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# HOME; A Devised Production

Kelly Wetherald

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***HOME; A Devised Production***

Presented to the Graduate Council  
**University of Portland**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
**Master of Fine Arts in Directing**

by **Kelly Wetherald**  
**May, 2017**

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## **1 - Introduction**

As I approach the end of a chapter in my educational journey, I reflect on the type of artist and person I strive to be moving forward in this field. *HOME; A Devised Production* opened a whole new world of expression, collaboration, and impact that I had been actively searching for within this career. To me theater is the study of people. It offers an opportunity to learn, listen, and empathize with the human condition. It is a forum in which to bravely question, critically challenge, and undoubtedly grow if you are open enough to share and let others in. The theater is a safe place to talk about difficult issues. After completing this project, I know more than ever that my mission is to bring people together to elevate those whose voices are unheard in our community.

Since moving to Portland, I have been engaging with the homeless population at the Blanchet House of Hospitality while working towards my Master of Fine Arts in Directing. I knew that I wanted to find an opportunity to artistically combine both of my life tracks for this thesis production. I had been searching for a play that not only explored some of the societal barriers surrounding the homeless population, but also humanized people through their stories in a way I had seen men humanized at Blanchet House every day. I wanted a play that opened the doors for dialogue around how people become homeless and why we inherently ostracize them based on circumstances. This play needed to be void of judgment, relatable, surprising, and have the potential to shift the perspective of an audience that may see the homeless population as too large of an issue for just one person to solve. This play needed to be universal enough that I could layer in the specificity of Portland's community in the concept and approach. After almost a year of looking, I realized that the type of play I had in my mind did not exist

yet. I needed to build it. Once I stopped looking for the perfect script, I found myself freer, more creative, and motivated in my artistic approach to this type of civic dialogue work.

Throughout this process, my focus was dedicated to five areas of concentration: collecting the stimuli in field research, creating a foundation of tools in the fall workshop series, expanding partnerships in the greater Portland and University communities, discovering the structure and frame of the story, and finally assessing the impact of this work on the community, population, and ensemble. Each of these larger categories will be discussed for the most part chronologically from surveying the Portland landscape through post-process reflection.

## **2 - The Portland Landscape**

The pre-production research that helped build a foundation for *HOME; A Devised Production* includes three major categories. It became necessary to explore the Portland homeless crisis, the community need for this form of storytelling, and the project structure of developing artistic social dialogue. This research inspired the initial direction for conceptual ensemble building as well as offered a best practices roadmap to come back to throughout the rehearsal process.

### **The Portland Homeless Crisis**

You cannot walk down the streets of Old Town Portland and not stumble over some signs of human habitation whether it be a make shift cardboard tent, a tattered backpack, heaps of blankets, shopping carts or bags filled with fast food and trash. The homeless population of Portland, Oregon is impossible to ignore, in fact the demographic is growing more rapidly than any other city in the nation. Under the jurisdiction of Mayor Charlie Hales, the City has issued a state of emergency in affordable housing and it is clear to locals and tourists alike that the issue is becoming a societal epidemic.

Per *The Bulletin* article dated September 24, 2015, “Portland Mayor Charlie Hales is seeking emergency actions to address homelessness, saying that the city needs to quickly address the lack of housing and create more shelters. [...] ‘We’re not solving the problem fast enough’, Hales said” (Wozniacka). Though Portland City Officials launched the Home Again 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness back in 2004 to keep up with the national pressure to eradicate chronic homelessness, it is glaringly obvious that the number of individuals living on the streets of Portland has visibly increased. While the City made positive strides in the start of the ten-year campaign, the crash of the economy

in 2008 and the more recent influx of out of town transplants ultimately halted, if not reversed their progress.

The issue of Portland’s homeless population is much more complicated than the public understands. To evaluate progress or lack thereof on this issue, it is important to draw a distinction between those that are chronically homeless and those that are transitionally homeless. According to The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a chronically homeless person is “either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years” (Office of Community Planning and Development, 3). A transitional homeless individual is someone that falls outside of these measurable requirements for reporting.

Both chronic and transitional homelessness only capture individuals living directly on the streets without any place to reside. However, the homeless epidemic in Portland extends past our visibly chronic and transitional homeless and into those that can hide under the façade of “couch surfing”, car dwellers, and mission hoppers. These are the under-the-radar homeless that are rarely captured in federal and state reports, yet are exceptionally visible to the community at large.

[T]he overall number of homeless people in Multnomah County between 2013 and 2015 did not change — despite the worsening affordable housing crisis — there are still serious concerns. On one particular night, 3,800 people slept on the streets, in shelter, and in temporary housing, and an estimated 12,000 people were doubled up, many in overcrowded and often unsafe conditions. [...] However there was a “48% increase in the number of unsheltered African-Americans from two years ago. Due to differences in the definition of “homeless” between HUD and Multnomah County, it is still a work in progress to find more accurate numbers of homelessness among communities of color. Nevertheless,

supplemental data indicates that levels of homelessness have increased in these communities, including, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians.  
(*Resources: Homeless Statistics*)

The number of 12,000 outlined above and a 48% minority increase in homelessness is a much clearer picture of what the Portland community looks like. These are the homeless that are more visible than ever crowding the streets of the business districts, loitering on every corner block downtown, camping on the Spring Water Trail, and asking for money at the entrance of every on ramp. Some of the public is appalled by the increased visibility of this population, yet they seem to find every opportunity to criticize local officials on their attempts to remedy the visibly homeless in Portland. Unfortunately, the problem we all wish the city would solve doesn't lie solely in the reallocation of tax dollars or developing policy after policy at the civic level, but rather in the willingness of the community to come together.

### **The Community Need**

It is easy to dig your heels into the ground and have an inflexible opinion about the population, the problem, and the failed attempts at remedying it. But I believe that innovation, paired with compassion and a commitment to have a conversation, is the key to incite change within our homeless demographic.

Contrary to the statistics outlined above, “at a national level, homelessness has decreased nearly 11% since 2007” (Griffin). Many cities around the nation have seen success in reducing the rate of both chronic and transitional homelessness respectively. So, the question stands – why is Portland, one of the most progressive cities in the country, severely struggling to move the needle in a positive direction?

Portland is fighting two major uphill battles – (1) housing availability and (2)



society's perception of homelessness and the people who end up falling that far. There are close to 1,000 new individuals moving to the Portland metro area each month and with a housing availability rate at a miniscule 3.4%, there are very limited options, let alone low-income options, available to those in need. "The city is booming, and the homeless are more visible than ever before. Skyrocketing rents, crippling low vacancy rates and a severe shortage of affordable housing are forcing Portland to re-examine its live-and-let-live attitude in a place where residents have long been tolerant of everything but intolerance" (Flaccus).

Portland City officials do recognize that the number one step to eradicate homelessness out of its 9-step process from the Home Again plan was to move people into housing first. If clean and safe housing can be identified for homeless individuals first, then that will create a base of consistency so that supportive medical, occupational, and educational resources can be most effective.

In 2014 a study was conducted by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that correlated individuals experiencing homelessness with mental health issues, substance abuse, and domestic violence altercations. If housing can be secured for individuals facing these struggles, it is much more manageable for the social service sector to address and treat various symptoms and behaviors that trap individuals in the cycle of chronic homelessness.

While the City is struggling to solve the affordable and permanent housing situation, I believe there is another uphill battle that needs tackling. The perceptions of the community experiencing homelessness are a distorted mess of labels that seem to categorize the population as drug addicts and criminal degenerates that like to live that

way. While the Portland community may be too laissez-faire to ostracize this group of people like other cities around the nation, their level of disengagement and lack of ownership of the problem is discouraging. I believe that we have lost our compassion and tolerance for those that struggle in this world. We don't care to address a situation such as homelessness unless it is a direct inconvenience in our daily lives.

Writing for *Mashable*, *Time* journalist, Chris Taylor comments in his article *To help the homeless (...)*, "This is where the homeless become a 'crisis' or a 'problem' or a 'tragedy' to passers-by, instead of unique human beings like you — each of whom has their own story, and needs a little help in changing the plot."

Through working with the Blanchet House of Hospitality, I have personally changed my perception of the lives of our most vulnerable population, for these individuals not only have stories worth elevating, but their stories have the potential to shift perspective and act as a catalyst for change. It is enlightening to hear how parallel their story is to your own, or someone you know. There is a need in our community to unite and tackle this issue of homelessness together because after all, they are us and we are them and that divide is not so black and white. "So before we start to fix the problem, we need to stop talking about it as an abstract problem. Let's visualize it as exactly what it is: humans having a long series of bad days, humans who need your helping hand because they're part of your tribe" (Taylor).

### **Theatre Based Civic Dialogue**

Knowing I wanted to combine both my passion for theater and my commitment to tell the stories of individuals experiencing homelessness, I looked into what it meant to devise such a production. Never having led a devised process on my own before, I found

it necessary to identify what type of experience I wanted my audience to walk away with before sinking too far into the research phase. I knew I wanted this play to be a dialogue, a shift in perspective through coming together as a community. I needed to dig more into what tools I could employ to successfully build a show in the world of “theater for social change”.

To fully understand the intent, impact, and catalyst for working in theatre based civic dialogue, I believe we must understand what exactly civic dialogue is by definition and practice. In a democratic world where citizens all have a right to feel, act, and react by their own volition, it is critical to remember that there is always another side to the story. Only through viewing societal issues from all sides can we truly form an educated opinion and a realistic strategy to solve it. “Civic dialogue plays an essential role in the workings of democracy, giving voice to multiple perspectives on challenging issues; enabling people to develop more multifaceted, humane, and realistic views of issues and each other; and helping diverse groups find common ground” (Bacon, 1). When I consider what makes interesting and effective civic dialogue or practice, I always come back to the undervalued skill of listening: listening to the need of the community; listening to the stories community members want to share; listening and absorbing a reality that is different than your own, void of judgment and void of fear. It is through active listening that perspectives can shift and relationships are built. And in my opinion, successful civic engagement is measured by those relationships built, strengthened, or redefined.

The second component of theatre based civic dialogue is the introduction of theatrical expression as the byproduct of relationship building and community

engagement. According to a study commissioned by The Ford Foundation, *Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue*, “Arts and culture have long demonstrated a unique capacity for creating a public forum for discussing compelling social issues” (Bacon 1). “Civically engaged art requires a recognition of process – the process of public engagement involved in creating the work – as well as product as an aesthetic dimension of the work” (6). The nature of gathering material in which to create a piece of theatre inherently pushes those involved to stretch boundaries and engage with other community groups in an open minded and accessible way.

While theatre based civic dialogue has been around for centuries with more of an informal influence, there has been a distinct trend in the late 1990’s to legitimize the approach and place added emphasis on dissecting its benefits and impact. *Animating Democracy*, having conducted the largest in depth study from 1996-1998, examines three major approaches for civic-based dialogue that I believe to be beneficial to the development of my final thesis production. The spectrum of approaches for civically engaged art includes commentary, dialogue, and action.

Commentary exists on the most conservative side of the spectrum, focusing on presenting an evocative aesthetic that may convey a particular point of view or suggest exploration in many points of view. The commentary usually alludes to the visual presentation of the theme or concept. On the contrary, action exists on the opposite end of the spectrum. Action focuses on the outcome of the piece of work and how it translates directly into a concrete change, whether that is a policy change or a fast, cross-cultural shift in perspective. The process and the product are equally important in concrete social

impact. Dialogue falls somewhere in the middle on the continuum of civically engaged approaches to art. Dialogue strives to explore, examine, and shift perspective, however, the definition of its success is not necessarily measured by concrete outcome. “There is intent by the artist and/or presenter to engage at a level that is more than theme-based or commentary, but which does not advocate a specific action. A goal of dialogue is to increase the public’s capacity to deal with complex issues” (Bacon 31).

### **In Summary**

Spending time researching the struggles of the Portland homeless community and the issues Portland specifically faces with housing provided a launching point for stimuli creation that was grounded in facts authentic to this location. While traditional research was necessary for the process, it was not the only form of investigation I would pursue in the upcoming months. *HOME* needed a component of field research in order to complement the statistical facts defining the Portland landscape. I hoped that by going out into the community, engaging with nonprofit partners, interviewing the population, and immersing the University students in a new environment I would deepen the community’s ownership of this play and discover unique storytelling opportunities.

### **3 - Field Research**

The research and data collection phase of *HOME* spanned nearly eleven months from March 2016-January 2017. Throughout this phase, various partnerships were forged in the community and the two, core ensemble members cast in fall of 2016, conducted interviews to help gather and diversify our data collection. While the audition process will be outlined in a later chapter, it is key to note that Abby Neiryneck and Theresa Foley were instrumental in this field research phase and laid the groundwork for the stimuli used to shape the trajectory of this thesis. The Urban Policy Immersion culminated the research phase of this project and allowed students hands on experience interacting with the homeless population. Each phase will be detailed in this chapter and acts as a key preparatory phase for rehearsal and script generation.

#### **The Hunch/Assembling the Organizational Players**

Since releasing my fixation on finding the perfect play and discovering that I needed to build this story on my own, I quickly discovered what direction I wanted to push forward with developing my hunch. The term “hunch” is borrowed from Moisés Kaufman, the Artistic Director of Tectonic Theatre Project, who defines it as something you know before you know that you know it.

I knew from the beginning of this discovery my strengths and weaknesses as an individual and artist. I am not trained, nor do I have a natural knack for playwriting. However, I am a community connector. I build relationships and partnerships daily through my development work at Blanchet House. I knew I could not create the type of play I wanted to direct on my own, but I could connect the right groups to help me build a pool of ideas in which I could shape and edit to achieve the dialogue I had envisioned.

This arrangement was also a very strategic decision because I was still unsure the angle in which I wanted to approach the exploration of homelessness. I set out to align these partners in early spring of 2016. Through the community building process or as I see it, field research, I came to the original concept and title of the piece, *Dissolving the Divide*; focusing on eliminating the barrier between “them” and “us”, for we are them and they are us.

In addition to securing the confidence of the Theater Program at the University of Portland, I looked to engage The Blanchet House of Hospitality. The Blanchet House was a critical component of this project because of the organization’s direct service and access to individuals experiencing homelessness or in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Incorporated in 1952, The Blanchet House mission is to “feed, clothe, and offer shelter and aid to those in need of a safe place to be nourished and restored” (About Us). Since 2012, The Oregon Food Bank has consistently named the Blanchet House as the largest feeding center in Oregon serving over 350,000 hot meals last year. Not only was it important for me to partner with Blanchet because of their pulse on homelessness in Portland, but also because of the individual stories of the men in their programming. Having access to the population in this way was an asset to this project and my development position with the organization made the opportunity for offsite performances a possibility.

