story begins in the spring of 2004, which was an election year in the United States. Political campaigns would have been in full swing, and Americans everywhere would have been bombarded with television ads and endless commentaries from political pundits. President George W. Bush was running for re-election against Democratic candidate John Kerry, and he won largely due to the war on terrorism he waged after the events of September 11, 2001. The Republican National Convention was held at Madison Square Garden in New York City from August 30 through September 2, 2004, the same time NYMF was gearing up for its inaugural showcase of new musicals. Not only did the convention bring President Bush and most other high-powered Republicans to the notoriously liberal, democratic city, throngs of supporters descended on New York, and the entire event sparked protests all over the city from anti-Bush activists (“2004 Republican”). While the Bush administration did not publicly propose budget cuts for arts programs, the increasing costs of the multiple wars being fought abroad left congress with few options but to use money that Bush’s financial proposal had allocated to arts organizations, like the National Endowment for the Arts, to instead fund the wars. This effectively undercut any funding arts organizations were to receive, and left many arts supporters nonplussed (Peterson). It is easy to see how [*title of show*], which champions

artistic freedom, may have been an expression of the authors' visceral response to this political environment.

2. New York Theatre Politics. The politics of the Broadway world play a large part in any musical's success, and are largely tied to the economic environment of the industry, mentioned above. Other factors that play a part in the politics of the theatre world are referenced from the beginning of the play. In "Two Nobodies in New York," Hunter and Jeff introduce the idea that their show might transfer and have a life beyond NYMF (I-1-9). Later on, during the "Development Medley," the "important industry and producer people" who attend their show excite the cast, and Heidi encourages the boys to "schmooze" with them (I-9-59).

Schmoozing, the fine art of developing a social rapport with someone to benefit a business situation, is a highly relevant political tactic in the world of professional theatre. Commercially successful artists not only have to express themselves artistically; but they must also be able to turn others on to their artistic expression, which, in most cases, requires winning the affection of others, personally and professionally. The authors are successful in winning the support of theatrical bigwigs, and must then maintain the delicate balance of retaining their own artistic vision while still keeping the support of their producers so that they can reach their goal of opening the show on Broadway.

3. Personal Politics. The personal politics of each of the four characters is never brought up textually, but based on certain plot elements and character traits, one can be sure all four are socially liberal Democrat or Independent voters. Jeff and

Hunter are homosexual males, a demographic that history has shown aligns itself mainly with the left. Susan and Heidi are heterosexual females, a demographic that spans a wider spectrum, but their strong ties to the gay community indicate that they are liberal as well. Hunter and Jeff are their best friends; and both work in an industry infamous for its support of gay rights—shown in part by the many charitable organizations members have created, including Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Broadway Impact, The Actors Fund, the Phyllis Newman Women’s Health Initiative, and more.

Social Environment

1. Group Social Interactions. The two main characters are best friends, gay, and artists. The social interactions between them are almost always casual, humorous or sarcastic, and full of familiarity. From the first scene, the authors establish a clear tone between the two main characters: Hunter calls Jeff to tell him about a strange and funny experience he had while eating dinner the night before; Jeff fills Hunter in on the latest Broadway gossip (I-1-2 through I-1-3). The two supporting characters are an extension of this description. Although Heidi is new to the group, she quickly acclimates and assumes the same social behavior. Each character is wholly familiar with the others. The group’s entire relationship is reflected in this kind of witty banter, and they thrive on the moments when they are able to connect in this way. It is the authors’ representation of the “correct order of things” in the characters’ universe, and in such behavior lies honesty, sincerity, support, and love. Therefore, as the show progresses, and conflicts begin

to mount between the characters, it is reflected in the dialogue. They no longer joke with one another, or, if they attempt to, their sarcasm is mistaken for contempt. Their inability to find familiarity and humor in each other is an embodiment of conflict—a telltale sign that something is not as it should be. At the climax of the play, the established social environment falls apart completely, and the resolution comes only after Hunter and Jeff regain the ability to poke fun at themselves and each other.

2. Jeff. Jeff is generally the voice of reason in the group. He is more grounded than his writing partner, Hunter, and therefore spends a great deal of time nurturing or reprimanding him. He corrects grammatical mistakes made by other characters and is often the first to point out when work is of unacceptable quality. His knowledge of Broadway musicals is thorough and he references them intelligently. Although he is the resident “task master” among the friends, he still enjoys humor and jokes with the other characters, usually in a dark or sarcastic manner. As the show inches closer to Broadway, Jeff’s grounded nature allows him to stick up for the script as it faces the scrutiny of the producers. Jeff cares deeply about the project and will not let his artistic integrity be compromised easily.
3. Hunter. Hunter is the resident pop culture aficionado of the group, and he loves to reference this in his interactions with the other characters. If there is the slightest opportunity for him to sneak in a joke, he will take it. In fact, when another character calls him out about his humor, he admits to needing “to give [him]self a

funny line” (I-7-42). Like Jeff, Hunter’s knowledge of all things Broadway is inimitable, although he admits early on to “hav[ing] opinions about stuff [he’s] never seen all the time” (I-1-6). This perhaps hints toward the fact that Hunter has taken on the opinions of others during the course of his many conversations about theatre, without necessarily having any personal experiences to support those opinions. This is true of many people, although few may be willing to admit it, and so, therefore, we see in Hunter’s joking sensibility the truth and honesty of his character.

Hunter possesses the deep-seated drive to see his musical succeed on any terms necessary, and as he strays farther away from his own integrity to achieve his goal, his social interactions change drastically. He no longer rattles off jokes and pop culture references, and is deemed “All-Business-Hunter” by his castmates (I-11-80). The show’s climax is a result of Hunter’s drive toward success, which eclipses his need to remain truthful to himself, and the social environment surrounding this conflict becomes strained as friendships are tested. As Hunter realizes that his integrity is more important to him, the social environment eases and things return to normal, as evidenced by the last lines before the “Finale,” when the two best friends are able to poke fun at one another with love and affection.

4. Heidi. Heidi’s social patterns evolve the most of any character over the course of the show, inciting changes in the principal characters. Being new to the group, she enters with an optimistic and sunny, yet somewhat cautious and reserved

demeanor. She must learn how she fits into an already-established group of friends. She already knows Jeff, so her social interactions with him are easy and natural, and she connects with Hunter almost instantly. On page I-2-14, they share a bonding moment when Heidi calls Hunter out on his Broadway trivia. After her line, “Is it me or did it just get like three degrees gayer in here?” the stage directions plainly state, “(HUNTER and HEIDI connect).” Heidi has the most difficulty bonding with Susan. Explored in the song “What Kind of Girl is She?” the two girls sense that they are polar opposites, and each feels the other may pose a threat to her friendship with the boys. This eases over time, and the two share a growing fondness, evidenced in their scene backstage at the show’s festival run (I-9-57), continuing through the song “Secondary Characters,” at the end of which (as the lyrics state in the song), the two have become best friends (I-9-60 through I-9-61).

After Heidi establishes her place in the group of friends, she must balance her show business career with her friendships. Being the only working actor in the group, Heidi must explore paying jobs outside the development of the show. This leads to the awkward situation of having to tell her friends she may be unavailable to continue with their project, and while she is careful to not hurt anyone’s feelings, her own end up being hurt when she realizes the boys have considered replacing her while she is performing in *The Little Mermaid*. This adds to the climactic conflict in the show, and the social structure Heidi was so careful to develop with the group crumbles after the “Awkward Photo Shoot” song.

Interestingly, there is no clear-cut resolution to this conflict, and while Heidi does encourage the boys by telling them, “. . . this is your story, and you guys should tell it your way” (I-13-90), the audience never learns exactly how the team works around this conflict; this resolution is of little importance to the story—Heidi’s actions are shown only to incite change in the principal characters, and her own personal conflicts and resolutions are inconsequential to the outcome.

Nevertheless, by the end of her song, “A Way Back to Then,” Heidi’s social interactions with the group are back to normal, and her love and support for the boys is unquestionable during the rest of the show.

5. Susan. Always willing to make a joke at her own expense, Susan has the most consistent social interactions throughout the show. From her first scene, when she pokes fun at her day job and her singing abilities, through “What Kind of Girl is She?,” in which she calls attention to her nose, Susan is always using herself for comedic relief. Much of this may stem from her own insecurities, but by laying them on the line for all to see, she adapts with confidence and integrity. In fact, she also serves as a moral center for Hunter and Jeff as they find themselves challenged by their own insecurities and integrity issues, offering guidance and advice in a manner that is almost motherly.

