



Virginia Commonwealth University  
VCU Scholars Compass

---

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

---

2013

# Theatre Triad: An Approach to Devising Collaborative Ensemble Theatre

Keith G. Fitzgerald

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

© The Author

---

Downloaded from

<http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2971>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

© Keith G. Fitzgerald 2013  
All Rights Reserved

Theatre Triad:  
An Approach to Devising Collaborative Ensemble Theatre

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by  
Keith G. Fitzgerald,  
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013  
Bachelor of Arts in Musical Theatre, Point Park University, 2007

Director: Lorri Lindberg  
Assistant Professor, Theatre  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia

May, 2013

## Acknowledgment

The author wishes to thank several people. I would like to thank my partner, David, for his love, support and patience during the past few years through graduate school. I would like to thank my parents, Mike and Toby Fitzgerald, for their unending love and support. I would also like to thank Lorri Lindberg and Dr. Noreen Barnes for their help and direction with this project and their guidance through my graduate studies. Last but not least, I would like to thank the ensemble of *Mélange*: Morgan Barbour, Patrick Bello, Annabella Bradstreet, Andrew Colletti, Connor Haggerty, Maudeleora Kaufman, David Rogozenski, and Miranda Tower for their talent and commitment to this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	v
Introduction: What is Theatre Triad?.....	1
The Approach.....	4
Mélange, The Play.....	19
Participant Testimonials.....	70
Reference Materials.....	74
Vita.....	87

## FIGURES

Theatre Triad Diagram.....	3
Mélange Sample Storyboard.....	5
Audition/ Interview Notice.....	76
Audition/ Interview Form.....	77
Theatre Triad Class Proposal.....	78
Theatre Triad Sample Syllabus.....	80
Mélange Program.....	83

## Abstract

### THEATRE TRIAD: AN APPROACH TO DEVISING COLLABORATIVE ENSEMBLE THEATRE

By Keith G. Fitzgerald, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013

Major Director: Lorri Lindberg, Assistant Professor, Theatre

Theatre Triad is a new approach to devising collaborative ensemble theatre starting with the three main components of Performance: Voice, Movement, and Text. These components were deconstructed and reconstructed in pairs as the basis for the devising process. The performance process begins with creating an ensemble followed by four steps: exploring the theatrical genres affiliated with the pairings of Voice and Movement, Movement and Text, Voice and Text, and completed with reintegrating all three components. Through this process many things occur, a new play is created, ensemble members focus on exploring the elements of acting and performance, and a strong foundation of acting skills is laid for young actors. Theatre Triad can also be used as a method for teaching a number of courses in Devising Theatre or Acting classes. In this paper you will learn how Theatre Triad works as both a production approach and method in actor training.

## **Introduction**

### What is Theatre Triad?

Theatre Triad is an approach to devising collaborative ensemble theatre based in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the three main components of performance; Text, Movement, and Voice. It is designed for use in both production/performance and in the classroom. In production the approach is a way of creating exciting new works in a professional theatre environment or within an academic Theatre Program. In the classroom Theatre Triad can be taught as an approach to devising new theatre and can also be used in a first year studio acting class within a program that does not offer classes in Voice and Movement during the first year of undergraduate studies. The goal of a strong first year program should be to provide a solid foundation in the craft of acting, and in theatre as an academic discipline. In the first year, a solid foundation is built through the combination of several key elements beyond the traditional acting basics of action and objective, for example: work ethic, ensemble building, collaboration, improvisation, text analysis, healthy voice production, use of the body as an expressive instrument, and ownership of material, by which I mean, feeling as though the character and the text belongs to the performer throughout the process. These elements are imperative to the success of student actors and are inherent in Theatre Triad. The classroom application is divided into steps or phases which may be