While Blanchet House and the UP Theater Program were the initial key partners, I realized quickly how narrow the story would be if I did not incorporate more voices from both the greater Portland and University communities. I then reached out to Write Around Portland, a local nonprofit that facilitates creative writing workshops for

underserved or marginalized communities. Their philosophy is “everyone can be a writer and benefit from and contribute to their community through the literary arts. Writing is a powerful tool for individual and societal transformation, self-expression, healing and the realization of the dignity of one’s self and others” (Write Around Portland). Working with program director, Sarah Weller, I could organize and execute a 3-time mini summer series for the guests of the Blanchet House Residential Program. I thought that the generated material from these workshops with men who had once experienced homelessness, could create a base of creative stimuli I knew was needed to begin building the bones of this devised production. Riding the success and popularity of the summer series, The Blanchet House decided to adopt an additional ten-week session for guests into the fall and winter months.

The final major partner in this project was University of Portland’s Moreau Center Urban Policy Immersion Program. The Urban Policy Immersion is focused on exposing students to learn about local urban issues and public policies affecting the poor in downtown Portland. This immersion focused on direct service, reflection, discussion, and meetings with experts in the field. I knew that the students that were cast in this project would most likely have little to no experience with homelessness or working with folks who had experienced this type of lifestyle before. I could certainly help guide the research, but the opportunity for direct service and interaction with the population whose stories I wanted to elevate was missing. I then researched immersion opportunities within the University and reached out to Assistant Director of Leadership, Pat Ell and Director, Laurie Laird of the Moreau Center. I pitched the partnership and project concept to Pat Ell prior to summer break 2016, cultivated the relationship by inviting them both out to



the Blanchet House and Farm for tours in May and then met with Ell periodically in the fall 2016 semester. The UP Moreau Center ultimately sponsored the participation cost for five theater students to attend the Urban Policy Immersion in January of 2017.

It was through the process of community exploration and bridge building that I subtly shifted and refined my conceptual approach for this project. Briefly mentioned earlier, this piece was titled *Dissolving the Divide* with the intent to eliminate the barrier between people experiencing homelessness and those that are not. I wanted to comment on the idea that we are not that far removed from our neighbor and only through engaging the similarities do we have an opportunity to change the landscape of homelessness. Harkening back to *Animating Democracy*, I knew I wanted this piece to exist as an opportunity for theatre based civic dialogue. I discovered that *Dissolving the Divide* was limiting and more on the scale of commentary because the young actors I would be casting would not have a choice other than to present or comment on the subject matter because of their lack of first person experience. If I stuck with the initial frame I set out with, the presentation would be more of a gallery of stories rather than an opportunity to engage, humanize and relate the population to the actors and audiences alike. There had to be a shift in perspective.

### **From Homelessness to *HOME***

Knowing there was a need for a shift in perspective to achieve the “dialogue” nature I wanted this piece to reflect, I strategically gave space to the research phase of the process. I knew myself well enough to know that I would not be able to see the necessary shift if I remained steeped in the same environment. In the summer of 2016, I began planning the fall workshop series and preparing for the first round of auditions in

September where I would cast two of the core ensemble members. Much of my preparation focused on physical theatre exercises, Viewpoints, and improvisation techniques that would bulk up my toolbox when working to train young actors to create with their bodies free from self-judgment. In Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints*, I latched onto the idea of point and counterpoint as a deliberate focus moving into the fall semester. So often young actors portray a wash of emotion and I knew I wanted this piece to explore polarities and highlight hope rather than dwell on the heavier subject matter. This 180-degree flip in thinking stuck with me as I reflected on my needed perspective shift for *Dissolving the Divide*.

Simultaneously in my development work at Blanchet House, I had just finished writing a grant for homeless men to build tiny houses as a workforce development program that directly impacts the need for transitional housing in Portland. While writing this grant, there was a great deal of discussion around whether or not these structures would operate as permanent or transitional housing. While the City of Portland needs permanent housing to make a lasting impact on the homeless crisis, transitional housing seems to be best received by the neighborhood communities. Is that because they don't want people experiencing homelessness in their backyard or is it simply because they don't personally know the people yearning for that community?

Through active reflection, listening, and awareness over the summer I realized that this piece was less about homelessness and more about how we, as a society, define and perceive home. The counterpoint of homelessness is having a home. But what if you have a house and don't feel at home? Does that mean that you can be houseless and be at home? Is home a feeling or a place? If home is a feeling, then is it possible to have

multiple homes? I realized quickly that this play was about something much more universal than homelessness, it was about humanizing people, elevating stories, and redefining our perception of home. This shift in perspective allowed more diversity in individual engagement in the project and offered an opportunity for genuine relatability from an undergraduate population of actors. We would have to explore homelessness as a component of the work, but the universality of the piece blossomed when *Dissolving the Divide* became *HOME*.

### **Small Group Stimuli Collection**

After assembling the key partners, participating in fall casting, and launching the fall workshop series, I initiated the next research phase of stimuli collection. Abby Neiryck and Theresa Foley set out to interview two people per week for nearly ten weeks, ultimately building a pool of stimuli for next semester. It was critical to utilize the company members I had early in the process and turn the split casting into an asset rather than an obstacle.

Leading up to the Urban Policy Immersion, Neiryck, Foley and I developed a series of questions stemming from the topic of *HOME* and then went out and interviewed approximately two individuals per week for three months. The question series was as follows:

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been here in Portland?
3. What do you do for a living?
4. How has Portland changed in the time you have been here?
5. What is your most vivid childhood memory?
6. What makes a house a home?
7. Is home a physical place or a state of feeling? Please explain.
8. Can you describe your dream home?
9. What has been your experience with homelessness?

Neiryneck and Foley quickly became comfortable talking with members of the Portland and University communities and I made sure to help facilitate the opportunity for them to talk with recipients of the Blanchet House services. It was just as important for them to interact and interview individuals experiencing homelessness, as it was for them to interview those they were comfortable with. Once we were on an interview schedule, I then called a meeting twice a month throughout the fall semester, to have them come in and perform their interviews as a monologue. Not only did they have to share the information with their company counterpart and myself, but they also had to *perform* the individual that they spoke to. This helped heighten interview awareness of gesture and acute listening for speech pattern and subtext. We then recorded components of their monologue that were most vivid or interesting to us as audience members. Upon performance and feedback completion, they then had to take this information and transcribe what they performed.

The transcribing process allowed Neiryneck and Foley to process the initial interview and their performance with great attention to detail and intentionality with story. My secondary goal for working in this fashion was to generate a large body of text that could be used as stimuli or as character development platforms as we started the rehearsal process. As we prepared for the next phase of this project, the Urban Immersion, Neiryneck and Foley were already in the habit of intentional listening and primed for detailed documentation of stories and attention to vivid imagery in the days ahead.

Upon completion of the first semester, Neiryneck and Foley had collected close to twenty interviews and were now ready to move on to the final research phase of this

project with me. In early January, over the winter break, the three of us ensemble members as well as two others from the theater program participated in an Urban Policy Immersion. This final phase gave direct and authentic exposure to the homeless population.

### **The Urban Immersion**

University of Portland's Moreau Center Urban Policy Immersion offered a unique opportunity for theater students involved with *HOME* to engage in direct service with a population experiencing homelessness. While I still only had two actors that would ultimately be cast in *HOME*, I opened the immersion opportunity to any theater student that was interested in auditioning in the spring or had taken a fall skill building workshop in conjunction with this thesis. Five theater students took advantage of this opportunity. While the student policy coordinators were facilitating discussion and reflection each night in conjunction with the established program structure, I also planted specific design focuses for each theater student to pay attention to within this experience. I thought it was important to offer another lens in which the students could experience this immersion that might come back later in the devised process of *HOME*. This was a unique opportunity to do some deep and visceral research that I hoped could better inform the build of character and authenticity later in the rehearsal room. Specific areas of observation were clothing, sound, lighting, movement patterns, and environmental structures. It was critical for students to maintain an acute physical and environmental awareness in which to draw from later in the theatrical process. This opportunity was essentially immersive research in which to be catalogued and pulled later in the devising process.

Over the course of this immersion, the group visited upwards of ten missions

throughout Portland that offer services to the homeless population. Two lasting experiences for me were an interaction with a woman named Marilyn at L'Arche Portland (a home for individuals with disabilities) and a gentleman named Stephen at St. Andre Basset who simply wanted to take turns reading the newspaper to each other during mealtime. Both interactions tested me in a personal way to shift perspectives around a certain population, and to self-reflect on my own values. Marilyn unknowingly held me accountable to my word of coming back to visit her for dinner by innocently saying "people never keep their promises" and Stephen challenged my perception of individuals experiencing homelessness by sharing his background as a stock floor trader and correct insight into the economic market. He is a father of two daughters and is still wearing his wedding ring from a divorce nearly eight years ago.

I only share these two stories because it is through these individuals that the true impact of the immersion and mission of the Moreau Center on University of Portland's campus became clear to me. In reflection with Director Laurie Laird, I discovered how Marilyn and Stephen reversed the role of teacher and taught me about accountability, the value of a promise, and the power of judgment in just two interactions. This immersion was about much more than just direct service. It was about placing the students in an environment where there was an opportunity to learn from and about those in the most vulnerable of situations. Little did I know at the time that "reversing the role of teacher" would come back to guide me much later in the structuring process of *HOME*.

Of the four undergraduate students that participated in this experience, only the two precast ensemble members would move forward to be in the final company of *HOME*. However, I believe the other two thoroughly enjoyed the experience this

immersion offered and one of them is still volunteering to serve breakfast at the Blanchet House every Wednesday morning at 6:30am!

The Urban Policy Immersion concluded the bulk of the field research done in preparation for *HOME*. Through linking up with Blanchet House, Write Around Portland and the UP Moreau Center, the ensemble had a wealth of information to pull from throughout the devising process. Their toolboxes were loaded with facts, stories, and authentic experiences in which to pull from for content and character generation.

#### **4 – Fall Semester**

The fall semester was a critical component in the devised process of *HOME*. The additional time prior to rehearsals in January allowed key ensemble members to collect stimuli and conduct extensive field research within the Portland community. The fall semester also provided an opportunity for me to teach additional devising skills to the students interested in the production. After participating in fall auditions and casting Abby Neiryneck and Theresa Foley as core ensemble members, I set out to execute a new skill-building workshop each of the next four months. The workshop series outlined for the first semester was intended to create a springboard of devising skills for students to learn, experiment, and dive deeper into each session. This would serve as preparation and build vocabulary that would ultimately help develop ensemble members at the start of the rehearsal process spring semester.

The initial schedule for the workshops was designed to develop skills tailored toward experimentation with physicality and building story without text. I set out at the beginning of the semester to create a foundation of training where students understood several major Viewpoints of Time and Space such as tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, spatial relationship, repetition, topography, shape, architecture, and gesture. Then we could work from this physical language and layer in elements such as design, sound/music, and improvisation from found and generated text.

#### **Casting Part 1**

Because of the size of the Theater Program, I was unable to cast a full ensemble at the beginning of the fall semester for a late March production. My audition structure was split between fall and spring semesters where I could cast two members in September that



would be committed to the production in March and the remaining 5-8 members at January auditions. While it is typically advantageous to the final devised product to work with the full ensemble for as long and cohesively as possible, I wanted to build this limitation into my plan from the beginning in hopes of making the split casting process an asset instead of an obstacle. The two actors cast in fall would have an instrumental role in collecting interview stimuli and helping to build the structure of how we explored the topic of home.

Unable to host callbacks on the same schedule as the fall productions, I held callbacks for *HOME* the week after casting was complete for all fall productions. This unfortunately greatly impacted the turn out from the student body with only two individuals showing up for the planned fall callbacks. If attempting this process again in an educational environment, I would be a stronger advocate for *HOME* callbacks taking place at the same time as the rest of the fall shows. I ended up changing the first September workshop into a second casting call due to the lack of initial attendance.

### **The September “Audition”**

While I anticipated diving directly into a three-hour workshop centered on Viewpoints for the September session, a slightly altered fall audition process shifted my workshop series scheduling. I elected to run the September workshop as an extended audition where I took a group of seven students through a skimmed down sampling of several devising techniques in hopes of finding two participants for the core ensemble cast of *HOME*. I broke the workshop up into four focuses; Viewpoints, improvisation, text generation, and ensemble devising.

We started the Viewpoints session with an introduction of soft focus and the methodology that I like to refer to as “one mind, many bodies”. This concept is easily applied to sun salutation warm ups and jumping jacks where the goal is to start and stop as one with no one member leading the group. My goal was to emphasize how important extraordinary listening is to the development of an ensemble. Their awareness of others in relation to time and space and their ability to “listen” with all parts of their body is critical when working as a group. Once we worked through these exercises, students commented on the palpability of the air when they felt like they were close to completing the task. They also thought that the idea of taking care of one another and always remaining present was incredibly difficult and draining. With this initial session, I also wanted to introduce the students to tempo, duration, kinesthetic response and spatial relationship. These four elements I have found to be the major building blocks of Viewpoints training and ultimately the most digestible for young actors new to physical theater training.

After exploring our way swiftly through this work, the workshop ensemble of seven transitioned into some basic improvisation techniques, working to break down self-censored barriers and encourage impulsive and non-linear thinking. Based upon Del Close and Charna Halpern’s *Truth in Comedy*, we dove into the Pattern Game. This game composed of simple word association focuses completely on making connections and challenging yourself to not associate opinion with your immediate responses. The Pattern Game encourages connections between words rather than biased points of view that lead to dead ends. “Making connections is as easy as listening; remembering, and recycling information. When patterns in scenes are noticed, and *played* they create continuity in the

scene” (Halpern 16). In addition to creating strands of generated words and themes, students were able to practice the “yes, and...” mentality which is a key component of improvisation and a critical building block for devised theatre. The luxury of time that might allow them to come up with the wittiest or most correct linkage did not exist. They had to maintain the tempo of speech and act and react from a genuine place of spontaneity. I found this exercise to be beneficial during the workshop because I believe that it got the students out of their head and comfortable speaking from a place of nonsense.

The third component of this first workshop was focused around text generation. I took the concept of generating a string of material from the improvisation exercises and applied it to a sentence of found text that the students could add onto and build a paragraph that may or may not make logical sense. I wanted to give them some experience with writing that didn't necessarily need to be tied to linear story. First we started with listening to a passage from Father Gary Smith's *Street Journal* and jotting down as many one word impressions we could from that passage in a 30 second time frame. From that list of words, students were asked to select three at random. I then placed them in two groups and asked them to select one word out of everyone's list that they were most drawn to. That word was now their point of view and they would follow instructions based upon that point of view. For example, one workshop participant was assigned to write from the point of view of “turmoil” and all her following sentences were influenced or directly motivated by a feeling of “turmoil”. Another student's point of view was “impatience” and another's was “love”. The following text was generated from a seed sentence and their respective points of view.

Blood was pulsing through his veins as the dirt flew behind.

There was both a literal and figurative expanse of space – a distance – being created between them at that moment

They moved at different speeds through the world – Jules in his brand new car, buildings and streets flashing by his window while his brother trudged along, wading through what was missed

I am missing him, my internal system is cold, it's run dry.

No longer blue but red but free.

My mind, my heart, my body are no longer bound- my existence is no longer tethered to his

And I am now free to do as I please with my life

Time will pass, will I forget this?