Religious Environment

Religious environment is never made explicit in the script. Aside from obvious thematic parallels, such as the exploration of creation, and textual metaphors, including the slaying of “vampires” as a way to deal with one’s own self-consciousness, a God figure is not

explored at all. The characters may be religious or spiritual, yet their faith does not directly effect the plot of the story.

Previous Action (underlined in red on original script)

Polar Attitudes

Jeff

1. At the beginning of *[title of show]*, Jeff is complacent—a passive “watcher” who makes judgements about the integrity of those more successful than himself, rather than an active “doer” who must consider his own integrity.
2. At the end of the play, Jeff is passionate about his actions and is willing to fight to keep his artistic integrity intact.

Hunter

1. At the beginning of *[title of show]*, Hunter is a silly, unfocused outsider, frustrated with his life, who daydreams about finding success at any cost.
2. At the end of the play, Hunter is contemplative and shows humility in his endeavors to be successful. He is willing to admit that his creation cannot achieve every definition of success or please everyone.

Dialogue

Choice of Words

1. Group Vocabulary. The authors’ decision to use “everyday” speech in *[title of show]* has been meticulously carried out in the development of the script. The authors’ notes from the script indicate:

One of the goals in writing *[title of show]* was to attempt to capture how people really talk to one another. While it is a musical, we wanted to

explore if there was beauty and entertainment and humor and life in the seemingly mundane. (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”)

As a result of this exploration, the characters use very common, simple, conversational words and sentences indicative of how modern Americans interact with one another. This also includes the use of profanity, most of which, while gratuitous, is not meant to be salacious. In keeping with modern vernacular, words that once caused shock and disdain have found their way into the everyday spoken English language and reflect relationships, feelings, and judgments. In their notes, the authors found it necessary to comment on the use of profanity:

Yes, there is adult language in [*title of show*] and yes we are aware that some may feel feelings about these words. When the f-bomb is dropped, it is important to know that there is a reason. This is how these characters speak. It is capturing the sound and cadence and vernacular of a particular people in a particular time. In some cases (as with *Blank Paper*) it is exploring taking things too far. (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”)

The exploration of profanity in the show is not limited to any one character; all four use profanity at least once. Overall, the words chosen for them are consistently simple, conversational, and slightly humorous. The individual choice of words for the two principal characters provides additional information about each one (see below).

3. Jeff. In this group of friends, Jeff employs the most grammatically correct usage of words. He also spends time correcting the grammar of others. This detail conveys the message that Jeff is educated and is proficient in English. Working as a web designer, he needs a mastery of the subject in order to maintain a successful business. While Jeff’s grammar is impeccable, his choice of words is not elevated

or inaccessible to the other characters. He still speaks conversationally, with casual and simple words. He chooses his words wisely, with thought and care.

4. Hunter. Hunter is very lax in his word choice. He uses informal sounds like “uh-huh” as opposed to “yes,” and overuses the word “like,” especially when introducing quotations or describing the reactions and attitudes of others. This does not necessarily reflect poor education, but simply the reality that the use of proper grammar in his everyday life is not required. He also makes up words, such as “mexillent” and “terlet,” which are a testament to his wacky humor and creativity.

Choice of Phrases and Sentence Structures

1. Jeff. Jeff speaks mostly in complete sentences. He also tends to question the other characters, either earnestly or sarcastically. This is representative of his role as creator and editor of the project he and Hunter are creating; if he does not like an idea, rather than declare his distaste for it, he questions it and either attempts to understand it, or attempts to reveal its erroneousness to the other characters.
2. Hunter. Hunter often speaks in fragmented sentences, indicative of his thought process. One interpretation may be that Hunter rarely filters the connection between his thoughts and speech, and the resulting words and fragments are an outward sign of this. His sentences often times tend toward the recollection of Broadway shows, popular culture, and past personal experiences. This indicates that his images of success are tied to what others think or have accomplished, or

what has been successful in the past, rather than what he is accomplishing in the present.

Choice of Images

1. Jeff and Hunter. The two principal characters often sing duets together, rather than solos, which results in the lumping of their images into several that are shared.
 - a. “The seed of an idea” is the first image used in the show. In the opening number, Jeff and Hunter liken their creative endeavor to a plant seed, confident that all an idea needs is nurturing to make it grow into whatever it may become.
 - b. Both characters have an idea of success following in the footsteps of others, which is demonstrated in the lyrics to “Two Nobodies in New York.” They sing about television actors performing their work, which leads to a sitcom, which in turn leads to an appearance on *Ellen*, who will garner them mass popularity. While this fantasy may be harmless, it gives the power of their success over to the actions of others, instead of basing it on their own work. This sets up Susan’s role in the play later on (see below).
 - c. In “An Original Musical,” the audience is presented with the image of a blank piece of paper trying to become a genuine original musical, reminiscent of the song, “I’m Just a Bill,” from *School House Rock*. Again the characters are searching for a “formula” for success based on the work of others. Jeff begins to show artistic integrity in this number by opposing

Blank Paper's suggestions. Instead, he chooses to do what he believes will create a better product.

- d. When Hunter suffers writer's block, Jeff helps him realize that he needs to "let the paint dry" (I-4-27), or get his writing out before he stops to judge himself. The characters have learned that being critical too early on in the process is detrimental.
 - e. The song, "Part of it All," is one giant image of what Broadway success means to these two writers. It includes being financially stable, attending fancy opening night parties, getting paid residual commissions, appearing on magazine covers and on billboards, and being recognized by other industry professionals in various ways. As compared to the fantasy in "Two Nobodies in New York," this one is more honest, and the authors begin to realize their dreams as the show moves forward.
 - f. Hunter's dialogue contains two food-related images. First, he relates his writing to having "donuts for dinner" (I-5-33), a practice that is enjoyable in the process, but later regrettable, when hunger sets in again. Also, he refers to his behavior during an argument with the other characters as "throwing up" (I-12-87), and philosophizes that sometimes throwing up actually makes one feel better afterward.
2. Heidi. Heidi's images offer commentary on the Broadway world and success.
 - a. Heidi uses recurring images that deal with fitting the mold versus creating it. In her first scene, she has just come from an audition for *Mamma Mia!*

on Broadway, and explains that she loses the part to another actress because the actress fit the pre-existing costume, rather than as a result of her talent (I-2-12). Later, she thanks Jeff for creating a piece in which she does not have to recreate something done previously by someone else. She says, “I am the mold” (I-6-36).

- b. In her song, “A Way Back to Then,” Heidi conjures the image of a carefree child playing, and suggests that one’s entire life is spent in search of a way to feel as happy and carefree again. The audience should begin to understand that creative expression is the key to this happiness.
3. Susan. Susan’s imagery resides heavily in metaphor—when she does not use the word “is” to introduce her metaphors (i.e. “A vampire is any thought or person or feeling . . .”) she uses the word “like” to create similes that offer the other characters visual representations of her ideas.
 - a. As the antithesis to Heidi’s revelation about artistic expression late in the show, Susan uses images that paint a picture of stifled artistic expression. Many are linked to sensory experiences: she calls herself a “corporate whore” at her day job; she repeatedly refers to things associated with it as “smelly”—herself as well as the carpet she must replace; and she tells other characters that her job is “killing her softly,” and makes her feel “mumpy.”
 - b. Interestingly, although Susan suffers a lack of creativity at her day job, she is also the sole character who knows the way to artistic freedom. During

the song, “Monkeys and Playbills,” she says, “writing should feel easy, like a monkey driving a speedboat. . .” (I-3-24). A further extension of this, the song, “Die Vampire, Die,” offers explanation to what may prevent the creative process from feeling so easy. She likens self-consciousness, which causes self-doubt, to a vampire creeping up to kill your creativity, and encourages Jeff and Hunter to kill their “vampires” and keep writing, no matter how they think anyone else will react. The audience also sees Susan battle her own “vampires” in regards to her personal insecurities. Susan is self-conscious of her nose and addresses this with humor, saying, “At least my nose could take her nose in a cage match of noses,” giving herself power around this insecurity.

