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Performing George in Sunday in the Park with George

Austin D. Bouchard

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PERFORMING GEORGE IN SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Theatre and Dance
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Austin D Bouchard

December 2015

By signing your name below, you affirm that this work is the complete and final version of your paper submitted in partial fulfillment of a degree from the University of Mary Washington. You affirm the University of Mary Washington honor pledge: "I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."

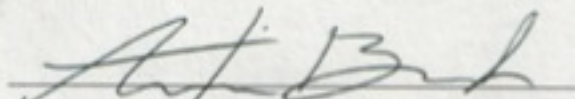
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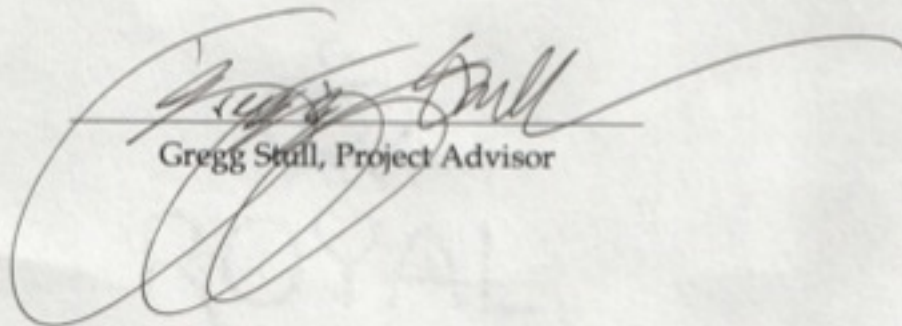
*Performing George in
Sunday in the Park with George*

submitted to the Department of Theatre & Dance
in fulfillment of THEA 482: Senior Project

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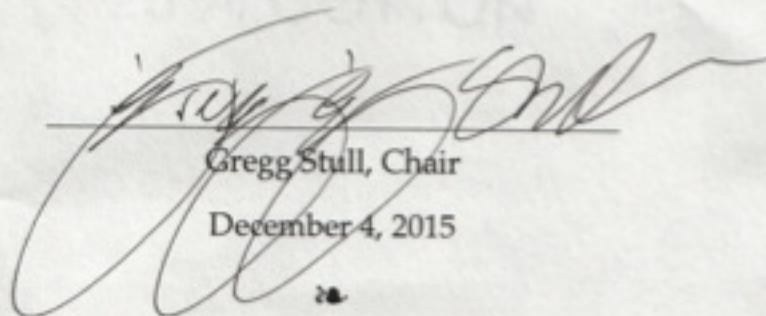


Austin D. Bouchard



Gregg Stull, Project Advisor

AWARDED HONORS IN THEATRE, 2015



Gregg Stull, Chair
December 4, 2015



UNIVERSITY OF
MARY WASHINGTON

Department of
Theatre and Dance

Playing George

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Georges Seurat / George

Throughout the rehearsal period and run of *Sunday in the Park with George* this site will serve as a resource, sketchpad, and dumping ground for my research, script analysis, notes/ideas, and more.

My work on character and script will follow the Practical Aesthetics method of acting as laid out by David Mamet and William H. Macy and as taught to me by the faculty at the Atlantic Acting School. For information on both:

[Practical Aesthetics](#)

[The Atlantic Acting School](#)

Note, in the script analysis I have decided to not show my "As-ifs" or the 4th step in practical aesthetics due to their private nature except in a few instances.

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Playing George

HOME ABOUT SCRIPT ANALYSIS SELF-CRITIQUE



Bring Order to the Whole

September 19, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

Opening Lines

First Analysis

1. The Literal – What is my character literally doing in the scene?

George is literally describing the challenges of painting to -the audience? -to himself?

Audience as students, lecturing to audience, teaching audience. George's role as architect, artist, higher power?

2. The Want – What does my character want from the other character?

George wants (the audience) to understand the nature of his work.

3. Essential Action – What is the essential action/nature of the scene?

To take someone under my wing.

To enlighten someone to a greater understanding.

To gain an ally.

To get someone to join my crusade. George's crusade is his style. It is challenged, ridiculed, and mocked by strangers and his peers.

Second Version

After working this with Gregg, the scene became much more introspective. Instead of describing his challenge to the audience, the words are his working words, words to keep him focused.