This was a great exercise that challenged the students to write freely and express on paper with a directed point of view. I anticipated coming back to this type of generative writing in the process of building *HOME*.

The final exercise explored in this first workshop focused on bringing all the three newly learned skills together. Here groups had the opportunity to build a short piece based upon some container guidelines that incorporated Viewpoints, improvisation techniques, and text generation and implementation. The group was tasked with creating a 4-minute piece that had the following criteria:

1. Beginning, Middle, and End
2. 15 repetitions
3. 15 seconds of silence
4. 10 seconds of stillness
5. One unison stop
6. An abrupt shift in tempo
7. Once line of text from your generated materials
8. All members must be used in the piece

Each group began quickly working to think through the task and create a plan of attack for the assignment. What I found the most interesting about observing our students at University of Portland was their fear of failure and their inability to logically think while being physical. It took quite a lot of poking to get students to begin to troubleshoot and brainstorm on their feet rather than planning every nuance through in their mind. Once I reminded the two groups to utilize the Viewpoints and improvisation skills we had developed earlier that session and encouraged them to try by doing rather than by planning, their commitment to the task increased. This brief introduction to new skills encouraged students to explore physically with heightened attention to space and time all while fostering a concept that devising artists like to call the Hot Hand. The Hot Hand is a practice that builds trust and idea generation in ensembles. The member who has the idea on what to create has the Hot Hand and all other members trust and encourage with the “yes, and...” principle. When one person loses the Hot Hand, another picks up with the next idea and the flow of ideas continues to cascade off one another. I found that those that were most successful and creative in the final product were those that took the risks and trusted the ensemble to guide the process.

This first September workshop was very beneficial to test elementary lessons on the University student body and then learn what and how they responded best. I could refine and dive deeper into the next series of workshops because of the introduction to the basic material in the first month. By re-configuring the initial workshop format, I could see a variety of skills all at once and successfully cast Theresa Foley and Abby Neiryck as my first two core ensemble members.

## **October-December Workshops**

The following three workshops in the series focused on diving deeper into Anne Bogart's Viewpoints, sequencing, and rhythm and tempo with movement. My intent for starting with a Viewpoints foundation was to create a common language between ensemble members. Viewpoints training not only heightens physical and spatial awareness of the actors, but also helps to quickly build ensemble and generate material. By creating an environment of possibility, surrender, and creation through movement, the pressure of having to make the "right choice" is released from young actors. The goal is more about learning to play and communicate with one another both physically and in relation to the environment. In the first September workshop, I introduced students to several Viewpoints of Time and Space; including tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, and spatial relationship. I wanted to be sure to revisit these Viewpoints in more depth and use them as a springboard and linking agent to transition between the workshops in the series. I set out to explore these Viewpoints more deeply and to introduce repetition, topography, and architecture as we progressed through the following three sessions.

I made a deliberate decision to leave out shape and gesture at the October Workshop to counteract my experience with the students who attended the September workshop. What I discovered upon further reflection was the student's inclination to layer in character or point of view to their movement quality. From personal experience studying Viewpoints and experience working with the student body, I thought shape and gesture would best be of use if introduced in a later month of the series. In the beginning, I focused on creating a common language, building ensemble, and fostering an environment built from following uncensored impulses.

Over the next three sessions, I would set out a plan for rehearsal and then more often than not, that plan would change. I would reflect on how the workshop unfolded in practice and then make adjustments for each next session. I found this plan-practice-reflection formula beneficial when trying to best optimize my time with the students.

### **The Plan**

When preparing for these workshops, I had to keep in mind that not every student that came to the September workshop would attend October, November or December's sessions and vice versa. Apart from the two recently casted ensemble members, Theresa Foley and Abby Neiryck, I needed to prepare for new members each time. These workshops were challenging to build from because of the inconsistency of participants, so I needed to tailor my approach so it would be successful standing completely on its own. I discovered quickly that I needed to rely on my reflection from the workshop prior and re-use what worked in the beginning of the class to help refresh repeat attendees while simultaneously building a quick base for those that were new to my teaching style and to Viewpoints.

I wanted to begin incorporating my secured ensemble members into the workshop process. Both Neiryck and Foley were an asset to this process because of their commitment to the entire workshop, devising, and performance process. I prepared several energy and focus exercises that I intend on having them lead. They would help bring up the energy of the group and then lead actors in "soft focus" exercises such as jumping jacks, Twelve/Six/Four, and Sun Salutations for the first month. As we progressed throughout the following months they would have an opportunity to refine how they would lead and follow in exercises with new groups of students.

Throughout the series, I planned on leading the group through the Viewpoints of Time to include tempo, duration, kinesthetic response and then a new Viewpoint from last workshop, repetition. My intent was to dive deeper into each of these concepts and stretch the stamina of the group. Instead of spending thirty minutes on all elements combined, we took the time needed to layer each new viewpoint onto the next. It was my plan to challenge the students to fight against medium, safe choices and predictability in response. I wanted to push them toward choosing extremes and making bold choices that got them to consciously act past their comfort zone. Once they learned a bit of self-awareness with tempo and duration, then I pushed them to become aware of those around them with the introduction of kinesthetic response and repetition Viewpoints.

I planned on working through Viewpoints of Space in the same manner. I started with spatial relationship as a review of last session and then moved into introducing topography and architecture. This was the first venture into Viewpointing off a grid. It was imperative to remind the group to maintain soft focus and not forget what was just discovered through exploring the Viewpoints of Time.

After working through topography and architecture, I wrapped up the workshop sessions with some open viewpoint work. This was opportunity for students to play and explore on their own the variety of Viewpoints that were introduced over the past couple hours. I hoped to split the group in two and have them watch one another in an open Viewpoint session and pull out several visually stunning moments that we could repeat and refine. I think it is important to tie together each workshop in a culminating experience to give the students a sense of performative value. I think especially with the students at University of Portland, they thrive when they see how the skills they have



spent the past three hours learning can apply to a project.

In addition to the Viewpoint work, over the next few months I set out to introduce sound and sequencing with devised work. I wanted to focus on music and sound in conjunction with the Viewpoint of Shape. I planned to highlight how sound has the capability of altering our emotions, state of mind, and intent when we approach one another or our surroundings. Sound and music can easily impact mood, tone, and style of devised work and awareness of those aural tools is something I wanted to layer into the training workshops I created.

When it came to introducing sequencing to young actors, I enjoyed the methodology of Frantic Assembly. They are a devising company based in the UK that approaches their work in a highly athletic and sport conditioning way. They are all about the “ethos of collaboration, of empowerment, of that constant desire to improve. It is about telling stories in a voice we don't always hear and about finding talent in places we don't always look” (Assembly). This company has a great physical approach to devised work that starts from the outside in and is not only attainable but also comprehensible for a young actor to get behind. I was interested in incorporating their sequencing exercises in the upcoming months and working to push students to focus on tasks rather than intention. I needed work that would pull them out of their head, prevent them from getting caught up in the relationship or story and encourage them to simply do with their body rather than plan. Throughout the next three workshops, I planned to sprinkle in exercises such as Hymn Hand, Chair Duets, and Fluff to work on the students sequencing skill set in preparation for next semester.

## **In Practice**

The plan I set forth above was successfully executed for the October, November, and December workshop. However, I learned that my plan had to be flexible from month to month. For example, there were several curricular elements that were altered in the moment based upon the skill, interest, and vibe of the group of students in the October workshop. I had to think quickly on my feet because one of my core ensemble members was unexpectedly called away for another show and therefore was unable to lead the warm up cycle. She therefore missed out on some key Viewpoints building blocks that I wanted her to have going into rehearsals this spring. This quick turn of events brought to light two of my key struggles in building devised theatre at the undergraduate level; limited time and attendance inconsistency. Abby Neiryneck and I later had a separate ensemble session designed to bring Foley up to speed on the new Viewpoints we ultimately explored at the workshop; repetition, topography, and architecture.

Like the inconsistent workshop attendees, we also had varied workshop sizes each time. October was the smallest group of only six students. This turned out to be an interesting challenge and opportunity as we progressed through the Viewpoints detailed in the workshop plan above. Three of the six participants were new and two of them joined the workshop thirty minutes late. It was an interesting adjustment as a director thinking so quickly on my feet. Rather than using the plan as a starting point and trusting that my preparation would allow for the workshop to unfold in a positive manner, I quickly adjusted. I talked through the Viewpoints and spent a bit of extra time on the fundamental four that were explored in the session before; tempo, duration, spatial relationship, and kinesthetic response. I needed to make sure that the new students

understood the concepts with enough time for them to feel successful in their exploration. I also felt myself aware of the waning attention spans of those that had learned these Viewpoints before. With less people in the room, I could balance these perspectives and ultimately give more individualized instruction. I pushed students to use this time to explore the unexpected and strive toward increasing your stamina. Boredom comes from a lack of curiosity.

As we worked through the Viewpoints of Time and Space, it became clear that the newly introduced topics of repetition and topography were going to take more time than I originally planned to integrate into the ensemble's physical vocabulary. This was the first time that students were exploring off a grid format with topography and had the opportunity to make choices with repetition. Therefore, we moved the exploration of architecture to a later month. Architecture introduces awareness of many different elements outside of your own body and control. It deals with the floor beneath your feet, solid mass, texture, light, color, objects, other people and absorbing the whole space and every quality of that space around you. The concept was too large to introduce in the second month and was worked through incrementally in the November and December sessions

One of the largest lessons I learned at the October workshop was trust my gut and listen to the energy in the room. Instead of feeling that pulse and following my instinct to leave Viewpoints for the day, I decided to stick to plan and see how the group would respond to doing some open Viewpoint work. I realized quickly that we were trying to incorporate too much, too quickly and I could feel the group feeling unsuccessful and frustrated. We found a natural point to come to stillness as a group and moved on to a

different activity. Moving into the next two workshops exploring more architecture, repetition, shape, sequencing, and music, I paid much closer attention to my instincts regarding the attention level in the rehearsal space.

It was important for me to find unique exercises that not only tied together some of the concepts that were tackled throughout the day, but also left the students interested in coming back in for the following workshops. They needed to feel challenged yet successful about the hard work they had put in over the three-hour classes. I decided that sequencing was a great skill to wrap up each of the remaining workshop sessions.

Working from an exercise developed by Frantic Assembly, Hymn Hands for October, Chair Duets for November and Fluff for December, I knew I could tie together some of the introduced Viewpoints all while building a sequence of movement that was void of meaning. Expanding on the October workshop, I partnered up the students and had them create a three-touch series for the first steps of Hymn Hands. They could place their hand on their partner's arms, shoulders or hips or move their partner's hands to their arms, shoulders or hips. They would perform three moves and their partner would perform three moves. Then they would connect their moves to make it a sequence of six moves that could then be looped back to the top and repeated. Once they established this series they needed to master it, paying close attention to specific and deliberate movement. I then had them increase the tempo of their series. This was an opportunity to point out what it means to perfect or master a task rather than being proficient enough to get by.

Once I felt the task was mastered, I pulled out an example pair (Performer A – Male and B-Female) and had the group make a circle around them and observe their

series. I then had a different student (Performer C - Male) walk slowly around the outside of the circle and had Performer A keep their focus with Performer C while Performer B stayed focused on Performer A. Once the perimeter was fully walked, I had Performer C join back into the circle and called lights out. I asked the group what they saw. At first the response was silent and then descriptive, “a man walked around a circle watching the pair in the middle”. “A man walked around the circle, another man watching him and the woman stayed focused”. I encouraged the team to keep going with their observations with a simple response of “Good, what else?”. I didn’t want to influence them with any kind of leading remarks; I wanted them to discover on their own. It only took a few more descriptive observations for them to begin feeding off one another’s remarks and layering on relationship to what they had just seen. “It’s a love triangle and both guys want to be together, but Performer A is trapped in a relationship with the woman. He is going through the motions, but you know he doesn’t want to be there.” “Performer A is protecting Performer B from Performer C who is prowling on her. And we are a wall around them that is keeping them both safe from the outside world.” I let them spin off one another for a couple minutes and then recapped the workshop with a reminder that we started this performance simply by building a series that was void of relationship and void of story. We utilized tempo, duration, spatial relationship repetition and topography in crafting this “performance” and we as audience layered on our own meaning.

This type of sequencing work, helped train repeat-workshop attendees to stay out of their head and focus on creating strings of material. By the time the workshop series was complete, students who would never classify themselves as dancers were now able to remember choreography and create strings of nearly 20 different moves that could be

crafted into a story by a director. I anticipate this being a valuable skill for them to have as I push into the deep devising process next semester.

### **Reflection**

I thought that the remaining three workshops in the fall series were great learning experiences for me as a director working on devised work in an educational environment. I learned, while a detailed plan is helpful for my own preparation, I also need to be flexible enough to read the room and know what skills are going to empower students to feel successful as collaborators and creators. This work is less about following a textbook guide on how to devise, but more about tapping into the interests of the potential ensemble, teaching them some skills that will stick with them past the end of the week and cobbling together a variety of exercises that will illustrate the effectiveness of the tools to the students in the moment. It is not enough for these students to learn Viewpoints for the sake of learning, but they need to be made aware of how this can apply to everyday life.

I think certain components of each workshop came across as repetitive. While they understood the concepts academically, I found they grew tired of pushing their physical boundaries for extended periods of time and became comfortable in their level of commitment to the task. As I considered applying what I learned from these workshops to structure a rehearsal plan for the spring, I would continually look for ways to stretch boundaries and create an insatiable appetite for progress within the ensemble.

I also found that the students responded quite well to the Frantic Assembly exercises. I think that sequencing helped tie together many concepts in a practical way these students could digest. I planned on listening to that feedback and using Frantic

Assembly's highly physical, sports conditioning-like approach moving into the next semester. I also planned on using sequencing as the bridge concept into choreography or building transitions in the devised work next semester. Having an ensemble that not only understands, but also applies sequencing as a tool to progress beyond a generative roadblock I believe would be incredibly valuable.

## **5 – Spring Semester**

Moving into the spring semester, I had completed all field research phases with the core ensemble members as well as developed a solid curriculum of tools in the fall workshop series. I now needed to move swiftly into my devised rehearsal process and begin generating material with a group of seven new student actors. As the following chapter unfolds, I would like to take a moment to detail the rehearsal time period allocated for this production. After the completion of casting, *HOME* was able to move into an extended rehearsal period, where two weeklong breaks were strategic in my own personal directing journey. The company would rehearse for five weeks and then attend a weeklong Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in mid-February. I would spend the bulk of that week discovering the content and thematic strings of the play. Upon return from Festival, the company would rehearse for two additional weeks exploring the structure of the play. Spring Break immediately followed where I was able to find the frame of the piece and solidify the final draft. The company would then return memorized for tech rehearsal just four days before opening.

Based upon the nature of this piece, I knew I needed a strong ensemble that could not only creatively work together, but could also support one another through an uncharted and demanding rehearsal process.