- c. Lastly, Susan concurs with the others during “Nine People’s Favorite Thing,” that ultimately, it is better to be proud of what you have done with integrity and only have a small number of people recognize your accomplishment than to allow yourself to “sell out” to the pressures of others in order to achieve wider success. She uses the image of herself as a young girl, showing up to her church’s cake-baking contest with a tray of Rice Krispie treats. While a red velvet cake wins the competition, one judge votes for her offering, validating her effort.

Choice of Peculiar Characteristics

1. Made-Up Words. Hunter and Susan make up words to use in conversation many times (see “Choice of Words,” above). Examples are “mexillent,” “g’nerds,”

“smell-em-ups.” To an extent, this quirk extends to creative grammatical structures intended to be humorous, such as, “. . . text me what time you want to meet for eats and talks later. I like you. Bye” (I-5-32).

2. Drag Queen Names. All the characters share the peculiar ritual of thinking up hypothetical drag queen names, and texting them to each other. These names usually consist of a common word or phrase tweaked slightly to sound like a proper name. Examples used in the script are, “Farrah Nuff,” “Sara Sota,” “Minnie Van Rental,” “Dorothy Chandler Pavilion,” “Lady Footlocker,” and “Tulita Pepsi.”

The Sound of the Dialogue

As noted previously, the authors used *[title of show]* to explore the natural dialogue between real people in a real place and time. The dialogue is intentionally designed to sound realistically conversational, which allows the actual sensibility of each individual character to stand out. The authors state:

The original cast worked extremely hard on stripping away performance habits and gimmicks and things we had relied on in the past that “worked” for us as actors. It was at times scary and vulnerable to do this, but daring to trust that being ourselves was enough on stage, in our opinion, made the show soar. (Bell and Bowen, “Notes”)

What Bell and Bowen mean by “gimmicks and things [they] had relied on in the past that ‘worked’ for [them] as actors,” are the affectations or put-on personas that an actor might rely on to achieve a desired tone or character. These acting “gimmicks” sometimes result in affected speech patterns and artificial-sounding dialogue, not necessarily to the audience, but affected and artificial to the actor’s own personal speech, and can be

incredibly difficult to shed. An actor may not even be aware of his or her own gimmicks, after years of using them effectively. The original cast took painstaking efforts to be their authentic selves onstage, which best suits the simple, honest sound the dialogue is rooted in—these are, after all, supposed to be their own words. Embracing the natural speech patterns of the actors in subsequent productions will keep the dialogue rooted in realism, even though the actors are not playing themselves. It is necessary to take care in choosing actors capable of examining their own technique in rehearsals to facilitate this process.

Structures of Lines and Speeches

The structure of the lines in *[title of show]* is consistently short. No character has a line longer than a few sentences, and no large speeches or monologues exist. This is typical of the musical theatre genre as a whole—monologues are replaced with songs sung when a character needs to express an idea or explore a thought longer than dialogue will allow. However, this particular musical uses songs largely as an extension of the dialogue, and in songs like “Two Nobodies in New York,” “An Original Musical,” and “What Kind of Girl is She?,” sung dialogue is explored in depth.

An image that works well in examining the structure of the dialogue is that of a ball being tossed back and forth between the characters. One character may start a thought, and quickly pass it off to another character, and then another, as the idea is flushed out and developed. For example:

JEFF. We’re thinking about calling our musical *[title of show]*.

HEIDI. What?

JEFF. Well, the form’s asking for *[title of show]*, so we just thought that...

SUSAN. So *[title of show]* would be on the poster and the programs?

JEFF. (*JEFF quickly agrees.*) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HUNTER. We could have a tag-line that said like “For anyone who’s ever dreamed, it’s time to believe in dreaming again...*[title of show]*...it’s time... believe...dream.”

SUSAN. That’s beautiful, baby.

HUNTER. Okay Larry, let’s fill out the rest of this form. (I-8-50)

This format is extremely typical of the line structure throughout *[title of show]*. Such a structure is facilitated by quick pacing, which keeps the audience from getting ahead of the material, or from experiencing a boring production.

Dramatic Action

Units (also notated on original script) *and Summary of Action*

1. “Here We Are!” (page I-1-1 through I-1-2: “Untitled Opening Number”).
 - a. Jeff: to birth
 - b. Hunter: to plant
 - c. Heidi and Susan: to support
2. “Life As Usual” (page I-1-2 through I-1-3: Hunter’s line, “. . . half watching “Doc Hollywood” on HBO On Demand”).
 - a. Hunter: to warn
 - b. Jeff: to shock
3. “Opportunity” (I-1-3: Hunter’s line, “Did you see that email I forwarded you?;” through I-1-5: Hunter’s line, “Mexillent”).
 - a. Jeff: to spark
 - b. Hunter: to dampen
4. “So...What Are We Writing?” (I-1-5: Jeff’s line, “So...What are we writing?;” through I-2-10: the end of “Two Nobodies in New York”).

- a. Jeff: to pinpoint
 - b. Hunter: to calculate
5. “Assembling the Group” (I-2-10 through I-2-17: “Scene 2: Meet and Greet”).
- a. Hunter and Jeff: to enlist
 - b. Heidi: to evaluate
 - c. Susan: to resurrect
6. “Formula for Success” (I-2-17 through I-2-21: “An Original Musical”).
- a. Blank Paper/Hunter: to guide
 - b. Jeff: to resist
7. “Procrastibating” (I-3-22 through I-3-23: “Scene 3: Procrastibating”).
- a. Jeff: to search
 - b. Hunter: to procrastinate
8. “Scoop Out an Image” (I-3-23: Susan’s line, “You can do this Hunter...unter...unter;” through I-5-28: the group line, “Paint dry! Paint dry!”).
- a. Susan: to ease
 - b. Heidi: to guide
 - c. Hunter: to commence
 - d. Jeff: to research
9. “Dreaming of Success” (I-5-28: Hunter’s line, “I don’t know;” through I-5-32: the end of “Part of it All”).
- a. Hunter: to escape
 - b. Jeff: to succumb

10. “Developing Worthy Material” (I-5-32: Susan’s voicemail; through I-6-36: Heidi’s line, “You know, the mold”).
- Hunter: to focus
 - Susan: to doubt
 - Jeff: to support
 - Heidi: to appreciate
11. “What Kind of Girl is She?” (I-6-36: Susan’s line, “Hey, do you think Heidi’s funny?;” through I-7-39: the end of “What Kind of Girl is She?”).
- Susan: to investigate
 - Heidi: to envy
12. “Vampires” (I 7-39: the beginning of the dream sequence; through I-8-47: the end of “Die Vampire, Die”).
- Susan: to caution
 - Hunter: to interrogate
 - Jeff: to self-doubt
 - Heidi: to support
13. “[title of show]” (I-8-47: Jeff’s voicemail; through I-9-54: “Scene 9: Mail It! Mail It!”).
- Hunter: to label
 - Jeff: to complete
 - Susan: to overcome
 - Heidi: to follow through

14. “The Festival” (I-9-54: Kris Stewart’s voicemail; through I-9-60: Susan and Heidi’s line, “Sluck!”).
- Hunter: to overthink
 - Susan: to cherish
 - Jeff: to execute
 - Heidi: to appease
15. “What Do We Do?” (I-9-60 through I-9-61: “Secondary Characters”).
- Heidi: to bond
 - Susan: to mend
16. “Keep Moving Forward” (I-9-61: Jeff’s line, “Guys, what’s going on?;” through I-9-65: the sung group line, “Holy fucking shit”).
- Hunter: to solicit
 - Jeff: to showcase
17. “Reviews” (I-9-65: Hunter’s line, “Hello?;” through I-9-67: the group line, “Off-Broadway Medley”).
- Jeff: to sympathize
 - Hunter: to comfort
 - Heidi: to excite
 - Susan: to glamorize
18. “Heroes Coming to See Us” (I-9-68: Susan’s line, “John Cameron Mitchell is here;” through I-10-69: the end of “Montage Part 3: Development Medley”).
- Susan: to shock