The Literal: George is talking himself through drawing the basic composition of the park.

The action here is the drawing. The words themselves are words he has uttered hundreds and hundreds of times.

"Calmly, with careful gestures, while his eye never left one and the slow level voice searched for the slightly professional phrase..." "If I had to describe him in one word, I would say that he was above all an organizer, in the artistic sense of the word. Hazard, luck, chance, the sensation of being carried away-these things meant nothing to him." -Belgian poet Verhaeren on Seurat.

"So we call upon the author to explain"

-Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds

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Drawing Dot, "Sunday in the Park with George" →

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Playing George

HOME ABOUT SCRIPT ANALYSIS SELF-CRITIQUE



Drawing Dot, "Sunday in the Park with George"

September 20, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

George drawing Dot

"No. Now I want you to look out at the water."

...

"The monkeys, Dot. Not the cage."

First Analysis

1. The Literal

George is literally talking Dot through a modeling session.

2. The Want

George wants Dot to realize that she is not the most important part of the painting.

3. Essential Action

To put someone in their place.

To get someone to fulfill their duty.

4. As-If

It's as if I'm telling my brother to accept a job offer he is hesitant to take, and his window to accept is almost up.

Second Analysis

First analysis was too aggressive and made George too dislikable from the top of the show.

Literal: George is literally talking Dot through a modeling session.

Want: George wants Dot to realize that the stiller she is, the more beautiful she will be in the painting.

Essential Action: To get someone to accept a gift.

This analysis for also serves for George's lines in "Sunday in the Park with George"

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HOME ABOUT SCRIPT ANALYSIS SELF-CRITIQUE



Speaking with Jules

September 23, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

George talks with Jules

"Hello, Jules."

...

"Yes..."

First Analysis

1. The Literal

George is talking to Jules about his first painting on exhibition, *Bathers at Asnières*.

2. The Want

George wants Jules to take his new work seriously.

3. Essential Action

To gain an ally.

4. As-If

It's as if I have been accused of cheating on a final exam, putting my graduation at risk, and I am going to my professor to set the facts straight.

This is the first interaction between Jules and George and the differences between the two artists are shown. Jules is leisurely, he doesn't paint this early, and "it is too sunny" to be painting. George however is experimenting and pushing boundaries with his work and will make personal sacrifices.

"Poverty frees them from ordinary standards of behavior, just as money frees people from work."

-George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*

[← Drawing Dot, "Sunday in the Park with George"](#)

[Done Sketching →](#)

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Done Sketching

September 23, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

George finishes sketching Dot

"Thank you."

...

"Dot. We'll go to the follies tonight."

First Analysis

1. The Literal

George is talking with Dot about the modelling session.

2. The Want

George wants Dot to leave so he can sketch other people at the park.

3. Essential Action

To lay down the law.

To [draw the dividing line](#).

[← Speaking with Jules](#)

["Color and Light" →](#)

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HOME ABOUT SCRIPT ANALYSIS SELF-CRITIQUE



Monthly Archives: December 2014

“Move On” and “Finale”

December 11, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

“Move On”

Dot appears to George, a vision or dream state. It is not until she says her child's name, Marie, that George realizes who she must be. To her, George becomes Georges Seurat, they are one in the same. To him, she is the inspiration he never had and that Georges never appreciated.

The Literal: George is talking to Dot about the lack of inspiration in his work.

The Want: George wants Dot to tell him what he can do to find purpose in his art again.

Essential Action: To get someone to reveal their secret.

“Sunday”

The action continues throughout the scene, when George asks Dot about the words written in the back of the red book, and when the Old Lady reveals herself. George gets closer and closer until the song ends. The final words written in the red book are the ultimate moment of discovery for George.

“There is a quality, in things, of the right way seeming wrong at first. To test our faith.”

John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*

The Island with Dennis, “Lesson #8”

December 10, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

The Island with Dennis

George rushes into the clearing on La Grande Jatte to make sure the plans for the Chromolume exhibition are going smoothly.

The Literal: George is making sure everything is ready for the last Chromolume activation he will produce with Dennis as his partner.

The Want: George wants Dennis to realize that he has run out of inspiration and needs help.

Essential Action: To get someone to see my worth.

George realizes that Dennis cannot help him and sends him away.