### **Callbacks & Casting**

Casting for a devised production is very different than casting for a scripted show and therefore the structure and approach to auditions was unique for this process. When casting in a traditional production, there are certain acting skills you look for as well as attributes that you see fitting the open role of the play. As I entered auditions for *HOME*,



we had not yet defined a script let alone characters whose role needed to be filled. I was casting people, personalities, curiosity, and the way in which they processed or approached information. While their general monologue audition was helpful to note how they worked with pre-existing text, I was most interested in how they could generate their own. In the end, I needed the remaining members of the company to not only bring their own opinions and ideas about the source material, but also to meld into the work that Neiryck, Foley, and I already started the semester prior.

The callback and casting process was critical in solidifying a diverse company that could work together and bring their own unique talents and skills to the forefront. Throughout the entire callback process, I had both Neiryck and Foley involved in actively guiding certain components of each callback session. Six monologue sides were chosen from the pool of transcribed interviews. The selection was then emailed to the group of students the evening prior to them coming to callbacks. I instructed those called back to read all the sides and select the monologue that they most personally related with or were interested in exploring. Providing the material ahead of time and giving the students the power of choice offered an opportunity for me to evaluate the student's commitment and interest in the project the moment they walked in the door. In addition to their callback side, I also prepared two exercises with Neiryck and Foley so I could observe how well each student worked on their feet, in the moment, and fully engaged with their peers observing in the room.

First of the two implemented exercises I used in this first round of callbacks was a form of improvisation questioning. Using their performed side as source material, I gave them a prompt line and had either Neiryck or Foley ask them questions diverting their

story and forcing them to stray from the original text. The student's task was to answer and dialogue as the character in their monologue and look for opportunities to flip the perspective back on Neiryneck or Foley and engage in a relationship rather than participate in an interrogation. The second callback activity I wove into the evening was asking those called back what was their most vivid childhood memory. This offered an opportunity for them to stop acting and genuinely share a story that they had an emotional and specific attachment to. Many times in auditions, actors are asked to dive into the character they are portraying rather than self-reflecting and sharing a piece of themselves. The response to these two exercises illuminated a whole other component of the audition process that I never would have captured if I solely stuck to working with the transcribed text.

From this first round of callbacks, Foley, Neiryneck, and I could then narrow down a group of individuals that we were interested in learning how they moved and built scenes in the timed constraints we had worked with in the workshop series. By incorporating Neiryneck and Foley in this callback phase of the process, I not only strengthened their investment in the structuring of an ensemble, but also showed my willingness to listen and trust their ideas and opinions. By the end of the evening, the three of us were noticing similar qualities we were interested in seeing more of and I had tactfully massaged the way in which they gave feedback regarding their peers. Looping them in this early in the process was critical in their ownership in the casting process. I needed them to trust my decisions when I walked out with our final company and the best way to do that was to weave them into the decision making as early as possible.

After working with each actor individually, the three of us were ready to learn more about how the students worked together as a team. Day two of callbacks was an intense series of devised building where 30 students were broken up into six groups and cycled through in thirty-minute intervals. Neiryneck and Foley took turns leading each group in a short warm up and then students were briefed with two skills to keep in mind as they worked together over the next half hour. They must remember the Hot Hand principle and the improv mentality of “yes, and...” I reminded them that these skills would help drive the work forward regardless of knowing the final product or seemingly correct direction. I was most interested in how they worked together and collaborated using a group of source material as their seed for creation. Each group pulled three pieces of stimuli from a grab bag and was given a set of limitations in which they needed to abide by. Six minutes was set on the timer and they were set loose to create. It was important for me to have Foley and Neiryneck a part of each devised group to also observe how they worked with new collaborators each time.

This second round of callbacks was incredibly informative and necessary for observing how students worked well in groups together. Status, idea dominance, and those with insecure but spot on ideas bubbled to the surface. I could see those that adopted the task whole-heartedly and those that were trying and those that were discouraged by the form I had presented. As mentioned earlier, I was not looking for characters for this play; I was looking for a company of collaborators. I knew that I could not have a group of all dominant leaders; I needed a cross section of personalities that complimented and challenged each other to be better and push beyond the comfortable. At the end of the timed exercise, each group performed where they were at in their

process and then I facilitated a short debrief session. I asked students how this new generative process worked for them. What was hard? What was fun? I also went around and asked each student what they would have changed or continued to work on if I gave them an additional three minutes to refine. This question was strategic and incredibly revealing. I was looking for actors that despite their comfort level with the process were hungry to grow and make the piece better. I wanted collaborators that thought critically about the work and were aware enough to know that there are always opportunities for improvement.

I finished the audition and callback process with a pool of potential collaborators that I thought could work collectively to help build *HOME* the way I had envisioned. I had the blessing of Foley and Neiryneck because of their investment in helping to decide this pool of potential company members. They were not privy to my top choices; however, they did sign off on any combination of actors of the pool we had come to as a team.

As I reflected on the two days of callbacks and prepared for the casting meeting with the other semester directors, I combed through each of my top choices for the team and notated their special skills on their audition sheet. It was important for me to know as much as possible about each of the unique attributes and talents the actors brought into the rehearsal room in addition to their devising capabilities. These skills that they wrote down were all components of their identity and would be something that I ultimately would want to incorporate into our devising process. This also helped guide my decision making if I was in a deadlock situation unable to choose. After casting the remaining seven company members, I had a guitarist, a bassist, a poet, a writer, two bilingual actors,

a dancer, four improv gurus, and a speech and debate competitor. I had a mosaic of talents in addition to their abilities to collaborate, lead, follow, and critically invest in the subject matter I was presenting. At this point in the process, I had no idea how much incorporating these skills would impact the development of the script and the uniquely deep investment in the ensemble and final product.

### **The Rehearsal Process - The Build**

Similar to the unique audition structure, the rehearsal process for *HOME* was much more organic and complex than a typical rehearsal process for a scripted show. Knowing that we could not follow the tablework-blocking-rehearsal model, I set out with a customized roadmap for how I wanted to structure the next seven weeks of devised rehearsal with a group of nine young actors new to devising. While I knew there would be changes to the plan as the weeks progressed, I had an idea of where I needed to go to successfully open some semblance of a play in mid-March.

I planned on starting with a week of skill building; digging into the skills that were introduced in the fall workshop series. While my intention for those workshops was to create a base in which to continue from in rehearsal, the reality of the situation was that few of my current company had attended workshops last semester because of their commitment in other shows. So I knew that I needed to spend the first chapter of this rehearsal process preparing them with tools where they could feel successful building scenes and working physically with the source material. I also planned to simultaneously double our transcribed interview base so we were working with over forty samples from the Portland community. It was necessary for the entire ensemble to work from the same

base experiences of pushing beyond the University bubble and talking to people outside of their comfort zone.

Once we could level out a solid foundation of skills for all nine of the company members, I planned to move into a generation phase. The intent would be to build a wealth of material for three weeks in preparation for the edit. We would then edit the material and piece together a traditional looking script in preparation for the rehearsal phase. We would then rehearse, memorize and piece together already built blocking in preparation for a normal tech and performance phase. While this plan all sounded feasible in theory, I knew that it would evolve and grow as we discovered more clearly the direction of this piece. I had the bones of an outline but was not afraid to stray from the plan when the production and development of story called for a different direction.

### **Skill Building and Research**

The beginning of the rehearsal process focused on preparing the ensemble of nine with tools that they could pull from to build a springboard for the generative phase ahead. However, before digging into Viewpoints, sculpting, sequencing and improvisation techniques, I thought it was important to set the culture of the room the very first day of rehearsal and acknowledge the uncertainty of the process ahead. We began creating a group list answering the question “What is devised theater?”. This opened the conversation that devised theater is many things to many different people and there is no right or wrong way to define it, just like there will be no right or wrong way for us to build this production. Building comfort and excitement within a world of uncertainty was something I worked to do from the very beginning of this process. We had to learn to live in the uncomfortable early and trust that as an ensemble we would support one another to

come through to a solution. Another exercise I chose to pursue for the first rehearsal was to create a code of conduct for how we wanted to work together in the following weeks. We needed to establish our company rules and I wanted to underline the value of ensemble in this moment. Everyone was selected for very specific and unique reasons and each voice was not only valid, but also necessary in building this play. I believe these two exercises, placed in the first rehearsal, helped show the students that we would all be figuring out the steps of the journey together. I will be sure to pull these exercises through in the next piece of devised work I approach because of how successful I found them to be in unifying the group right from the start.

Over the next week, we moved through the Viewpoints of space and time in a similar fashion outlined from the Fall Series Workshops. I also wanted to introduce physical sequencing exercises from Frantic Assembly, specifically the exercises Hymn Hands and Chair Duets. From workshop reflections, I noticed how sequencing helped the students connect moments or build physical relationships void of meaning. Their minds seemed to productively disengage when they only had to focus on the mastery and specificity of each move. This was a tool I wanted to be able to pull into rehearsal if I simply wanted to create a physical connection where I could shape the backstory of character. Like sequencing, sculpting exercises successfully pushed the students to “do” instead of “plan”. They could fluidly shape a tableau of bodies based upon their impulses and not worry about the permanence of the choice. Sculpting also had the potential to link theme to form which would ultimately become very useful in creating starting points for certain scenes in the play. Improvisation games were also another large component of the first week of rehearsal. This helped to cultivate a culture of “yes, and...” and urged

company members to remove judgment and self-consciousness to fully invest in the rules of a game.

Bridging the skill building in the rehearsal room and the generative phase to come, I knew I needed to guide the ensemble through the interview collection and research process Neiryck and Foley started last semester. They would interview a member of the community and come back to rehearsal and perform their findings, transcribe it and upload the transcription on an online-shared “think tank”. We also spent a portion of rehearsal time in the library collecting found stories and facts related to home. This field and online research was vital in bringing the other seven members up to speed and steeped in the subject matter of home and homelessness.

### **An Ensemble Shift**

As we moved through this first rehearsal phase, I thought the actors were progressing nicely, learning new tools, collecting great stimuli and opening up with one another ultimately strengthening the bond of the ensemble. Unfortunately, at the end of the first week, one of the fall semester ensemble members seemed to disengage and expressed to me in confidence her lack of satisfaction with how the ensemble was progressing. While this confrontation was difficult for me to work through as her director, I had to remind myself that I had fostered this type of ownership in the process with both Neiryck and Foley from the very beginning. I needed to stay grounded as the leader, but also consider her point of view and self-reflect on the validity of her perception. This was the first of several gearshifts that would prove difficult as I progressed through the development of this production.



While this may not be a paramount obstacle for a scripted rehearsal process, I knew that a unified and strong ensemble was one of the primary keys to success for building this script from the ground up. I needed this group to each find their own identity and work to complement the similarities and differences of their collaborators. I could not afford to have polarized groups or less engaged individuals this early in the process. Upon reflection, I realized that while I had spent a lot of time and energy structuring the first week of rehearsal for all nine of the ensemble members, I spent little time recognizing how the collaborative process had drastically changed for both Neiryck and Foley. This project had grown three times in size overnight and I had not properly checked in with how that transition was working for the fall group. I needed to bring everyone back to square one and rebuild relationships more deliberately.

At an information session for the Moreau Center Urban Policy Immersion last semester, the student coordinators facilitated an exercise called “My Lens”. I decided to introduce this exercise to the group as an attempt to gently open and dismantle misconceptions they may have about one another’s differences. “My Lens” is an exercise where you go around in a circle and list the lenses that shape the way you personally view the world. I wanted the company members to invest in this process and feel safe sharing their lenses with the rest of the group. For this to take place, I needed to go first, open up and lead by example. “I am Kelly and the lenses that shape the way I view the world are... I am female. I am educated. I am white. My parents are divorced. They divorced when I was an adult. They don’t speak. They speak through me. I believe love is worth fighting for, etc.” When I had finished, I passed the torch and encouraged them to

share as much or as little as they felt comfortable. We spent two and a half hours of a five-hour rehearsal completing this exercise.

While it may seem excessive for a director to take that time out of rehearsal to spend on an exercise such as this, I would argue that spending that time was singlehandedly the best decision I made throughout this entire process. It completely shifted the trajectory of our ensemble, highlighting similarities and giving context to our differences. The level of respect and the trust in the room exponentially increased and created the type of cohesive team I know could build a show such as *HOME*. I wrapped up the exercise drawing the parallel from our ensemble to the individuals we had been continuously interviewing. We can never take for granted the lens in which others view the world. While you may not believe, or appreciate the actions of another, you need to take the time to listen and look for their lens.

### **From Interview to Stimuli**

At this point in the process, we had gathered close to 75 pages worth of transcribed interview material. It was time to streamline the concepts and begin to build. I knew that I didn't want to simply physicalize the monologues; I wanted to extrapolate the essence of each interview and build from what resonated within the ensemble. By opening up the text to the actor's interpretation, and acting on that interpretation, I hoped the actor's level of ownership and authenticity would deepen. I was less interested in watching student actors attempt to portray a character from which they had no point of reference. I was most interested in how the actor's own stories and that of the interviewee combined to create a unique mosaic. To create an opportunity for the ensemble to hook in, we needed to work with more manageable pieces of stimuli and break apart the

interviewee's stories into ideas and concepts rather than narrative. I printed out all the material we had gathered up to this point and had the ensemble fracture the monologues into sentences, passages or phrases that were a cohesive thought. They then cut up the transcriptions and placed each new thought on an index card to be adhered to the back wall of the theater. They also worked in this fashion with all the facts and found stories we had been collecting in previous weeks. We created three large groupings of cards and could then visually see all the stimuli at one time. We worked from this wall and physically pulled off index cards that we wanted to explore when we began building vignettes and scenes in smaller groups. It was a living installation in our rehearsal room where the actors could pull or trade ideas at any time if they were ever creatively stuck in the generative process.

We then began to build scenes in the timed container exercise that I had used both in workshop and auditions. For example, groups would have to build a scene with a beginning, middle, and end using three pieces of stimuli as inspiration, one prop, have 15 seconds of silence, use three different levels and one song. I layered back in some tableaux that were built from the beginning sculpting work as well as sequencing constraints to facilitate transitions. I needed to connect the tools I had given them to the text we had fractured as stimuli. We built several scenes in this fashion and I realized quickly that I would not be able to successfully structure a theatrical play this way. If I needed a through line for the final script, I needed to build a through line when building material. In a typical devising process it might be possible to pull themes from the built scenes, but with the time I had to create this play I needed to pull my themes from my

stimuli first. This way I would know the vague direction of what we built could cohesively be pulled together at a later point in the process.

From the suggestion of Professor Andrea Stolowitz, I facilitated a series of “swimming exercises”. Swimming exercises are when there is a prompt sentence that needs to be completed and the goal is to write every idea that comes to your mind, regardless of continuity or meaning in a set period. Her suggestion was ironic because this was the exact type of exercise Write Around Portland used when drawing men from our Blanchet program out of their shell in the writing workshops the summer prior. Swimming frees the mind from finding the correct answer and focuses on continual idea development. The first sentence posed to the company was “This story is about...”. The second sentence being “We want the audience to walk away...”. After completing each of these swimming exercises, I had them select their favorite three phrases and we created a collection of our responses up on the white board. Each phrase now had thirty options of how the sentence could be completed. We refined and combined until we came up with a skimmed down list that was built from the collective. We came to the following:

This story is about...