- b. Jeff: to nudge
 - c. Heidi: to top
 - d. Hunter: to support
19. “What Now?” (I-10-69 through I-10-71: “Scene 10: What Now?”).
- a. Susan: to deflect
 - b. Heidi: to win approval
 - c. Jeff: to resign
 - d. Hunter: to push forward
20. “Keeping the Ball in the Air” (I-10-71: Hunter’s line, “I have another idea;” through I-11-76: the group line, “Yay!”)
- a. Hunter: to publicize
 - b. Jeff: to appease
 - c. Heidi: to celebrate
 - d. Susan: to distract
21. “Change It” (I-11-76: the beginning of “Change It, Don’t Change It;” through I-11-83: Jeff’s line, “I have no idea what OUR show is anymore!”).
- a. Hunter: to assuage
 - b. Jeff: to expose
22. “Throwing Up” (I-11-83: Jeff’s line, “I feel ridiculous;” through I-11-86: Susan’s line, “Hunter!”).
- a. Susan: to pacify
 - b. Hunter: to defend

- c. Jeff: to block
 - d. Heidi: to stab
23. “Apology/Why We Do This” (I-12-87: the beginning of “Scene 12: Final Phone Call;” through I-13-90: the end of “A Way Back to Then”).
- a. Hunter: to mend
 - b. Jeff: to open up
 - c. Heidi: to comfort
24. “What Do We Want to Be?” (I-13-90: the beginning of “Scene 13: Pre-9;” through I-13-93: the end of “Nine People’s Favorite Thing”).
- a. Jeff: to instill principles
 - b. Hunter: to embrace
 - c. Heidi: to fortify
 - d. Susan: to validate
25. “Put the Show Out There” (I-13-93: Jeff’s line, “So;” through the end of the show).
- a. Jeff: to release
 - b. Hunter: to simplify
 - c. Heidi: to celebrate
 - d. Susan: to relish

Detailed Breakdown of Action (on cast member scripts)

Characters

Jeff

1. Desire. More than anything else in the world, Jeff wants to create art that remains authentic to himself as a person, keeping his integrity as an artist intact.
2. Will. Strong.
3. Moral Stance. Jeff's moral values are high. From the beginning, he is honest with himself and the other characters, even if it annoys them or pushes them beyond their own comfort level. Jeff acts as a "voice of reason" to Hunter, calling him out on his faults and always leading him back to what is most important.
4. Decorum. Jeff is careful about how he presents himself to others, always wishing to be perceived as confident and "together." His posture is good, and his grammar is impeccable. He speaks clearly and with confidence, even if he doubts himself or his art. For Jeff, it is important to retain personal and artistic integrity, and he feels this is best manifested outwardly in a highly proper decorum.
5. Summary Adjectives.
 - a. Enthusiastic
 - b. Inquisitive
 - c. Stern
 - d. Composed
 - e. Vulnerable

6. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity.
 - a. Heartbeat – slow, steady, calm; he is working on a project from his home computer and, having done the same thing countless times before, he is un-stressed and relaxed.
 - b. Perspiration – none; dry, relaxed.
 - c. Stomach – calm; though empty and beginning to feel the urge for nourishment.
 - d. Muscles – mostly relaxed and without tension, although his eyes are a little strained from staring at the computer screen for too long, and his fingers and wrists are in need of stretching.
 - e. Breathing – Slow and even, always from the diaphragm and never from the shoulders or chest.

Hunter

1. Desire. More than anything else in the world, Hunter wants to be recognized for achieving artistic success.
2. Will. Strong. His drive is unquestionable; he will do anything to achieve his goal.
3. Moral Stance. Questionable. This is where Hunter runs into trouble. Because his desire and will are so strong, he is willing to compromise what he believes in to achieve success, to the point of changing his art altogether if he believes someone with power will support his work. Ultimately, his friend Jeff reminds him what is really important after Hunter's lack of morals almost destroys their show completely.

4. Decorum. Hunter cares little about his outward appearance and how he presents himself to others, especially this group of close friends. His posture is poor, he adjusts himself freely, sometimes crudely, and he tends to conduct himself as if he is alone in his home even if he is not.
5. Summary Adjectives.
 - a. Quirky
 - b. Lethargic
 - c. Humorous
 - d. Frustrated
 - e. Adventurous
6. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity.
 - a. Heartbeat – quick and even; excited to relay a piece of gossip to a friend.
 - b. Perspiration – a little; he’s “glowing” or “shiny.” The anticipation of his friend’s reaction to his story, plus the fact that he is half-looking at Internet porn have him slightly worked up.
 - c. Stomach – tight and tense, but not uncomfortably so.
 - d. Muscles – poised, perhaps with ambient movement like the anxious bouncing of a leg or tapping of a foot on the ground.
 - e. Breathing – quick and excited.

Heidi

1. Desire. More than anything else in the world, Heidi wants to create an authentic theatrical role. She is tired of replacing other actors or understudying leads, and

longs to make definitive creative choices for herself, instead of replicating the work of others.

2. Will. Medium. Heidi has been able to support herself as a working actress, but finds she must consistently replicate the work of others, or exist in the background as a member of the ensemble. Even during the mounting of this new project—her first real chance to achieve her desire—she puts herself in danger of losing the role because she must take another understudy job to support herself.
3. Moral Stance. Heidi’s morals are unquestionably good, even when her willpower is not strong enough to meet her desire. She is undoubtedly caught between two conflicting entities—a rock and a hard place, so to speak—and she feels badly about letting her friends down.
4. Decorum. Heidi’s outward presentation is reflective of her consistent employability in the acting business. She is clean, crisp, and accessible at all times—qualities casting directors look for in an actor. Her posture is good, and she maintains a level of professionalism in everything she does, even when not in the audition room. This “works” for Heidi, in her everyday life and in her career.
5. Summary Adjectives.
 - a. Professional
 - b. Likable
 - c. Game; willing to try anything
 - d. Conflicted

- e. True; willing to go out of her way to make things work for herself and others

6. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity.

- a. Heartbeat – rapid; she is the last one to arrive and just had a less-than-perfect audition. She knows she is meeting new people, and a combination of being rushed and excited keeps her heartbeat up.
- b. Perspiration – sweating lightly. Again, being rushed and nervous makes her sweat a little, but Heidi is also the type of person to take a moment to calm herself before presenting herself to others, so perhaps she paused a moment in the hall before entering to make sure her perspiration was in check before proceeding to meet the others.
- c. Stomach – a loose knot. The combination of not winning the role at her audition, however many times she has been through the same situation before, and the impending meeting new people has rendered her stomach a little tight.
- d. Muscles – tight, again from rushing and nervousness.
- e. Breathing – short and shallow. Rushing from across town and climbing the stairs to Hunter’s apartment leaves Heidi a bit short of breath upon entering. She is not completely winded, but her quick breathing affects her conversation and decorum until she gathers herself to take a deep breath.

Susan

1. **Desire.** More than anything else in the world, Susan wants to support her friends in their artistic endeavor. Having been somewhat defeated by her own insecurities, she will do anything to help her friends succeed in overcoming theirs.
2. **Will.** Susan is strong-willed and able to separate herself from personal drama to offer objective, clear advice.
3. **Moral Stance.** Susan is uncompromising in her moral stance. She speaks from experience and knows the pitfalls of the artistic experience on the journey toward creative expression. Although she has admittedly been defeated by some of these pitfalls, she has learned from them and guides her friends to help them avoid making the same mistakes. Some of Susan's morals may be questionable to others—they tend to be socially liberal as opposed to conservative values—but they are a good set of principles and she always defends them with integrity.
4. **Decorum.** Susan has adopted an overly casual decorum that relies heavily on her quirky brand of humor. Inside her circle of friends, Susan is unashamed to reveal personal information and to ask hard or sometimes embarrassing questions to exploit the humor in any situation. She is casual, and drapes herself comfortably across furniture, often times removing her shoes to feel more relaxed. This decorum is in stark contrast to her daytime decorum at work, a highly professional and straight-laced decorum suitable for a capital investment firm, which is briefly shown to the audience in the second half of the show.

5. Summary Adjectives.

- a. Confident
- b. Funny
- c. Insecure
- d. Supportive
- e. Reasonable

6. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity.

- a. Heartbeat – slow and steady; relaxed in her friend’s home.
- b. Perspiration – presently, none. However, a hard day’s work had her sweating profusely previously and the residual smell is noticeable, if not to the others, to herself.
- c. Stomach – empty and grumbly.
- d. Muscles – tired, perhaps with a tightness indicative of a long day at the office—knotted back, sore feet and eyes.
- e. Breathing – Slow and unlabored.