“Lesson #8”

George looks for help anywhere, even the pages of a book that he places no faith in.

The essential nature of the song is: To get someone to take me under their wing.

As-if: It's as if my father is back in the ICU, asleep and in critical condition, and I am asking for advice about my future.

"If I close my eyes for a moment, I can see Larry react to something or another: amused by life, by grace. He will throw his head to the side, laughing with delight and with wicked hint of impishness, yet at the same time it's never without knowing the gravity of things."

Speaking with Elaine, "Children and Art"

December 10, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

Speaking with Elaine

George manages to escape the dinner party and find Elaine and Marie.

The Literal: George is talking to Elaine about the different affects the evening had on himself versus Marie.

The Want: George wants Elaine to realize that events like these are not going to help him.

Essential Action: To get someone to see the big picture.

Elaine leaves...

"Children and Art"

George listens for a moment as Marie sings about the Chromolume that she was very impressed by. He walks over to her when he sees her begin to become confused.

The Literal: George is listening and speaking to his Grandmother about the power that art and family share.

The Want: George wants Marie to see that he is not the artist that Marie's father was.

Essential Action: To bring someone down to my level.

Elaine wheels off Marie and George stares at the painting. He wants to learn Seurat's secret, whatever that may be.

"Putting it Together"

December 10, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

The "Putting it Together" sequence has George speaking with multitudes of important potential patrons of the Museum, paralleled with the lyrics which represent George's inner monologue throughout the scene.

The Literal: George is talking to investors and members of the museum about working on future Chromolume projects.

The Want: George wants his potential patrons to feel comfortable in his presence.

Essential Action: To gain an ally

There is more to these moments than just George trying to make money. He is struggling with self doubt in his work, and self loathing because he knows he is essentially a fraud. He must still play the want through all this.

Several distractions hinder George throughout the scene: Marie's attitude and fumbling through conversations could be potentially damaging so George must make her feel welcome and useful at the event while covering for her. Dennis storms in later still losing his cool about the Chromolume malfunction so George must make him feel proud of his work so George can get back on task. Blaire appears to see right through George's work and he knows her opinions are valid, but still, he is here to work and must make her believe that he is confident in the Chromolume machines. The action is still "To gain an ally."

The sung lyrics are George's moments of victory from the action, or moments of frustration.

Chromolume Presentation

December 10, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

George presents his latest series of work at the Art Institute of Chicago to an audience of investors, critics, and museum members.

The Literal: George, with Marie, is presenting the back story that inspired his latest chromolume.

The Want: George wants the audience to feel excited about this new piece.

Essential Action: To get someone to join my crusade.

BEAT when Chromolume fails

The Literal: George is explaining what went wrong with the machine's activation.

The Want: George wants the audience to feel they can trust him after a disastrous first attempt.

Essential Action: To get someone to throw me a bone.

Once the machine is running smoothly, the action changes back to the first. There is no beat change when Marie reveals the book, the stakes are simply risen to a higher level.

Beautiful, "You are blocking my light", Sunday

December 10, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

George's mother has finally to agreed to sit with him and be sketched. If no one else understands George, perhaps his mother will.

The Literal: George is telling his mother that the world is different then what she sees.

The Want: George wants his mother to see the world as he does.

Essential Action: To get someone to take me under their wing.

Dot enters the park with her child.

The Literal: George is telling Dot that he is no longer a part of her life.

The Want: George wants Dot to leave *his* park.

Essential Action: To put someone in their place.

Dot leaves and George begins the action of sketching his mother. Her words have little impact on him as he quickly disconnects with her to try and focus on his design, light, harmony, etc. He is unaffected by the chaos surrounding him in the park until his mother is too distracted to continue modeling. Suddenly George is overwhelmed by the lives he has been drawing, until his mothers words help him connect with his subjects.

"Sunday"

The Literal: George is speaking his working words as he composes the park and finishes his painting, "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte."

Action: Posing, directing, and placing the subjects.

We Do Not Belong Together

December 8, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

Dot calls George away from his painting. George wants to get back to their original conversation before the interruption, about "her" painting and her choice of Louis over himself. Then she tells him,

"I may be going away. To America."

The Literal: George tells Dot that running away to America will not solve her problems.