- The nine of us
- Finding the beauty of the human experience
- People who will never meet, but we know their names anyway
- Seeing beyond the label to the beauty
- Learning how to give voice and respect the truths of ordinary people
- The future
- Changing our definition of beautiful

We want the audience to walk away...

- With their eyes open

- After the show ends
- To find their own story
- Deeply uncomfortable
- With an accurate representation of peoples stories
- Laughing
- With questions and answers
- Feeling
- Hand in hand with strangers
- Seeing people for attributes, not circumstances
- Kinder
- Changed
- As stewards
- With art
- In existential crisis
- Seeing 6 deep
- With their world upside down

The point of this exercise was to ultimately agree on one phrase for each sentence. While this list shrunk over time, the *HOME* company never could get down to one answer for each. Perhaps a longer generative process prior to this exercise would have provided more clarity and agreement in a singular direction. Regardless, this exercise was beneficial in expediting my discovery around structuring thematic umbrellas. We needed to find commonalities in which to generate within so they could build enough material in the next week to meet our timeline goals.

### **Generating with Structure and Creating the Pressure Cooker**

Categories became the next chapter in this structuring process. I tasked the company with creating four categories in which these index card ideas would overlap in some way. They needed to find similarities in the stimuli and physically pull the cards and place them into groups on a 15-foot roll of butcher-block paper. Physically removing the fractured interviews from the wall and recategorizing them as a team pushed the ensemble to work together and critically think through their grouping instincts. Once they

had grouped as many of the index cards as possible, I had them come up with an active title for each category. For example, one of the groupings the company created focused on childhood and memories. I had to push them to think actively and so instead of “memories”, that category became “reliving the past”. This title was now an action that they could theatrically perform. The final category titles we ended up working from were, “reliving the past”, “pouring love”, “surviving the transition”, and “advocating your truth”. Over the next week, we dedicated each night of rehearsal to building vignettes in one of these four buckets. True to schedule, we had a pool of 25 scenes that were built from the stimuli of first person interviews by the time students in the department were leaving for a week conference outside of rehearsal.

Before addressing the self-compilation and reflection work that took place over the next week to bring us to our first “script draft”, I want to touch on the shift in environment, tone of the rehearsal room, and impact on the ensemble. Since moving through the stimuli collection phase and pushing aggressively through the structured generation of scenes, there was a palpable shift in intensity within the rehearsal room. We now had a common direction and a firmer grasp of what needed to be accomplished in the time the company had left for the festival. By creating these categories, the company now had a clear outlook on how the rest of the week would unfold and the rehearsal format was, for the first time in the entire process, somewhat predictable. While this provided comfort in certainty for some, for others it created a pressure cooker environment that had been building over the last three weeks of rehearsal. I had immersed these nine students in a world of uncomfortability and unfamiliarity.

Unfamiliarity in process, in content, and in product. They were confused and running down paths that were sometimes frivolous and sometimes immensely fruitful.

On the final day of rehearsal before festival break, a member of the ensemble was building on their own within the structured container of limitations. I varied the size of groups often to keep the building process fresh and the final products unique. I knew that the emotions within the room at this point in the process were fragile. They were tired and creatively running on empty. The company was furiously building material they thought was missing from our cross section of scenes and they had no idea when enough would be enough. They were three weeks away from tech and we still did not have a script for them to go away to memorize. The pressure was building and this particular ensemble member captured how he was feeling and channeled all of the frustration he had felt from this process to write and perform the following monologue.

I don't know what right I have to be here. I've been extremely lucky. If there's one thing I am, it's lucky. The worst thing that has ever happened to me was my parents got divorced. And now I look back at it, it was a great thing that happened for me. I've never had to wonder where I'm going to spend the night or if I'll have enough to eat. I've never doubted that my parents loved me. I've always had plenty of clothes. What do I know about living? What right do I have to sit up here and act like I can relate to what other people have gone through?

*Shouted*

My life is fucking great.

*Slowly breaking down*

I don't have depression or anything. I can find whatever I need if I look, and then not very hard. I want to understand. I just don't know if I'm capable of that. More than that I don't know who I am. There's nothing that makes me uniquely me, so what do I matter? Sorry.

The eight other company members were in tears after watching this performance. This monologue brought voice to how a lot of them had been feeling throughout this entire process. They questioned their ability to relate to the interviewed stories and they

questioned their place to illuminate them onstage. This moment was a perfect opportunity, as the director and lead deviser, to remind them that the scenes they had built were interpretations of the stimuli and were ultimately a physicalized expression of the meaning they had placed on top of the words of others. They were not acting out others' pasts; they were using the stimuli as a springboard to interpret the value of home for themselves and others.

While I knew very early in the process that this play needed to be about the ensemble's personal stories in addition to the stories of those we had interviewed, that was a discovery that the company had to make in their own time. If I tried to force them to build material that was viscerally and emotionally connected to the "lens in which they view the world" it would never evolve into my intended effect. It is like the relationship of a parent/child. I could see they would rebel or resist and I needed them to want to share on their own because that is when I would be able to pull out their best versions of themselves. This monologue opened the doors for that exploration and the company left on their week conference thinking of how they could put their personal imprint on this show. Who were they in relation to *HOME*? Who did they want to be and how could they think critically and personally about the topic we had committed to explore? From there I could tap into their personal talents and skillsets; dance, poetry, music and song and weave together these stories with a more cohesive structure.

### **Structure and Framing**

As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, a great deal of my directorial script work happened over two significant breaks in our rehearsal process. After five weeks of rehearsal there was a weeklong festival break. During the festival break, I spent day after



day racking my brain to put what had been generated down on paper in the form of a standard script that the actors were used to working on. I wrote numerous drafts trying to take the notes from the built vignettes and turn them into actual scenes with locked in dialogue and opportunities to rehearse moment-to-moment work. I realized after days of frustration that I was trying to build a traditional play that was born from an anything-but traditional process. Just as I had guided the students to do for weeks, I needed to strip away my preconceptions of what I thought the script should be and allow myself to think creatively and outside of the box. It made perfect sense that our first draft of this script would look different than anything I had seen or worked on before. Plus, I was not the one building the scenes in the first place, I needed their help to capture the nuances of the moment to moment work.

### **This Story is About...**

After this discovery, I approached the next phase of structuring the piece with the same materials we had used to structure the categories. I created my own 15-foot butcher-block paper script. I wrote each scene that was ever created on an index card and began to sort through what I thought belonged in the next draft of this play. I knew all 25 of the pieces were (1) not aligned with the essence of what I thought this show was and (2) were not theatrically engaging enough to make it to the next phase of the process. I narrowed down the working draft to 17 scenes. This group stayed taped on my butcher-block script and the rest were archived. I then went through and made bullet points under each of the scenes outlining my thoughts on what the scene was actually about. Themes, questions, moments that were effective, style, sound, etcetera were pulled and written underneath the index cards. Then continuing with this same format that I had structured for the

company, I titled each of these scenes with a word or phrase that embodied as much of my notes as possible. I quickly discovered that each of these 17 scenes was tethered to a theme of love, voice, or memory.

If we started this process asking the Portland community about *HOME*, and through our exploration of their answers drew out the themes of love, voice and memory, then I concluded that home is an embodiment of those three ideals. An ideal home is a place where you are loved, feel like you have a voice, and can make good memories. However, the reality is that not everyone has all three of those components that make a home and that is clearly seen in the scenes that were built over the past month of rehearsals. I knew in the moment that this phase of the process was a turning point in the direction of the play.

While I had identified these three themes and I had skimmed down what was in the next “draft” of this script, I still felt like I was missing a link anchoring back to the seed in which *HOME* sprouted from. I brought my unconventional collage down to the Blanchet House in hopes of reconnecting with some of the individuals who were interviewed months prior. A friend and resident of the Blanchet looked at the scroll of paper and listened to me explain the process of how we had gotten to this point. His take away and amazement of how this project had progressed was the myriad of perspectives and perceptions that came from asking the same base of questions. He thought that the many facets of people and their stories was the most interesting part of what we had done so far. He said, “It is so interesting how people’s perception and perspective shape how we view others. I always tell the men in this house, ‘think before you speak, because you never know how your words are perceived by another. Your project is kind of like that. A

whole lot of perspectives.’” I was grateful for this individual’s input because it allowed me to connect perspective to the themes I had pulled out prior. I went back into rehearsal with the direction that *HOME* is love, voice, and memory. And we as a community have the responsibility to create or destroy home for others with our perspective and perception.

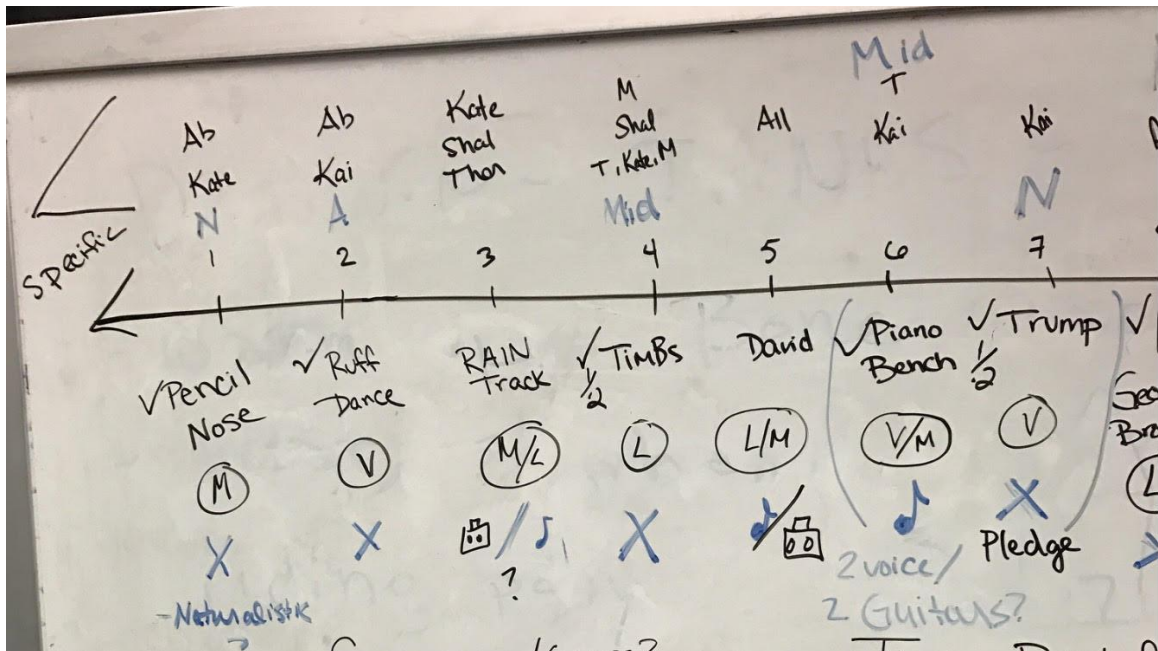
### **Order and Structure**

After presenting the butcher-block draft of the script to the ensemble, we then set out to find the order in which these scenes existed and how they could piece together to create cohesive evening of theater. We attempted to group a series of scenes together one of each category, love, memory and voice. From that grouping I tried to guide them to develop a character. I was still unsure if this play would be character-driven or theme-driven and thought if we could create four characters using three scenes then on paper we would have a structure that had some theatrical potential for performance. After many trials, errors, and roadblocks, the ensemble and myself had become thoroughly frustrated with characters driving this plot. Again, this would not be a typical show and these scenes would not support the traditional theatrical constructs of character, plot, and story.

Feeling at a loss in this structuring process, I consulted Professor Mead Hunter for dramaturgical help. After thoroughly briefing Prof. Hunter on the progress thus far, he suggested I look at ordering the scenes from small to large. Or in his words, “from the most personal and specific to the most general or universal”. This opened a whole new world of storytelling and a direction I knew I could successfully guide with the company. This new direction came at the perfect time after the discouraging rehearsal of attempted character development. Ordering these scenes became an extensive exercise and critical

analysis both on our feet and at the white board. We ultimately agreed upon an order and began linking scenes that we felt could crescendo seamlessly into the next scene. This now gave us a roadmap in which to analyze and notate other direct connections such as core theme (love, voice, memory), actors involved, live or recorded sound, abstract vs. naturalistic. Referencing Figure 1 below, you can see how each scene was plotted on a timeline and analyzed for specific characteristics. The blue marker notates intention for sound/music, the circled letters categorize the scene as “love, voice, or memory” and the blue marker above the line (N, A, Mid) comments on the naturalistic versus abstract quality of the performance.

Figure 1 -



After thorough analysis of the order we had created, I transitioned the cast to a stumble through rehearsal. We committed to working through these scenes in this order to see what the show felt like on its feet instead of what it looked like structurally on paper. The analysis of our play was one thing, but it needed to translate to an audience and have a through-line

that would hold their attention and ideally impact them. While we felt successful in coming up with a compelling structure and order of our collection of scenes, the stumble-through revealed that we still had a long way to go. At this point in the process, we had one more week to make changes prior to solidifying a script for memorization over spring break. I knew that this next step of finding the frame of the play was something I needed to conquer on my own. We did not have time to organically discover it; I needed to come back from the weekend with an idea that would transition us to the next phase. So, I took the butcher-block script, the transcribed scenes the company had written over the last few weeks and some final personal submissions of writing that were uploaded on the think tank and searched for this frame.

### **Finding the Frame**

After piecing together this process to date and looking through all the old stimuli, my daily journal, the countless pictures of structuring white board brainstorm, and diving deeper into the scenes we had generated from the beginning, I came to a frame that I felt had the potential to take this play to the next level. I wanted a frame that was universal. I wanted a frame everyone could relate to regardless of background, perspective, or personal truth. I wanted a frame that was active andactable. I wanted a frame that somehow could encompass an earlier thematic discovery of home equaling love, voice, and memories.

I stumbled upon the idea of a child running away from home. This is a tale that everyone knows: packing your peanut butter sandwich and running away to your back yard. As I reflected on this seed, I considered why people run away in the first place. I believe you run away from home because you are looking for something else; something

you are not getting. So, while you are running from a current home, you are actually simultaneously running toward that other definition of home you seek. This idea of running away and running to became very interesting to me. If we layer back in the idea that home is the embodiment of love, voice, and memories and apply this frame to it, then when you run away from home you are running from love, your voice, or your memories. And when you are running to home or seeking another home, you are seeking love, your voice, or the ability to create positive memories. This frame clicked for me and I could look at each of the scenes we had devised up to this point and delineate whether the main character was running from or to home. I then pulled them apart into two categories and created acts.