Idea*Literal Meaning of the Play’s Title*

The literal meaning of *[title of show]* is relatively simple. It is a question on the entry form for the New York Musical Theatre Festival, the answer of which reveals the title of the new theatrical work being presented.

Symbolic Meaning of the Play's Title

The symbolic meaning of the play's title is addressed directly in the script, and it reveals the meta-theatrical content of the play. At a loss for what to title their piece, the authors considered the play's self-reflexive nature—it chronicles its own inception—and decided the title of their piece is best presented as a question; the same question NYMF organizers were asking of them: “[title of show].” The result is two-fold: the obvious statement that the show is about the creation of a new play, and the suggested statement that the authors have left the title blank, to be filled in by each individual audience member who encounters it. The authors have invited their audience to figure out for themselves what their show is about, and have done so in a clever, meta-theatrical manner, which hints toward the show's upcoming content.

Philosophical Statements (underlined in green on original script)

What is the Play Literally About?

[title of show] is literally about two musical theatre writers developing a new work of theatre to be presented at the New York Musical Theatre Festival, and the subsequent development of the material by the cast into a Broadway musical.

What is the Moment of Climax in the Play?

The moment of climax in the play happens during an awkward photo shoot when it is revealed that Hunter has considered replacing Heidi in the show, one final straw that renders all four friends unable to move forward with the project, as the entire process has flown out-of-control. Each character is passionately trying to secure his or her desire, but Hunter walks out, leaving the fate of the show uncertain.

Why Does the Character Make this Climactic Choice?

Hunter blows up and decides to leave because he feels attacked from all directions: the producers are insisting on changes; Heidi feels like her role is in danger; Larry, the music director, feels excluded; the show is infringing on Susan's high-paying day job; and Jeff is constantly shooting Hunter's ideas down. The result is Hunter's huge blow-up and his withdrawal from the creative process.

What is the Result of this Climactic Choice on the Other Characters?

The other characters, initially affronted by Hunter's incident, reconcile their differences with him. They realize the pressures of impending success have become too much for Hunter to navigate through, and he is lost and scared. Once Hunter clears his head and apologizes, the process continues, "wrongs are righted," and the tough decision is made to proceed with integrity in tact, regardless of the pressures of commercial success.

Moods

Mood Senses and Mood Image

1. Unit 1: "Here We Are!"
 - a. Sight – a curtain being drawn, letting light flood into the room.
 - b. Sound – birds chirping as dawn approaches.
 - c. Taste – crisp; like a grapefruit.
 - d. Touch – the spark of static electricity.
 - e. Smell – fresh-brewed coffee.
 - f. Image – like a stop-motion video of a sapling sprouting from a seed.

2. Unit 2: “Life as Usual”
 - a. Sight – a crowded subway train.
 - b. Sound – a honking car horn.
 - c. Taste – bland, like unseasoned chicken.
 - d. Touch – stiff rubber, like a tire.
 - e. Smell – musty, like an old broom closet.
 - f. Image – like a favorite song being played on repeat.
3. Unit 3: “Opportunity”
 - a. Sight – a blurry image, like opening your eyes underwater.
 - b. Sound – a creaking door opening.
 - c. Taste – neutral, like water – willing to take on another flavor.
 - d. Touch – a faint breeze against the face.
 - e. Smell – the faint smell of gas, like turning on a gas burner on the stove.
 - f. Image – like approaching an unknown door for the first time.
4. Unit 4: “So... What Are We Writing?”
 - a. Sight – a blank white piece of paper.
 - b. Sound – a dial tone.
 - c. Taste – cool, like chewing on a piece of metal.
 - d. Touch – flat and smooth.
 - e. Smell – a new library book.
 - f. Image – like trying to start the car by turning over the engine.

5. Unit 5: “Assembling the Group”

- a. Sight – birds landing on a power line.
- b. Sound – the excited din of a cocktail party.
- c. Taste – spicy salsa.
- d. Touch – a slap on the back.
- e. Smell – someone cooking a mouth-watering dish next door.
- f. Image – like watching people enter through a revolving door.

6. Unit 6: “Formula For Success”

- a. Sight – a recipe in a book.
- b. Sound – the chant of the Little Engine That Could: “You can do it!”
- c. Taste – sweet and sharp, like peppermint.
- d. Touch – steadily warmer and warmer.
- e. Smell – luxurious perfume, complex but enticing.
- f. Image – like a *Schoolhouse Rock* television special.

7. Unit 7: “Procrastibating”

- a. Sight – someone stopping at the top of a busy escalator.
- b. Sound – a ticking clock.
- c. Taste – bland, monotonous.
- d. Touch – the cold remnants of a once-hot meal.
- e. Smell – the faint smell of gasoline.
- f. Image – like a roller coaster screeching to a halt just before the big drop.

8. Unit 8: “Scoop Out an Image”

- a. Sight – a boiling pot of stew.
- b. Sound – a singular voice rising above incessant babble.
- c. Taste – exotic Cantonese cuisine.
- d. Touch – quick vibrations.
- e. Smell – fresh sea air.
- f. Image – like choosing one of many paths to walk on in the park.

9. Unit 9: “Dreaming of Success”

- a. Sight – a lounge chair on the beach.
- b. Sound – tinkling of ice in a cocktail glass.
- c. Taste – smooth and creamy.
- d. Touch – silky.
- e. Smell – coconut.
- f. Image – like watching a fantasy film you would give anything to be in.

10. Unit 10: “Developing Worthy Material”

- a. Sight – a unorganized pile of old photographs.
- b. Sound – the babble of children playing on the playground.
- c. Taste – dark chocolate; a hint of bitterness.
- d. Touch – plump and firm, like an overstuffed pillow.
- e. Smell – freshly popped popcorn.

- f. Image – like being proud of the flower you have drawn, because it is yours, but wondering if the assignment was to draw the whole bouquet.

11. Unit 11: “What Kind of Girl is She?”

- a. Sight – dogs sniffing each other’s backside to say “hello.”
- b. Sound – Scooby Doo’s “huh?” sound.
- c. Taste – overly complex; hard to pick out the main ingredient.
- d. Touch – fine-grain sandpaper; deceptively smooth, but still rough.
- e. Smell – an unidentified odor you might experience in line at the post office.
- f. Image – like trying to determine the flavor of jelly bean you just popped in your mouth; you are not sure if you like it, but it is too late to choose something else.

12. Unit 12: “Vampires”

- a. Sight – a swarm of gnats.
- b. Sound – the buzzing of bees.
- c. Taste – arugula; sharp and bitter.
- d. Touch – sharp and spiky.
- e. Smell – garlic; pungent.
- f. Image – like hacking through an overgrown forest that only seems to grow more dense with each swing of the scythe.

13. Unit 13: “[title of show]”

- a. Sight – wrapping paper.

- b. Sound – the sound of scissors closing.
- c. Taste – spicy; like a Chilean wine.
- d. Touch – bumpy and irregular.
- e. Smell – the faint odor of perspiration.
- f. Image – like taste-testing an entree before it is sent to the food critic.

14. Unit 14: “The Festival”

- a. Sight – a busy airport.
- b. Sound – a dance club.
- c. Taste – a gin and tonic; sharp and refreshing.
- d. Touch – bumpy and fast; like driving a car down a gravel road.
- e. Smell – gunpowder.
- f. Image – like being shot out of a cannon in front of a large crowd.

15. Unit 15: “What Do We Do?”

- a. Sight – a sudden blackout.
- b. Sound – crickets.
- c. Taste – weak tea; bland.
- d. Touch – hard.
- e. Smell – bleach.
- f. Image – like walking into the doctor’s office and finding that the receptionist is missing.

16. Unit 16: “Keep Moving Forward”

- a. Sight – a circus tent.

- b. Sound – a trumpet fanfare.
- c. Taste – granola; sweet and crunchy.
- d. Touch – brisk; wind in the face.
- e. Smell – the anticipation of cotton candy.
- f. Image – like the swirling images on a kaleidoscope, slowly coming into focus.

17. Unit 17. “Reviews”

- a. Sight – floating trash on a beautiful lake.
- b. Sound – raspberry; a fart sound.
- c. Taste – bittersweet.
- d. Touch – the crawling of ants.
- e. Smell – cinnamon.
- f. Image – like being picked last in gym class, but winning the game anyway.