The Want: George wants Dot to realize that she never understood him and it is her own fault they never worked together.

Essential Action: To get someone to throw me a life line.

Almost Finished, and Talking with Jules

December 8, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

Dot calls on George while he works on the final touches to his painting.

The literal: George talks with Dot about the choices she has made concerning him and Louis.

The want: George wants Dot to realize that staying with him will be better than a married life.

Essential Action: To get someone to cross a line in the sand.

Beat change when Jules and Yvonne enter.

The literal: George is talking with Jules about the breakthroughs he has made with the painting.

The want: George wants Jules to admit that his painting is worthy of praise.

Essential Action: To get my due.

George becomes entranced with his painting after Jules and Yvonne leave, until Dot breaks him from this moment leading to "We do not Belong Together" ...

The One on the Left and Finishing the Hat

December 7, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

The One on the Left

George enters the park looking for another subject to draw, decides to finish the sketch of the soldier he had started on previously.

Finishing the Hat

After the Soldiers and the Celestes leave George has the park to himself and reflects on the difficulty of being an artist, creating new and challenging work, but also trying to lead some semblance of a normal life. He has been observing the lives of others for years as he works on his painting, "Mademoiselles...you and me pal...second bottle...etc" (all sung in the style of the person George is imitating) but admits in the end that these brief glimpses are all he gets while he sits in his studio or on his sketching stool.

The Day Off

December 7, 2014 in [Script Analysis](#)

In the beginning of this scene, as George sings while sketching the dog, "If the head was smaller..." George has a moment of self-reflection/self-doubt. It is a reference back to the "Color and Light" sequence where Dot sings about how she wished she looked, "...if my hands were graceful..."

The Literal: George is not seeing the composition he wants in the dog.

The Want: George wants Dot to accept him for what he really is.

George loses himself in the sketching, as he lost himself in the painting.

The Dogs:

Spot- Spot pines for some good scraps to eat and a little comfort while at the park before he goes back to his uncomfortable boat with the Boatman.

Fifi- Fifi, an energetic but timid dog, has spent most of her life closely leashed to her uptight owner, and is a little frightened of her sudden freedom in the park. She hates the constant attention from her owner, but wouldn't mind a little attention from Spot...

As the usual suspects drift into the park, George notices what they work so hard to keep quiet. For someone as reserved as George, he is still an expert observer. As Jules engages him in conversation,

The Literal: George is talking with Jules about the fundamental differences between their styles.

The Want: George wants Jules to admit that there is validity to his different style.

Essential Action: To get a fool to see the big picture.

George continues sketching and observing until he notices Dot, cannot think of anything to possibly say, and makes his way back to the studio.

[Older posts](#)

Playing George

HOME ABOUT SCRIPT ANALYSIS SELF-CRITIQUE



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[← Boatman, Celestes, and Dot](#)

[The One on the Left and Finishing the Hat →](#)

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The "Putting it Together" sequence has George speaking with multitudes of important potential patrons of the Museum, paralleled with the lyrics which represent George's inner monologue throughout the scene.

The Literal: George is talking to investors and members of the museum about working on future Chromolume projects.

The Want: George wants his potential patrons to feel comfortable in his presence.

Essential Action: To gain an ally

There is more to these moments than just George trying to make money. He is struggling with self doubt in his work, and self loathing because he knows he is essentially a fraud. He must still play the want through all this.

Several distractions hinder George throughout the scene: Marie's attitude and fumbling through conversations could be potentially damaging so George must make her feel welcome and useful at the event while covering for her. Dennis storms in later still losing his cool about the Chromolume malfunction so George must make him feel proud of his work so George can get back on task. Blaire appears to see right through George's work and he knows her opinions are valid, but still, he is here to work and must make her believe that he is confident in the Chromolume machines. The action is still "To gain an ally."

The sung lyrics are George's moments of victory from the action, or moments of frustration.

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Speaking with Elaine, "Children and Art"

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Speaking with Elaine

George manages to escape the dinner party and find Elaine and Marie.

The Literal: George is talking to Elaine about the different affects the evening had on himself versus Marie.

The Want: George wants Elaine to realize that events like these are not going to help him.

Essential Action: To get someone to see the big picture.

Elaine leaves...