Once I wrapped my head around what I wanted this frame of the play to be, I began to write the script in a traditional sense, later bringing in two members of the ensemble to help finish and gain ownership over this first draft. I guided them with some of the discoveries I had made structurally in addition to the frame. I knew we needed more of the original text from the interviews in this final production. They grounded our scenes in a naturalistic and immediate way. This text would ultimately act as the glue between certain scene phrases and help guide the audience through the journey of the play. If scenes became too abstract or ethereal, the Brechtian style montages would remind the audience of the origin and authenticity of the stimuli. The three of us pulled stimuli text, built montages and overlapped devised scene text to build the first draft of *HOME; A Devised Production*.

In addition to layering in original text, I discovered through separating the scenes that the first act that was focused on running away from home was primarily built from

the stimuli. The second act which was meant to be centered around the discovery of home happened to be the personal story tracks the actors had revealed throughout the final weeks of the generative phase. This split was an exciting discovery and one I wanted to keep moving into building a rehearsal script.

### **The Fear of Finality**

We had a read through of the first official scripted draft of *HOME* one week prior to spring break and two weeks prior to tech. Somehow, the timeline I had set for myself at the beginning of this process was still intact. This was the first time the entire company was introduced to the frame and the first time they had seen this play exist in a traditional form. Unexpectedly, the reception was divided. Some of the ensemble liked the step forward the story had taken. They were encouraged by the fluidity of the play and thought the frame was interesting. Others were hesitant and unwilling to accept that this was the draft we were left with after all the hours of work. It was not the story they were thinking we would tell, yet had no suggestions on how to improve the product we were now working with.

As the creator of this frame and director of the project, this was a disappointing blow to the confidence I started rehearsal with. I knew that time was no longer on our side, however I wanted each of the students to feel a piece of ownership and pride in the scenes and stories they had been building. This play was turning out to be a beautiful combination of stories that bridged the gap between the students and the interviewed population better than I expected.

There is always a point in the rehearsal process, traditional or not, where the director needs to play hardball and shift the drive, direction, and accountability of the

ensemble into high gear. This was one of those moments for the production of *HOME*. Company members could not criticize the progress of the work unless they could offer constructive feedback that would move the group forward. I needed those with criticisms to reflect on *why*. Why were they struggling with this script? Had they created preconceived ideas of what this final product would look like that was preventing them from maintaining an open mind? Had they fully invested and placed their own personal stamp on this process? I needed to remain confident in this next step of the process and move this script from paper to production. We needed to get the show up on its feet in this form and see what was working and what was not before making any more changes to structure or form.

I realize in hindsight that this gearshift in the process was this hard because of the seeming finality of the story they had created together. This was the first piece of original work any of them had ever created before and in less than two weeks this play would be performed in front of an audience. The vulnerability and bravery it takes to share original work, let alone personal testimony in front of an audience, is huge. The presentation of this traditional looking script added a level of reality to the creative journey they had trusted in. This script felt final. This script felt real. And the fear of not having every scene exactly right could now be seen literally in black and white. Little did they know that we would go through twelve more drafts of this script before solidifying a final performance copy.

I asked the ensemble to trust me, just as I had trusted them before and rehearse this script as if the playwrights were not in the room. I needed them to approach the play as actors rather than devisers or writers. Their job was to motivate moments, create



characters, and solve the “problems” of the play as if they would any other script. We spent the remaining days before spring break rehearsing this script, blocking transitions and pulling from the archived builds to help glue together pieces that were not making sense. We finished this week strong and the students left with a final production draft to be memorized after one more revision.

### **The Last Draft**

The last week of rehearsal prior to spring break was very much focused on getting the students comfortable and confident in the show they had created. I wanted them to know what the play felt like on its feet and feel as if the kinks of transitions were on their way to being smoothed out. However, throughout this last phase of the process, there were still several components of the script I was working to solve on my own that I knew would help to heighten the universality of the play to any audience. While I was very happy with the direction the play had evolved, I felt as if we had lost three anchors that were essential to my vision for this project. I wanted to more pointedly comment on homelessness in Portland throughout the production. I wanted to incorporate more of the audience’s voice to round out and ultimately validate the voice of the population and the voice of the actors. It was important to me for the audience to feel a sense of ownership in this story. And finally, I felt that we had addressed how home is a feeling, but we had lost some of the perspective that home is also a place or a structure. These three entities needed to be addressed without completely restructuring the text and performance tracks the students were tasked with memorizing over spring break.

Stories of individuals experiencing homelessness were a foundational element in our stimuli and scene generation, however as we formed a script, this component of

storytelling was muted. I knew I needed to weave this back in a way that respectfully challenged the perceptions of the homeless population in Portland especially. A member of our ensemble took an unexpected medical leave of absence in the middle of the rehearsal period. While she could come back with a couple weeks left, she missed a great portion of our generative scene time. Thankfully because of the nature of devised work I could still integrate her into the play. It also just so happened that the one scene she was in happened to be the transition between the two acts. I removed her from the ensemble pieces in the first act and had her strategically move through each scene, unnoticed by any of the other ensemble members. To me, she was the representation of homelessness; a part of the environment and only noticed by the audience at crafted moments throughout the play. She walked a different track than the rest of the company and would fade in and out of focus as the first act unraveled. This blend in and out of the background would ideally comment on the homeless epidemic in Portland where tents and sleeping bags filled with people quickly become a part of the expected scenery. By the time we got to her scene at the transition of the acts, we would humanize this “piece of scenery” and watch her crawl into an imaginary tent of safety. In theory retrospectively changing our perception of her character’s journey throughout the first act.

The role of audience was still an element that I wanted to layer into the final draft of *HOME*. It was important for me to place ownership in the hands of the beholder. This easily could have become an insular production that explored topics that were only interesting to the ensemble and those we interviewed. However, I wanted to make sure we pushed the energy outward and held a mirror up to those in the audience. I wanted

them to physically engage in the creation of this piece and I wanted this to also impact the actors. There needed to be a flow of reciprocal energy that connected the audience with the actors and therefore, through association, with the collected interviews. I realized that the audience interaction could help connect our two acts. Functionally giving actors time to change costumes, but also reground the audience in the here and now in preparation for the discovery of what home is for the company.

Finally, the last detail I knew needed to be reincorporated into the final draft was in conjunction with a design aesthetic I latched onto early in the devising process. I knew I wanted to build something from minimalistic set pieces that ultimately surprised the audience at the end of the play. I wanted to assemble scattered pieces in a surprising way to conjure a feeling of togetherness with the audience and ensemble. This design concept had taken a back seat for a great deal of the structuring and framing process. However, I was now looking for ways to allude to home being a physical place as well as a feeling. This was a perfect marriage of concepts. The boxes that had been reoccurring symbol and were now woven through the play became the building blocks for creating a cardboard house at the end of the play. I could then use lighting to grow a silhouette of this house ultimately giving the sense of enveloping the audience.

I integrated these changes into the final script and when the company came back from spring break we integrated and rehearsed them in preparation for tech. The company ran the show in its 100% completed state four days before opening. While I would have liked to spend more time on deepening the acting moments in act one and strengthening how the “homeless track” meshed with the scenes in the first act, I believe the play and

its impact was incredibly strong for the amount of time the company spent rehearsing in a traditional form.

## **6 – Devising with Design**

The design elements of *HOME* evolved organically out of the generative process of scene building as well as from necessity of portability. The script that we created could not depend upon design elements to uphold the story structure because when we moved to the secondary performance location at the Blanchet House, we would not have the luxury of performing in a theater. The text had to successfully stand on its own. Knowing that from the beginning of the process, the only designer that was tied to this project was company member Abby Neiryneck, who was also the costume designer for the show. While I feel sound and props were most successfully integrated into this devised process, for the most part all design elements were surface-level at best and served the functionality of the play. If I had the opportunity to revisit and work on this production again, I would give more time to how design could be integrated daily and thoroughly explored in the generative process.

While I had the full intent of integrating design elements early to have them act as a function of the build, I knew certain categories fell by the wayside as the script evolved. I was consumed by the process of building the story and therefore found that elements such as lights and set would best function as minimalistic as possible. This project was less about the spectacle anyway and more about the opportunity to elevate stories and voices. I needed designs that helped execute certain functional moments of the play but never detracted from the stories on stage. The boxes became a great symbol throughout the play, representing how we pack and unpack certain memories from our past while simultaneously giving the feeling of moving or changing homes. These packing boxes were not only simple and portable but also held deeper meaning depending on how actors

endowed them throughout the play. Lighting was optional and only helped guide audience members through the transition of acts when the show was performed in a theater space. Lighting became irrelevant when we transferred the show to Blanchet House.

Costumes design was my biggest exploratory regret in this devised process. If given the opportunity, I could easily find ways to strengthen character development through costume. Similar to my approach to sound and props, I would make a bin of clothing available within the scene build. These pieces of clothing could have been available to help shape how the actors work physically and in relation to one another. Fabric and clothing other than our own, can help us inhabit another character both physically and mentally. I agree with the faculty that the first act seemed emotionally two dimensional, especially in comparison to the level of vulnerability in the actor's work in the second half. I would be most interested in exploring how integrating costume into our exploration of the first act could have shaped and deepened characters in final performance. Regardless of costumes being layered into the show in the last week of rehearsal, I still communicated and helped Neiryneck execute a design that was simple and supportive of the play we created.

The final element of design that would have been interesting to explore throughout this process would be the valued insight of a visual artist. Having an individual on the team or an external person assigned to this project who would have been able to bring to fruition concepts developed in the rehearsal room would have been incredibly beneficial. There were many ideas that had theatrical and storytelling potential that lived and died as theories alone. With the amount of time and resources that were

allocated to this project, I was unable to assume the role of visual artist on my own. Instead, I prioritized the build of the play and making sure the story I was trying to tell could connect to a live audience.

## **7 – Impact**

Impact by definition has several meanings: to strike forcefully, to collide, to alter, or influence. As theater artists, it is always our hope that the production we spend sleepless nights thinking about and hours in the rehearsal room refining resonates with audiences after opening night. It is our hope that the message or approach to the piece is innovative yet relatable; stretching the mind or shifting perspective. Traditionally, impact flows from artist to audience. It is linear. *HOME*, however, had a uniquely unexpected cyclical impact. Not only was the community on the receiving end of this impact, so was the company and population from which these stories came. Each entity in the room had an equal responsibility to engage with one another.

### **The Population**

*HOME; A Devised Production* had four performances at the University of Portland and received wonderful feedback from audiences, professors, and from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Respondent and University of Oregon Theater Professor, Michael Najjar. Najjar commended the entire company on their “cohesive and strong ensemble, palpable personal investment in the stories, and (their) bravery in tackling the difficult subject matter. [...] This is the type of theatre we need to be doing. I have very little to critique and simply want to congratulate you on this piece you built. You should be proud.”

The University response was more than I could have imagined, however there was a fifth performance that held just as much if not more importance than the other shows combined. *HOME* was meant to be shared with the population from which its original concept came from.



The Blanchet House performance took place on Sunday, May 26, 2017 at 5pm in the Founder's Café; the only day of the week when meals are not being served to the 1200 hungry stomachs that wait in line each day. With an hour prior to opening doors, the company unpacked three cars full of boxes and props and began moving tables and chairs of the dining hall to create an intimate playing space for this play to live. The students sped through the anchor points of the play, spaced out the movement sequences and got to work warming up and getting used to the new facets of this space. For one thing, the audience would be much closer than they were used to. The acoustics were live in a room filled with echo and 30 foot ceilings. There were no offstage locations and the changing room consisted of a corner office with blinds over the windows and a coat closet. This was just a few of the quirks of the afternoon, but by the time 4:45pm came around the company was as prepared and excited as they would ever be.

The house was filled that afternoon with a wide range of community members, including Blanchet House residents, staff and board members, volunteers, corporate and community development partners, Portland Housing Bureau Officials, social service nonprofit leaders, OHSU healthcare professionals, and University of Portland *Beacon* reporters. The performance was a great success for many reasons. While the theatricality and magic of being in a theater with all the lights and sound perfectly crafted was missing, there was something much greater that took its place. There was an authenticity of performing the play in a setting where individuals experiencing homelessness are served every day. The magic of bringing life to people's stories that have felt ashamed or silenced was a gift that neither the company nor I would trade for the world.

There is a guest of the Blanchet House who, prior to entering the Residential Program, had lived in his car for years. One thing led to another and his car was impounded and towed, rendering him homeless and in need of a place to go. By eating at Blanchet, he discovered that staying homeless wasn't his only option. This person is a great man who attended the play Sunday afternoon. Socially anxious around the large group of audience members, he sat in the back row, right in front of me. This individual watched the entire performance and when the actors stood up to take their bow, he turned to me and extended his hand. I put my hand out and he squeezed it one time with a firm grip and a slight smile. He left before the audience was done clapping. I reflect on that moment because, to me, that is exactly what this play was about. The company was incredibly proud of the show they had conceived, created, written and performed. We hosted our final talkback with the community and struck the production that evening.

### **The Community**

In the days and weeks following I received emails and small notes confirming the impact the production had on some of the audience members that attended. An unexpected email dated March 31, 2017 popped into my inbox from an audience member that came Saturday night. An excerpt read,

I had gone into the theater expecting to feel empathy for the stories we would experience, that it would make me mainly feel sorry and remember the plight of so many people around me. But I found it far more touching that it reminded me of personal struggles and triumphs. It was a stark reminder that these depictions of life that felt so close to home came from the thoughts and memories of people I don't enjoy interacting with, often pretending they don't exist. I've been digesting it for the past week and it's honestly been kind of rough, in a cathartic way. It's forced me to confront some things from my past I'd rather ignore but also reminded me how lucky I am that I've had so many people help me through times that might have seen me end up in much darker places. I hope I can remember my thoughts and feelings from all this when interacting with people, homeless or otherwise, as I go forward. So, thank you for producing this.

## The Company

Similar to the mosaic of interviews and facts that were collected throughout this process, I also believe that I collected a mosaic of student devisers. This courageous group of students took great risk and opened themselves up to vulnerability in this process unlike anything I had ever seen or experienced before in an educational setting. The level of trust that was cultivated and fostered throughout this process was transformational for the success of the production, but also for the growth of the team. Each company member was unique, quirky, and possessed their own set of talents and challenges throughout this process. There were moments where I was unsure how we would weather certain shifts in the process. However, I had to have faith that my vision for this eclectic group of collaborators would shine through and the confidence I placed in each of them would transform their insecurities into positive and confident creativity. They needed time, space, support, and patience to thrive in this new environment I had thrown them into. So, as I discuss impact of this production on the population and the community, I have to be sure to include the impact on these new devisers. Their transformation throughout this process was unexpected, but incredibly satisfying and necessary to the essence of the play.

First semester was so hard for me and having you and *HOME* as a constant meant so much. You really made me feel supported and I am so thankful for every time you asked about my day or checked in, it helped me get through first semester and just made me feel so loved. You are so patient and kind and I don't know what I did to deserve everything you have given me. [...] Thank you for always treating me with respect even when I didn't come to rehearsal ready to work. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me. You taught me how to make choices and trust myself. This experience has been so amazing, I've learned so much and this is the first show at UP that I've really owned. Thank you for organizing a show that I'm proud to be a part of.