18. Unit 18: “Heroes Coming to See Us”

- a. Sight – fireworks.
- b. Sound – applause.
- c. Taste – Pop Rocks.
- d. Touch – a massage.
- e. Smell – Christmas morning.
- f. Image – like a child going to Disney World and meeting Mickey for the first time.

19. Unit 19: “What Now?”

- a. Sight – a weakening pulse on a heart monitor.
- b. Sound – “wah wah wah.”
- c. Taste – rancid; old milk.
- d. Touch – poking.
- e. Smell – burnt coffee.
- f. Image – like when the other team comes from behind and wins the game in the final play.

20. Unit 20: “Keeping the Ball in the Air”

- a. Sight – juggling.
- b. Sound – hummingbird.
- c. Taste – the first chip out of the bag.
- d. Touch – holding a cup of hot cocoa on a cold day.
- e. Smell – smoke.
- f. Image – like keeping a volleyball in the air.

21. Unit 21: “Change It”

- a. Sight – spinning pinwheel on the computer screen.
- b. Sound – scratching of nails on a chalkboard.
- c. Taste – an anchovy on a pizza.
- d. Touch – rope burn.
- e. Smell – blazing inferno.
- f. Image – like a couple arguing in front of their child.

22. Unit 22: “Throwing Up”

- a. Sight – free-fall ride at the amusement park.
- b. Sound – a balloon popping from over-inflation.
- c. Taste – salty.
- d. Touch – sharp; like a tack.
- e. Smell – compost heap.
- f. Image – like a person vomiting in public.

23. Unit 23: “The Apology/Why We Do This”

- a. Sight – a pat on the back.
- b. Sound – phone ringing, then being picked up.
- c. Taste – smooth and even; like warm milk.
- d. Touch – petting a dog.
- e. Smell – macaroni and cheese.
- f. Image – like seeing your house after a long trip.

24. Unit 24: “What Do We Want to Be?”

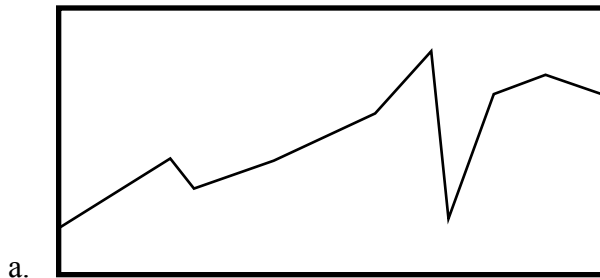
- a. Sight – a light going on.
- b. Sound – a tinkling bell.
- c. Taste – familiar; unsurprising.
- d. Touch – a favorite blanket.
- e. Smell – the smell of a library.
- f. Image – like choosing paint swatches.

25. Unit 25: “Put the Show Out There”

- a. Sight – the landscape as viewed from the top of a mountain.
- b. Sound – a calm wind blowing.
- c. Taste – crisp and clean.
- d. Touch – a hug; smooth, gentle.
- e. Smell – cool mountain air.
- f. Image – like releasing a bird into the sky.

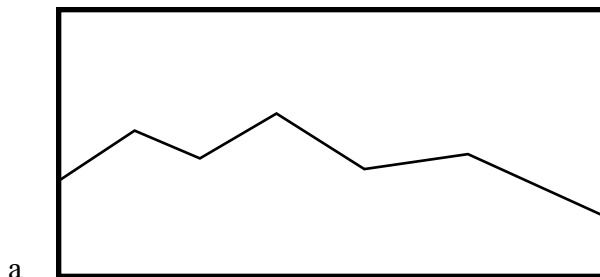
Tempos*Tempo Charts and Tempo Chart Descriptions*

1. Unit 1: “Here We Are!”



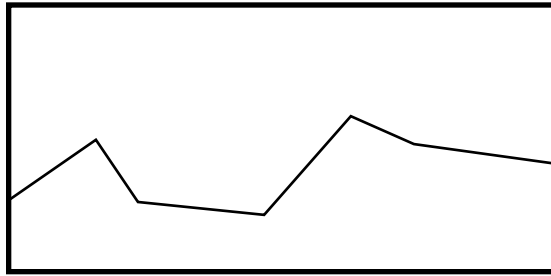
- b. Easy and gentle to broad and loud.

2. Unit 2: “Life as Usual”



- b. Medium and casual to slow and boring.

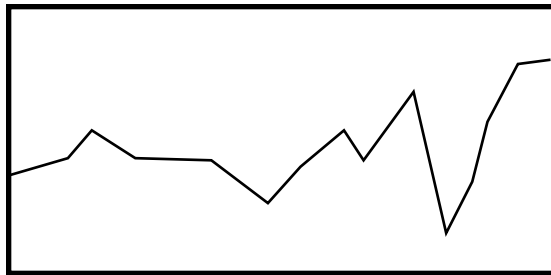
3. Unit 3: "Opportunity"



a.

b. Slow and boring to medium and humorous.

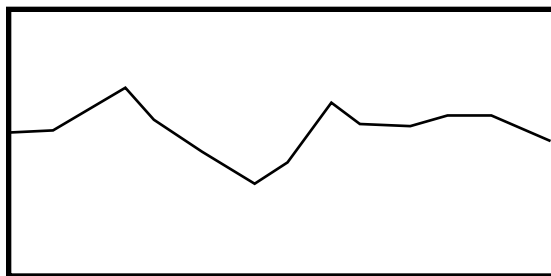
4. Unit 4: "So... What Are We Writing?"



a.

b. Medium and inquisitive to fast and excited.

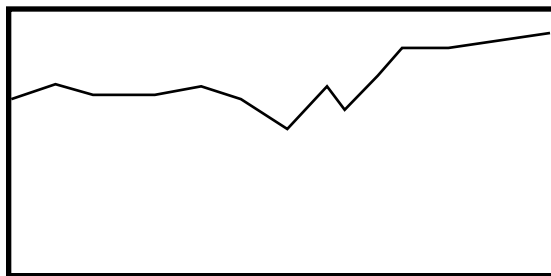
5. Unit 5: "Assembling the Group"



a.

b. Medium-fast and welcoming to medium and concerned.

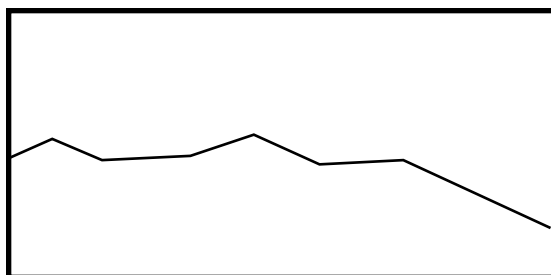
6. Unit 6: "Formula For Success"



a.

b. Fast and helpful to extremely fast and celebratory.

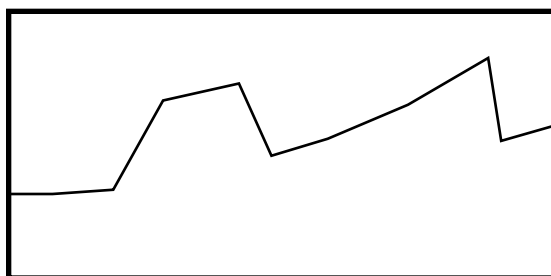
7. Unit 7: "Procrastibating"



a.

b. Medium and enticing to slow and stalled.

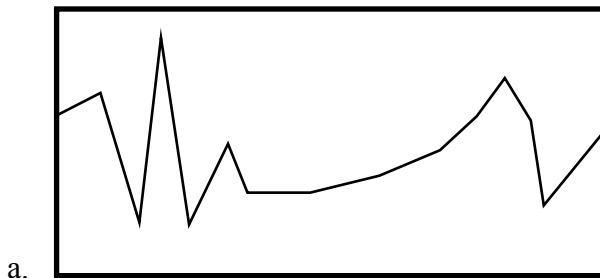
8. Unit 8: "Scoop Out an Image"



a.

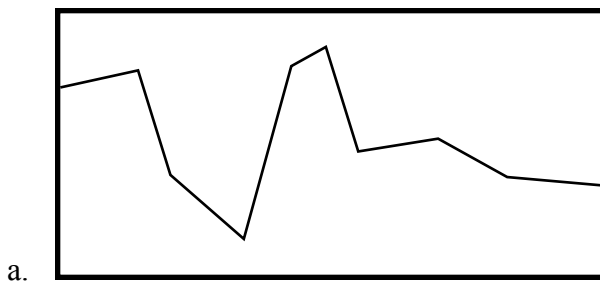
b. Easy and encouraging to medium-fast and exclamatory.