"Children and Art"

George listens for a moment as Marie sings about the Chromolume that she was very impressed by. He walks over to her when he sees her begin to become confused.

The Literal: George is listening and speaking to his Grandmother about the power that art and family share.

The Want: George wants Marie to see that he is not the artist that Marie's father was.

Essential Action: To bring someone down to my level.

Elaine wheels off Marie and George stares at the painting. He wants to learn Seurat's secret, whatever that may be.

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The Island with Dennis, "Lesson #8"

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The Island with Dennis

George rushes into the clearing on La Grande Jatte to make sure the plans for the Chromolume exhibition are going smoothly.

The Literal: George is making sure everything is ready for the last Chromolume activation he will produce with Dennis as his partner.

The Want: George wants Dennis to realize that he has run out of inspiration and needs help.

Essential Action: To get someone to see my worth.

George realizes that Dennis cannot help him and sends him away.

"Lesson #8"

George looks for help anywhere, even the pages of a book that he places no faith in.

The essential nature of the song is: To get someone to take me under their wing.

As-if: It's as if my father is back in the ICU, asleep and in critical condition, and I am asking for advice about my future.

"If I close my eyes for a moment, I can see Larry react to something or another: amused by life, by grace. He will throw his head to the side, laughing with delight and with wicked hint of impishness, yet at the same time it's never without knowing the gravity of things."

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"Move On" and "Finale"

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"Move On"

Dot appears to George, a vision or dream state. It is not until she says her child's name, Marie, that George realizes who she must be. To her, George becomes Georges Seurat, they are one in the same. To him, she is the inspiration he never had and that Georges never appreciated.

The Literal: George is talking to Dot about the lack of inspiration in his work.

The Want: George wants Dot to tell him what he can do to find purpose in his art again.

Essential Action: To get someone to reveal their secret.

"Sunday"

The action continues throughout the scene, when George asks Dot about the words written in the back of the red book, and when the Old Lady reveals herself. George gets closer and closer until the song ends. The final words written in the red book are the ultimate moment of discovery for George.

"There is a quality, in things, of the right way seeming wrong at first. To test our faith."

John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*

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Self-Critique

Life isn't perfect. People are not perfect, relationships are not perfect, work isn't perfect, my body isn't perfect, art isn't perfect. Whenever I look back on a past role I have played onstage I cringe and twitch in embarrassment. "Why did I make that choice?" "Why on earth did I not react to a moment like *this*?" Why, in other words, wasn't I better? Obviously because I am young, barely experienced, and my serious training has only just started. But looking back on my time onstage for a show is not the same as comparing my paintings from five years ago to my current work, or my writing style. In those mediums yes you develop a style or voice as the work matures, but you have a tangible path that can be traced all the way back to its origin. The brush work here is too controlled, I should loosen that up, or the composition could be fixed if I change the geometry of this. I cannot transport myself to the spring of 2013, look inside my own mind, and see what I was thinking as Prospero in *The Tempest*. I could look at my notes from the show and study my analysis, but all of that is internalized by the time I am up onstage. All that I have with me from that show is an unquantifiable experience that taught me some *thing*. Yes I learned how to read and unlock scansion and meter, and my character analysis became sharper than previous shows, but all of that fueled a performance that I cannot recall. There are memories of being on the stage, saying my lines, seeing my scene partners, but I cannot break that down and say, "This is what I did right, this is what I did wrong, I'll fix it for the next play I'm cast in." Of course I have a desire to be better, to be more honest on stage, be even more in the moment, but for me that comes from being in rehearsal, being in classes, and being on stage, not from looking back at a role and saying "Damn I really screwed that moment up, why couldn't I be more like Christopher Plummer in that bit." If all of this sounds very defensive it is because I find the idea of a jury for a performance very aggressive. I am proud of my work on *Sunday* and I believe that of just about every show I've ever been in. The material has been the most challenging I have ever faced, the rehearsals rigorous but rewarding, and working with a great director and cast has taught me countless lessons and showed me new parts of myself. But I cannot judge my own work so much as let it inspire me to make the next performance better than the last. Certainly I can defend my choices, but in the end those choices were discovered by myself or through Gregg's direction and we worked together to make them a part of his vision for *Sunday in the Park with George*. One critic might think a choice was too weak while another may think it was the right one, but to me it must have felt right in that moment.

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