## **8 - Reflection**

I am walking away from the process and performances of *HOME* as a proud and fundamentally changed director. Through continual exploration, trial and error, and risk taking in this process, I have discovered a new level of creativity, collaboration, and storytelling that has shifted how I approach my craft as a director. A thoughtful reflection on the successes and learning opportunities the development of this play has offered, I feel reinvigorated with an artistic hunger that I know will launch me in my intended direction post-graduation.

After personal reflection and feedback from audiences and University of Portland faculty alike, I believe the most successful components of *HOME* were the strength of the ensemble, the outward reaching universality of the story, and the fluid structure of the script and transitions.

*HOME* above all else needed to be an ensemble driven collaboration where students could come together to explore the external stimuli and bring stories of themselves and others to life. My hope at the beginning of this process was to have not only the voices of the Portland community elevated on stage, but also the voices of our actors and our audiences. While I feel that all three entities were well represented in our final product, I was very proud of the strength of the student voice in this piece. They were not accents to the interview-based script, but an integral component of the show that fostered a new level of ownership and ensemble building throughout the second half of our rehearsal process.

The strength of the ensemble work starts back at the gestation of this process with the casting of each of the company members. As noted in the audition chapter, each

student brought to the table their own unique set of skills and stories that I knew needed to be integrated into the fabric of this piece. More times than not a director is casting to fit an actor to the character of the play. I was casting based upon how each individual processed ideas, viewed the world, and their unique attributes and talents they brought when they walked in the room. Thankfully, the flexibility of this piece allowed me to develop moments for each of my company members that were unique to them.

However, the strengths of the cast were not the priority at the beginning of this process. Strengthening ensemble trust and fostering their openness to weaving their own stories between the testimonies of those they had interviewed was a more careful path to travel than simply writing them into the play. I wanted each of the students to discover the voices they wanted within this show instead of me, as the director, telling them what I think they should do.

To build the type of ensemble I needed to develop this script, I was committed to taking the time in rehearsal for each of them to get to know one another on a different level. I have been a part of many shows where ensemble building is simply about the amount of time you spend together, a couple of trust falls, and reoccurring warm ups at the beginning of rehearsal. I knew this cast needed more to prepare for this devised journey we were about to take together. I needed to remove the second-guessing and caveats of “this might be stupid” that walked into the rehearsal room every time we were going to generate material. I needed them to follow their instincts and recognize that though they might all seem very different on the outside, there were many overlapping circumstances, points of view, and background baggage that had the potential to unite them.

We did several exercises throughout the rehearsal process that I believe fundamentally shifted how the ensemble functioned as one throughout the remaining weeks. On the very first rehearsal we created a set of rules on how we wanted to work together. We spent a good part of the first week of rehearsal working on Viewpoints to help unite mind and bodies. I developed a common vocabulary and emphasized how we are “one mind, many bodies”. We needed to have a base of tools from which to work and then recognize that while we are ten different individuals, we need to work as one, “follow the Hot Hand” and abide by the improv rule of “yes, and...”. After building this base, I took nearly two and a half hours of rehearsal to talk through an exercise called “The lens in which I see the world”. While this was difficult for me as a director taking a large chunk of time from rehearsal for this, it was completely necessary to bring us to the next level of trust within the ensemble. This was an early turning point for the students, where opening up to one another and giving voice to their own stories became the foundation of the work we would do moving forward. The level of respect and confidentiality rippled through the remaining weeks and brought a deep sense of responsibility to sharing the words of others and respecting the lens in which others view the world.

I believe the ensemble work in *HOME* was one of the play’s strongest components. I attribute that to how the beginning parts of rehearsal were planned and implemented. I also attribute that to the flexibility to stray from the plan and give space to the exercises that needed air to become transformative for the process. I would over plan and then have no trouble releasing that plan. Upon reflection of this process and the palpable ensemble work in the final product, this fluid style within the room is something

I will bring forward with me as a director. Throughout this process, I had to actively work to be fully present in the room and fight against the ticking clock in the back of my mind. Only when you are completely present can you truly hear the verbal and nonverbal needs of the collaborators and the message of the play. Artistic Director of the American Theater Company and mentor of mine, Will Davis, told me the summer before I started this adventure “if you are running out of [rehearsal] time, slow down”. I will never forget that advice and will continue to pull that forward into every show I work on.

In addition to a strong ensemble base, I think the outward energy of storytelling was successful in our production of *HOME*. It was critical to my vision that the stories we ultimately chose to explore were indeed actively engaging with an audience. While the ensemble may connect well together and work in a collaborative and creative fashion in rehearsal, it was imperative that they open up and connect that world of discovery and storytelling to the observer of any age and background. In fact, the more specific we could make our stories, the more universal they became. I think there were several scenes, both ensemble and population generated that achieved this level of specificity most successfully, including “Piano Bench Tape Mouth”, “George the Broom”, “Indigo House”, and “My Home is Here”.

While the material itself drove the outward energy and audience connection, I also think the concept reversal prior to rehearsals had a great impact on the universality of the play. The perspective shift of this play prior to rehearsals from an exploration of homelessness to an exploration of home had a significant impact on how an audience could engage with the content. From its very beginning, I wanted this piece to dissolve the divide between “them and us”; referring to those struggling with homelessness and

the common citizen. I wanted to remove the label and illuminate the sameness of each of our human truths. Fortunately, I discovered that it is nearly impossible to ask an individual who has no point of reference for homelessness to put themselves in that imaginary situation and generate empathy for those that are. If I continued down this path of exploration, I would have struggled creating any sort of connective tissue between the audience and the performers and between the performers and the stimuli.

Instead, I decided early on to flip the perspective and explore how we, as a society, define and perceive home. My thought being that if we fully commit to this topic and use interviews from the Portland community and some from the homeless population, we would in turn be challenged to look at all sides of the coin. You cannot fully explore home without exploring what it means to be or feel homeless. This angle was also a far more universal ideal that both the ensemble and the community could identify with. Home is many things to many people and this gave me a pathway in which to direct the anticipated discoveries outward instead of keeping it precious and private for only the nine of us to truly know.

As I reflect on my directorial process of *HOME*, I am glad I consistently challenged myself to shift perspective and fight for the counterpoint in storytelling. Like the ideals I tried to embed within the ensemble, I would regularly check in with myself: if it was white could it be black; square, round; sharp, curved; invisible, visible? While I aimed to work this way in my directing prior to *HOME*, this was the first show in which this push and pull of opposites was consistently implemented throughout the generation of scenes and script structure. Working in this fashion was successful in helping me break through some of the barriers of script development and in achieving the upward lifting



momentum of the second act. I plan to continue to work on keeping counterpoint awareness at the forefront of my directing process.

The final element that has come to the surface in my reflection process as a successful element of this production was the play structure and flow between scenes. Transitions and pacing in theatre is a personal sticking point for me as a director. I believe a play is only as good as its transitions, which not only push the action forward, but also have wonderful storytelling opportunities on their own. Transitions help guide the audience through the play and offer moments to directorially shed light on subtleties of approach or specific symbolisms within the story you are trying to tell. I was worried when building the bones of this script that the transitions between stories would suffer because of the lack of time and my inexperience in writing a piece such as *HOME* from scratch. However, I believe that the pace and continuity of the piece came together in the last week in a way that successfully supported the frame of “simultaneously running away and toward home” between the acts.

Building the structure of this play was far more complex than I ever anticipated, however I feel that what made it most successful was the attention to balancing voices and perspectives. I needed three major elements to shine through to make the voices in this play valid. I needed an authentic representation of individuals experiencing homelessness, the true perspective of the college age students exploring the stimuli, and the myriad of voices and experience levels in between to connect the polarity of the perspectives. Through countless rewrites and exploration both in the rehearsal room and outside, testimonies happened to divide where the student’s stories were focused on the search and discovery of home. Individuals experiencing homelessness were primarily in

the first act and were running away from home. Then the Portland community perspective as well as the voices from the audience acted as the montage glue that held these two frames together.

While I believe that *HOME* was a success for the intentions and goals I set at the beginning of this process, there are still several key areas that I would have liked to approach and refine differently if time allowed. I would have liked to spend more time rehearsing the first half of the play in the traditional sense. The character exploration and moment-to-moment work of the interview based stories were two-dimensional compared to the dynamic investment the ensemble developed with their personal stories in the second half of the play. Since the storytelling was so grounded and personally connected in the second half, it became glaringly obvious that the interviews needed more specificity and actor substitution work in the beginning.

I was mainly focused on developing and crafting a story that was not only coherent, but also theatrical. Unfortunately, this combined with very young and inexperienced actors took a toll on the acting in the first act. I would have spent more time reminding the actors “Who are you talking to?” and “What do you need from your partner (even if your partner is the audience)?” in the generative phase of the process if I could work on this show all over again. Now knowing that building the script and finding the frame would take the amount of rehearsal time that it did, I would have brought back Viewpoints gesture work and perhaps even introduced some *Commedia dell’arte* character physicality in our warm ups throughout the process. This potentially could have helped us develop more distinctly different characters in the first act as well as

strengthened the movement of the ensemble member representing homelessness in the first act.

In addition to stronger character work in part one, I would have liked to explore in more depth two specific design elements. I would have liked to integrate costumes earlier in the generative process of our work and experiment with how visual art could have played a larger role in helping to shape story and symbolism throughout the acts.

I believe we missed an opportunity to let clothing influence the development of character in the first half of the play. In rehearsal, we worked with a group of random props, however we were always devising with our normal street clothes on instead of experimenting with how clothing could transform self and environment. Regardless if costume piece were worn in the final performance, I think they could have added a whole new element to the student's timed exercises.

I also would have liked to explore how visual art could have enhanced story and differentiation between acts. There were several concepts that emerged from the process that were never given life because of the lack of a visual artist, or frankly designers, in the room. In this production process, I did not have the bandwidth to properly weave complex design threads through the storyline and manage the implementation of those concepts in rehearsal or tech. The design of *HOME* was not the emphasis of this production, however it would have been nice and beneficial to the play to have some conceptual design support when crafting the script. If I were to tackle this project again, I would have asked at the beginning of this process for either an experienced stage manager that could execute the logistics of the rehearsal room so I could focus a bit more

on design, or I would have asked for a designer that periodically came to rehearsals and was a part of the early conceptual discoveries.

The final element of this process I would have approached differently in hindsight was the location rehearsal schedule. If I could craft the rehearsal schedule again, I would have held at least every other Sunday rehearsal at the Blanchet House of Hospitality. Having access to the Blanchet space and not utilizing it throughout the generative and structuring process of this play was an amateur mistake. When we moved the final production of *HOME* downtown there were several key elements that I would have liked to discover earlier than the day of performance. The acoustics of the room were much different from that of Mago Hunt Theater. The space was live with a strong echo. Sound traveled and the actors needed to slow down their speech and strengthen their diction to be properly heard. The sight lines in Blanchet House were also much different than the university theater. The audience was significantly closer to the action, which made any activity that took place on the floor difficult to see. It would have been interesting to see how the play would have changed if we spent some of our rehearsal time in the secondary performance space.

While there were some technical components of the Blanchet performance that were a bit rocky and void of some of the theatrical magic, there was a different type energy that made up for these mishaps. There was a palpable magic of authenticity performing for the population from which this project's concept came from. The audience was composed of men from the Blanchet program, social service professions, city housing officials, students, and corporate supporters alike. The diversity of voices in *HOME* was for the first time reflected in the diversity of the audience. In the moment and

even more so in reflection, the opportunity to share with this population was by far one of the greatest rewards of this process.

## **9 - Conclusion**

From concept to curtain call, the process of devising *HOME* with these nine ensemble members and countless members of the Portland community has not only solidified the type of director I aspire to be, but also has given me the confidence that I can build in this unique form if the passion and questioning is strong. There have been specific successes and improvements that I would like to make to this rendition of the play, but what I cherish as a part of this process the most are the universal lessons I will take away as a director in this field.

I have learned:

1. You need a strong ensemble. You need trust, however as the director, you need to be willing to make yourself vulnerable first.
2. Patience is everything. Just because I know something isn't working, doesn't mean it has to be fixed that second. Sometimes the best ideas come from living in the wrong and uncomfortable.
3. Gear shifts between stages of the devising process are HARD
4. Don't be afraid to say I was wrong when I was wrong.
5. Questions are better than statements.
6. Admitting "I don't know" is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.
7. I can have confidence in the direction without knowing the right answer or the immediate next step. My instincts are strong and worth advocating for.
8. Process is just as important as product. Sometimes more.
9. This is the type of work I am meant to do.
10. And there is no right or wrong way to do it.

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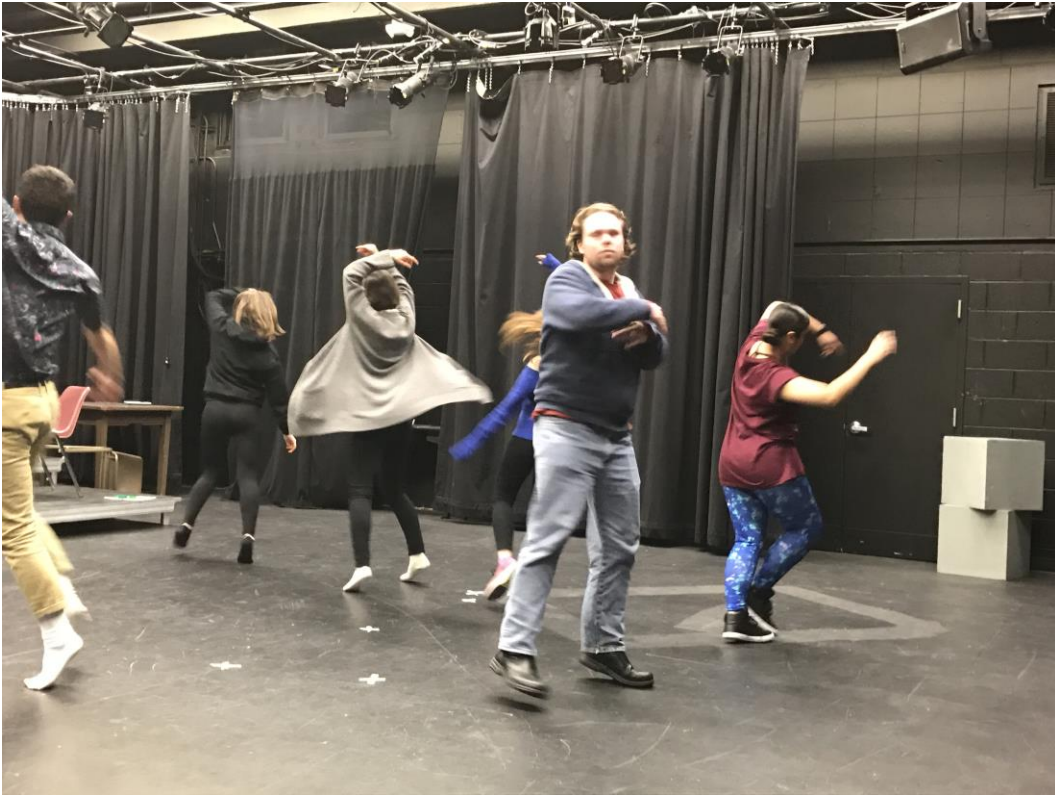
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**Appendix A – Auditions**