9. Unit 9: "Dreaming of Success"



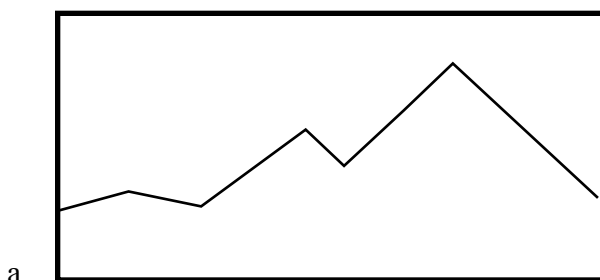
b. Medium-fast and hopeful to medium and confident.

10. Unit 10: "Developing Worthy Material"



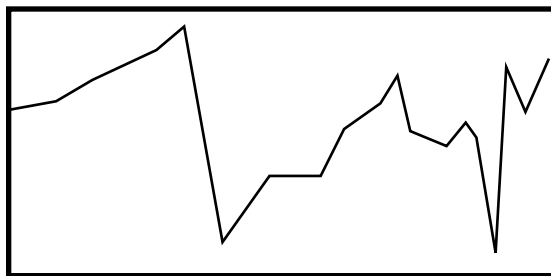
b. Fast and joyous to medium-slow and grateful.

11. Unit 11: "What Kind of Girl is She?"



b. Slow and careful to easy and revealing.

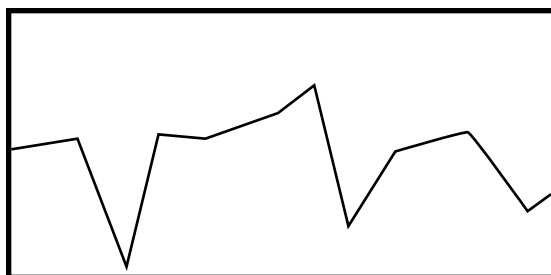
12. Unit 12: "Vampires"



a.

b. Quick and mysterious to fast and determined.

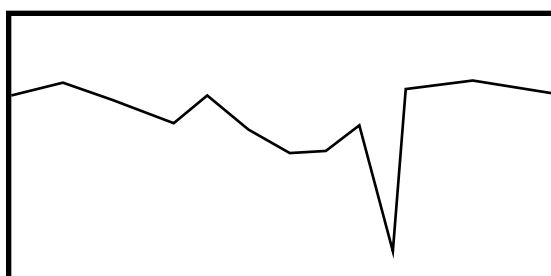
13. Unit 13: "[title of show]"



a.

b. Medium and nervous to medium-slow and questioning.

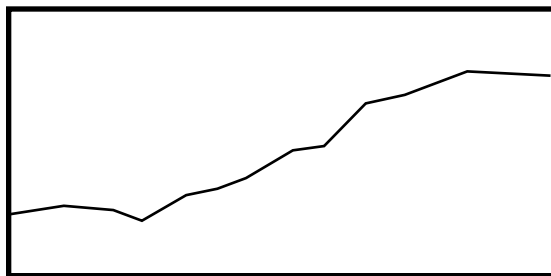
14. Unit 14: "The Festival"



a.

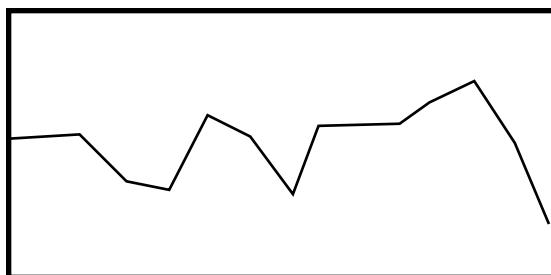
b. Fast and excited to quick and hopeful.

15. Unit 15: "What Do We Do?"



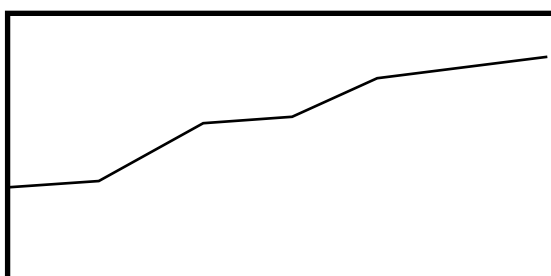
- a.
- b. Slow and unsure to fast and carefree.

16. Unit 16: "Keep Moving Forward"



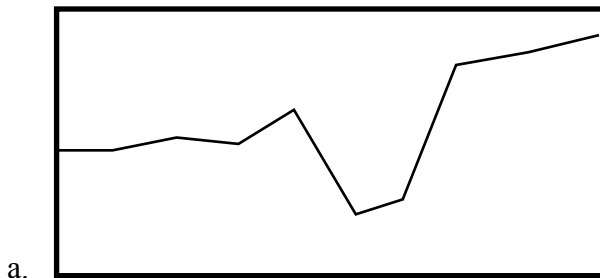
- a.
- b. Medium and enticing to slow and in awe.

17. Unit 17: "Reviews"



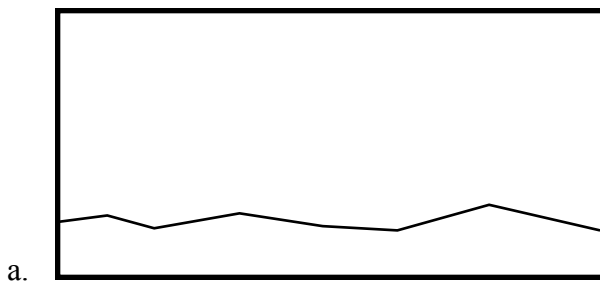
- a.
- b. Medium-slow and disappointed to fast and defiant.

18. Unit 18: "Heroes Coming to See Us"



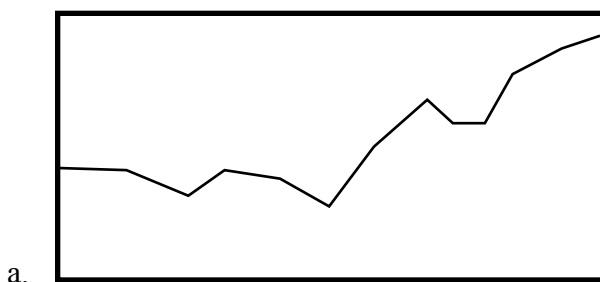
b. Medium and stupefied to fast and abrupt.

19. Unit 19: "What Now?"



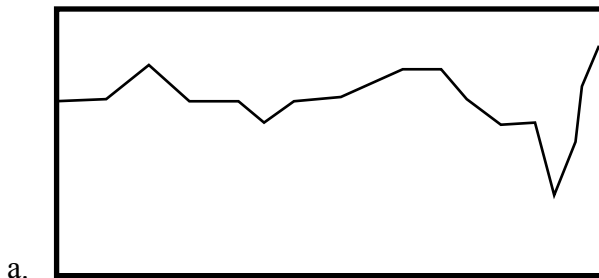
b. Slow and unsure to slow and thoughtful.

20. Unit 20: "Keeping the Ball in the Air"



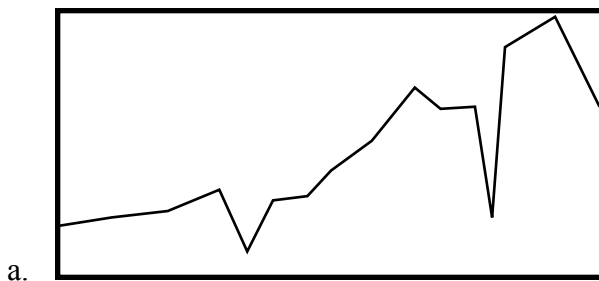
b. Medium and calculating to medium-fast and celebratory.

21. Unit 21: "Change It"



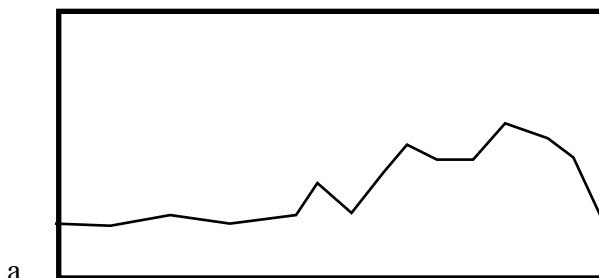
b. Medium-fast and conflicted to fast and confronting.

22. Unit 22: "Throwing Up"



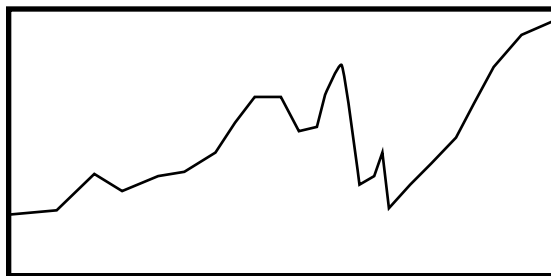
b. Slow and awkward to medium-fast and scolding.

23. Unit 23: "The Apology/Why We Do This"



b. Slow and timid to calm and luxurious.

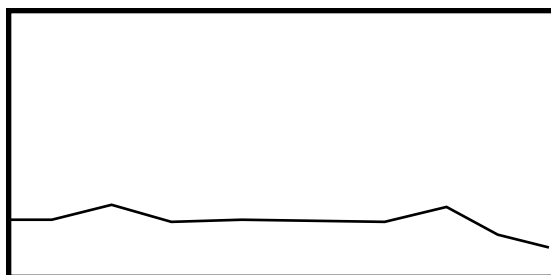
24. Unit 24: "What Do We Want to Be?"



a.

b. Slow and unsure to fast and anticipatory.

25. Unit 25: "Put the Show Out There"



a.

b. Slow and final to slow and releasing.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Working on *[title of show]* for the past two and a half years has been such a labor of love. What began as a way to have fun with material that I loved turned into an honest exploration of the power of the theatre-making process and its usefulness in the educational world and beyond. This process has made it clear that uncensored creative self-expression and a free artistic mind are indeed skills that lead to developing innovative solutions to many different kinds of challenges.

The challenges encountered in this study were found in the students' varied levels of creative self-expression. At first glance, these varied levels may present themselves in many different forms—seemingly trivial personal issues, lack of commitment, uninterestedness, or simple personality quirks—as they initially did to me in this process. The truth is that these roadblocks are very telling signs leading the educator toward areas of blocked creative expression, and they are actually a gift to any educator wishing to engage freedom and ingenuity in young minds. Like Susan preaches in the script, “A Vampire is any person or thought or feeling that stands between you and your creative self-expression. They can assume many seductive forms” (I-7-44), anyone wishing to free the creative mind must hunt down the “vampires” that stand in the way and slay them. This process is as varied and undefinable as the many heterogeneous “vampires” that

stand in the students' way, and the process of finally realizing unencumbered artistic expression will vary with each individual.

For some, like the actor playing Jeff, the blockage of expression can present itself in a disdain for the material and personal trails. For this actor, creative expression was realized in small nuances found to comment on the work. Working with the actor, he discovered that most of the elements of the script that he disliked were actually meta-theatrical moments the authors consciously chose to include, but that they believed were questionable in taste as well. For example, the actor came to the realization that his character was not sold on the idea of the flying dream sequence much in the same way he himself was not, and so it became the perfect opportunity for the actor to authentically employ his own self-expression and impart it to his character. This resulted in a hugely comical moment of the show, when Hunter's enthusiasm for the ridiculous flying dream is undercut by Jeff's refusal to participate in it, even though it is happening all around him. During the performances, the audience ate it up, and the uncontrollable laughter and applause was the reward for the actors' honesty and creative prowess.

For others, like the actresses playing Heidi and Susan, authentic creative expression was realized in the various ways both actresses found themselves inside the motivations and behaviors of their characters. The actress playing Heidi convincingly stood onstage a confident, self-assured woman. Where before she had been worried about the content of the piece, in the end she owned each curse word and adult-themed moment with a new-found natural ease. The actress playing Susan not only found joy and inspiration in her character, but also nuance and humanity. In doing so, she was freed

from the preconceived notions that her character was only comic relief and that her acting was suffering, a belief that was actually leading her to over-articulate her acting choices. Both were freed of personal blockages in the form of ideas they had about themselves.

Despite the infinite variables that will plague the process of freeing young creative minds, there are undoubtedly a few constants that will aid in the process:

1. Full disclosure of the goals and aims of the study. It was important that the students were aware that the directorial team was a stand for them to grow and mature in their craft. Because the students knew from the very first rehearsal that opening up the creative process was at the forefront of this study, they were able to be active participants in the process, instead of oblivious subjects. The aim should be comprehensive knowledge and ability, and this is aided by the participants' active involvement to better themselves and their craft.
2. Open communication between participants and educators, and the development of the rehearsal room as a "safe space." The students must feel that they can come forward with any questions, fears, problems, ideas, and thoughts as the process unfolds. The inability to do so, whether perceived or actual, is another "vampire" to slay that can interfere with the goal of creative freedom. The freeing process is riddled with enough challenges from societal norms, peer pressure, and belief systems; the educator must not add any more challenges to this process than are already present—or must try consciously not to do so.
3. Remember that free, open artistic expression does not always mean that the students will share the educator's appreciation for, or vision of the material. It is

important that the students not be forced to share the same opinions of the material. This may be a difficult idea for the educator to relinquish, as much of the time it may lie outside the consciousness of the educator—it may be unwittingly assumed that all participants are as deeply invested in the material as the educator, or the educator may want to share a love for the material, as is human nature.

Special care must be taken to honor the students' perspective and opinion, and help them to develop an artistic expression based on their own feelings toward the project. This can be a reaction to it, a furthering of the underlying themes and messages of the piece, or a celebration of the piece as a whole, depending on the student.

4. Embrace natural leaders, but avoid favoring them. Sometimes a student will stand out as creatively open and ready to express. Do not mistake one who merely shares the educator's love of the material for this person; an open, unencumbered student is one who questions problems posed by the material, offers multiple solutions, and learns to adapt to the contributions of others. To avoid making other students feel inadequate (another "vampire" in the process), it is important to not publicly call direct attention to this student's expression. Too often this praise can be misconstrued as making one student "right" and the others "wrong." Instead, let this natural leader encourage others to think on the same level.
5. Do homework and encourage others to show up prepared. As director, musician, technical expert, or actor, doing one's homework is an important step in the process and will allow for creative solutions to be drawn as problems arise. The

more prepared one is, the more information one has with which to calculate solutions. There is a subtle difference, though, in arriving prepared and overtaking the process. One must be sure not to impose one's own ideas on the entire group simply because one's homework is more thorough or complete (see Number 6, below). Be an active contributor, not a dictator, and be a stand for those who are less prepared to complete this step and be an active contributor, also. For the educator, this may mean asking many questions of the students, and waiting patiently for them to generate their own answers.

6. Collaborate. Never stop collaborating with everyone involved in the process, and even those who are not. The collective input of the entire group will result in the most effective group creative expression, and will effect more people positively during the process. It was because the group worked as a team that *[title of show]* realized brilliant results in performance, and the audience feedback was outstanding. It was due to collaboration with those outside the production that *[title of show]* had rehearsal space, publicity, choreographed dances, props, set pieces, musical instruments, and much more. Such teamwork and collaboration is the basis of success in many fields, and it is important to remember to take advantage of it in such an intrinsically collaborative art form.

For me, as director, the entire process was rewarding and fulfilling. Watching these four students mature, grow, and extend their talent to new levels of creative freedom was empowering and uplifting, and gave me new assurance that the art of creating theatre can indeed inspire and exercise the creative mind to enable one to meet

any challenge. Thanks not only to the personal discoveries that were made working with each actor, but to the collaboration that is integral to the theatre-making process, the goals of this study—to develop ways to make the process of theatre-making more effective in inspiring the authentic creative expression that fosters growth and positive change—were achieved with brilliant results.

NOTE

1. The page numbers in the script of *[title of show]* are represented by a Roman numeral indicating the act number, a hyphen, an Arabic numeral indicating the scene number, a hyphen, and an Arabic numeral indicating the page number. For example: “I-1-5” indicates Act One, Scene One, Page Five. The use of this format is consistent throughout this thesis, and has been used without citing the authors Hunter Bell and Jeff Bowen hereafter, as the reader should understand that parenthetical documentation of a page number presented in this format always refers to the script of *[title of show]*.

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