## Appendix B – Partnerships



*Write Around Portland Final Reading*



*UP Moreau Center Urban Immersion at St. Andre Bassett - Portland*



*Blanchet House of Hospitality Pre-Performance Warm Up – March 26, 2017*



*Blanchet House of Hospitality Post-Performance Talkback – March 26, 2017*

**Appendix C – Rehearsal Process**



*Fracturing Transcribed Monologues*



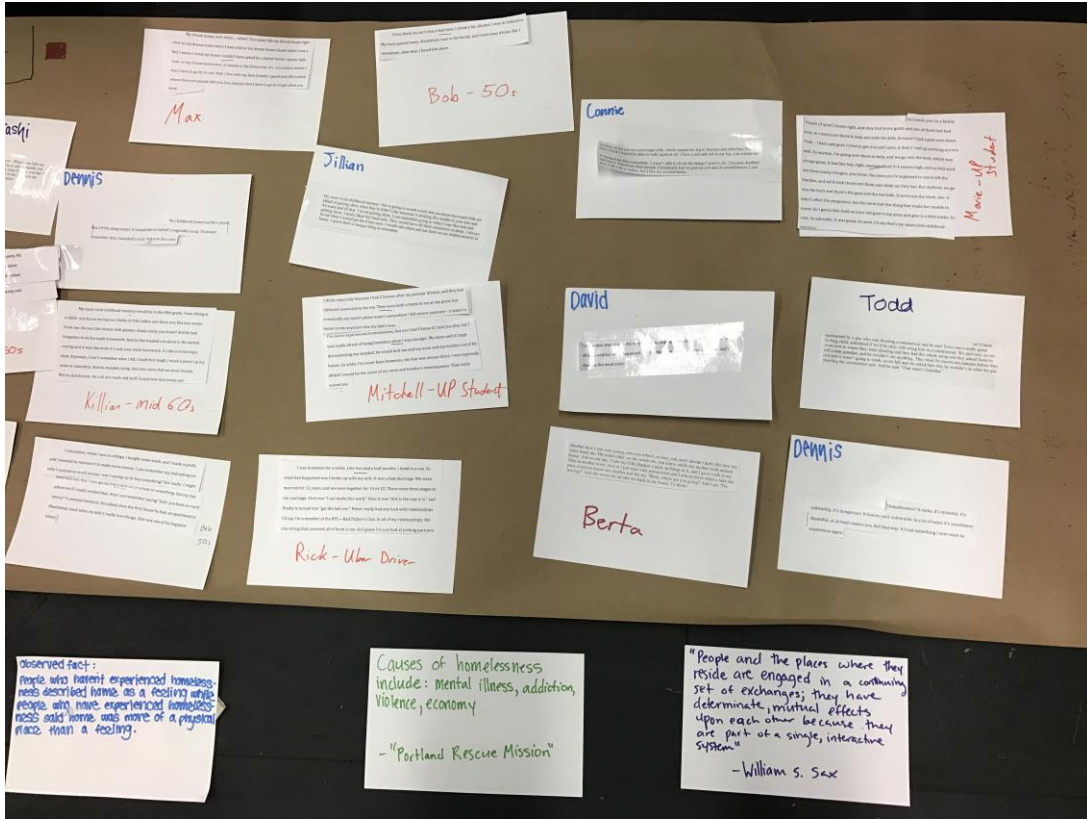
*Interview, Facts, and Found Story Brainstorming Wall*



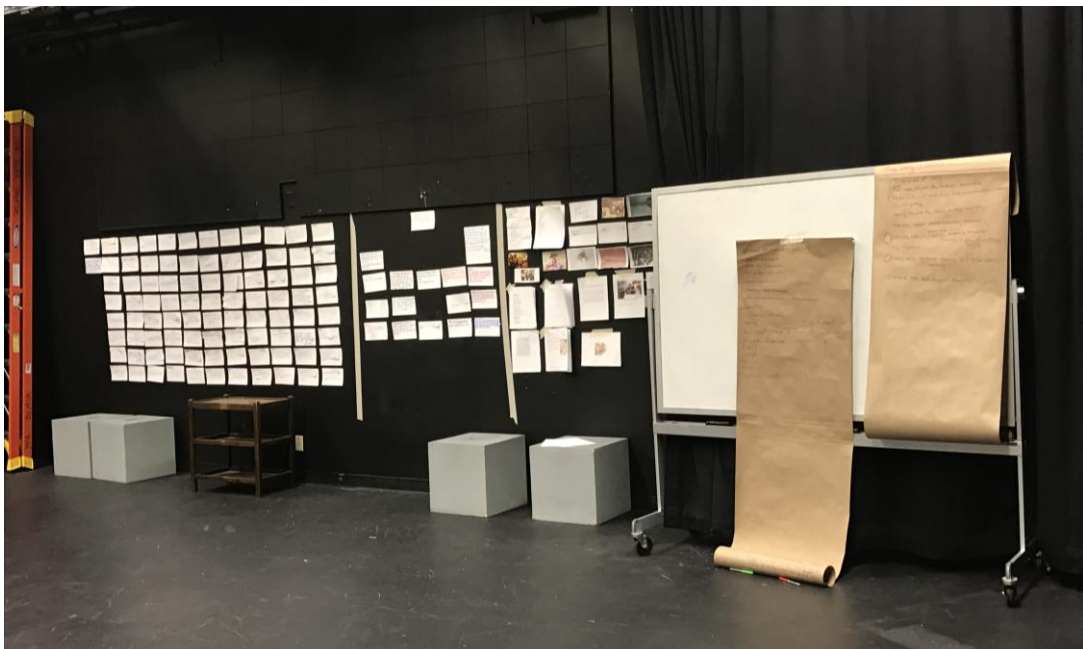
*Generation of Scene Material from Stimuli*



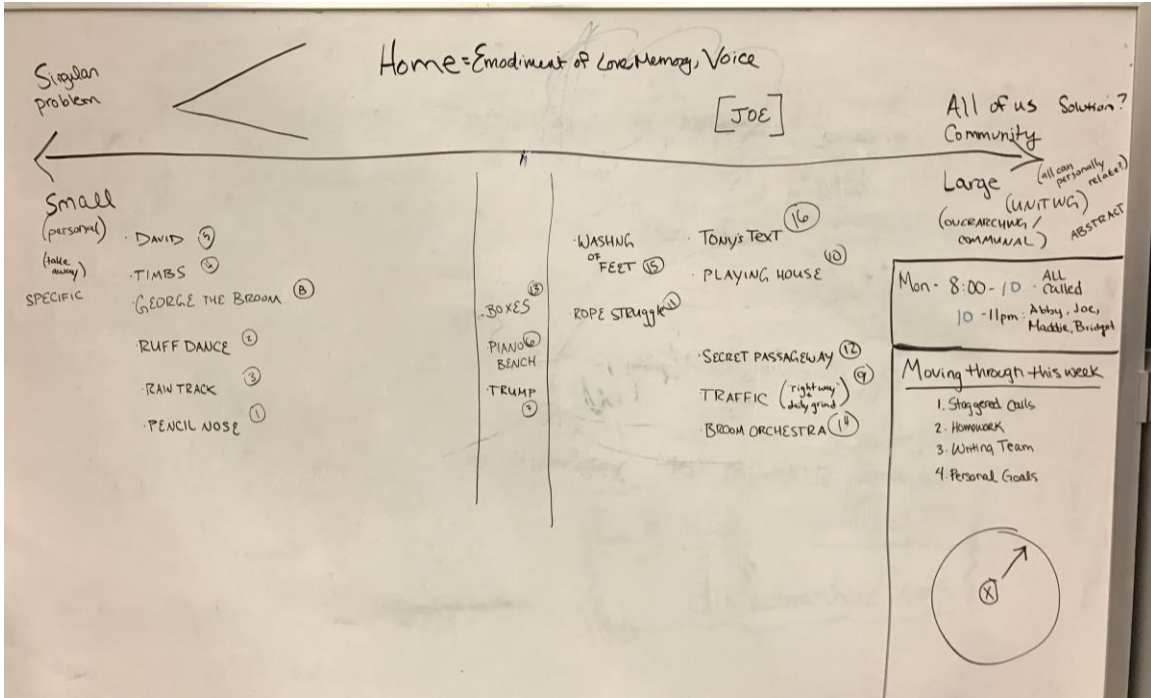
*Individual Breakout Scene Generation*



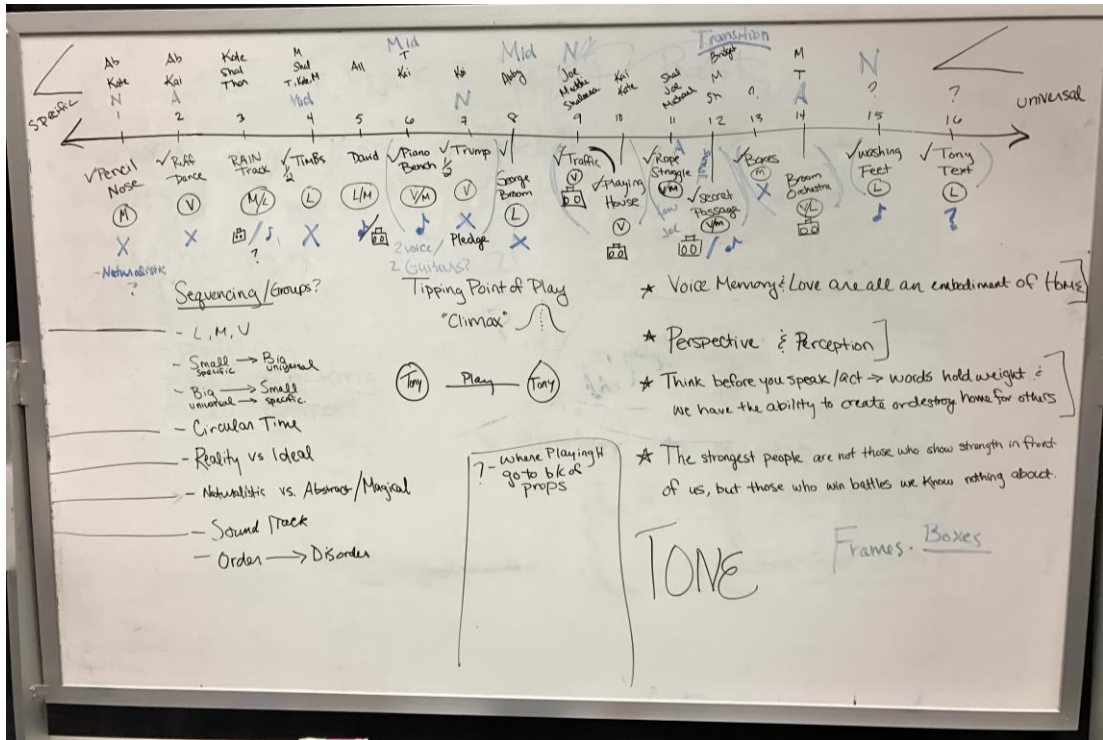
*Fractured Card Stimuli Grouped in “Surviving the Transition”*



*Finished Brainstorming Wall*



### Finding Structure



Small to Big Sequence – Zoomed in Figure on Page 57

**Appendix D – Scenic Design**

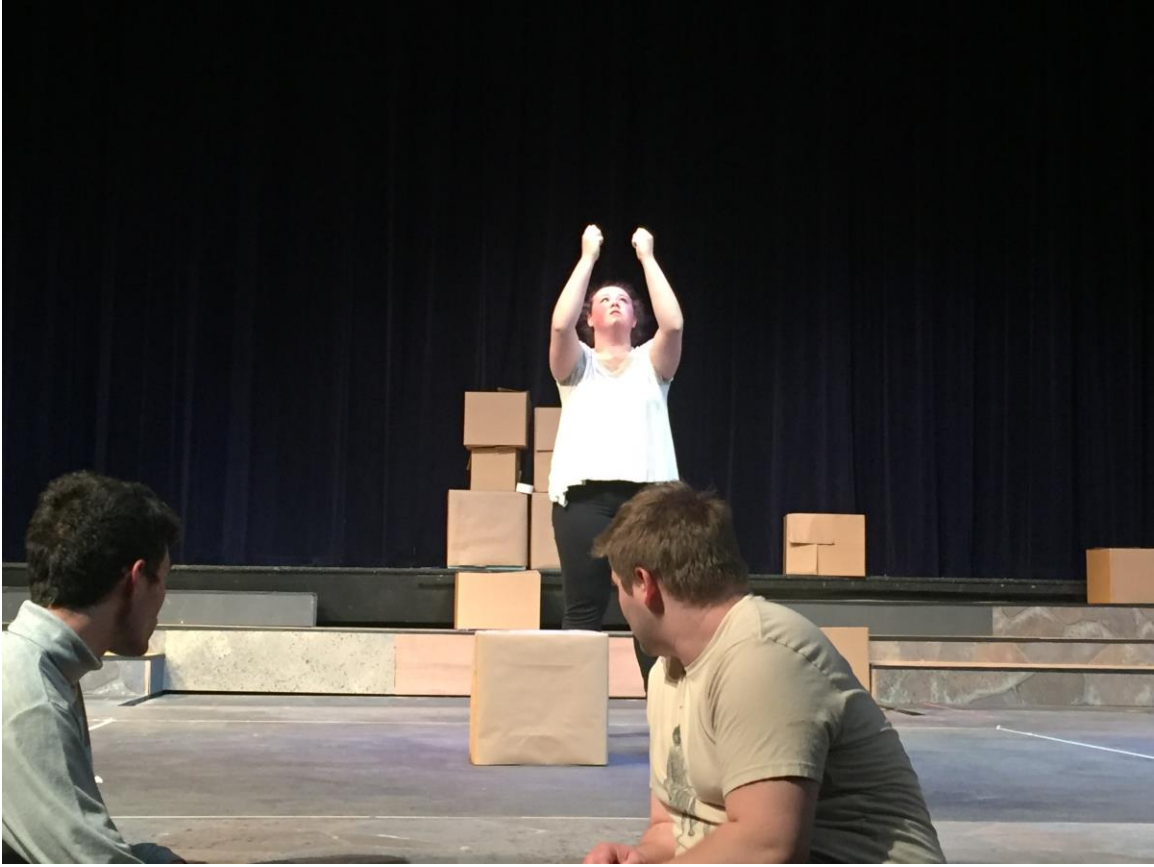


*Minimal boxes for versatility and transportability*



Appendix E – Performance





## **Appendix F – External Press**

- <https://uportland.exposure.co/home-a-devised-production>
- <https://www.facebook.com/universityofportland/videos/10154456071926408/>
- <http://www.upbeacon.com/article/2017/03/kelly-wetheralds-home-digs-deep>
- <http://materdeiradio.com/ttc-episode40-032417/>
  - Interview begins at 15:09