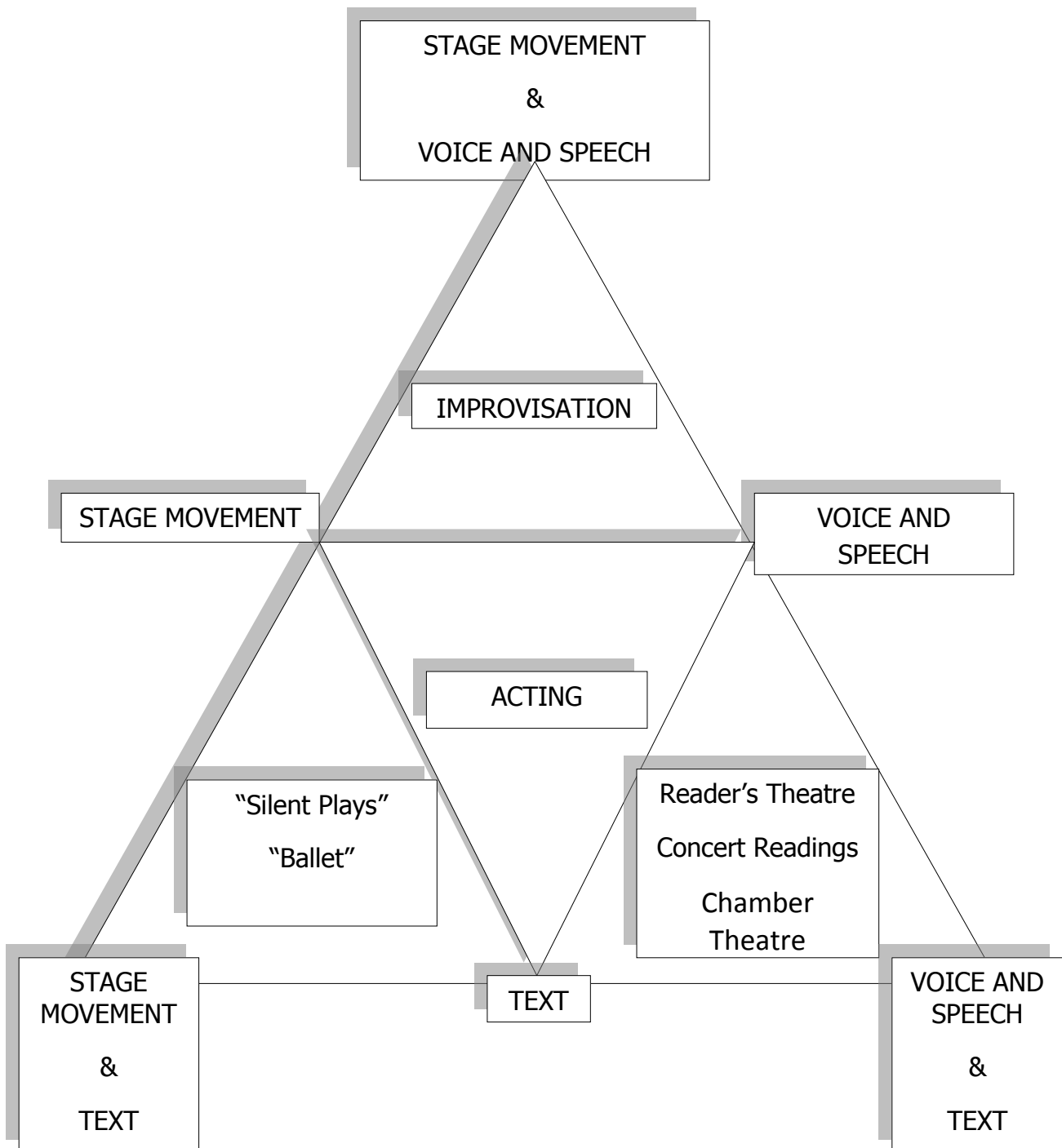


taught by an acting teacher or a team consisting of teachers in each of the fields explored through the work. While doing coursework for my MFA I came up with this idea, after drawing it out as a diagram I put it away knowing that it would be important later in my schooling, through showing colleagues the diagram and in conversation I decided that I would either teach a class in devising theatre or produce and devise a new play using the Theatre Triad approach. I decided to create a syllabus for a course and devised a new play as a creative project as subject for my thesis.

# Theatre Triad

**Figure 1**

Theatre Triad



## **Chapter 1**

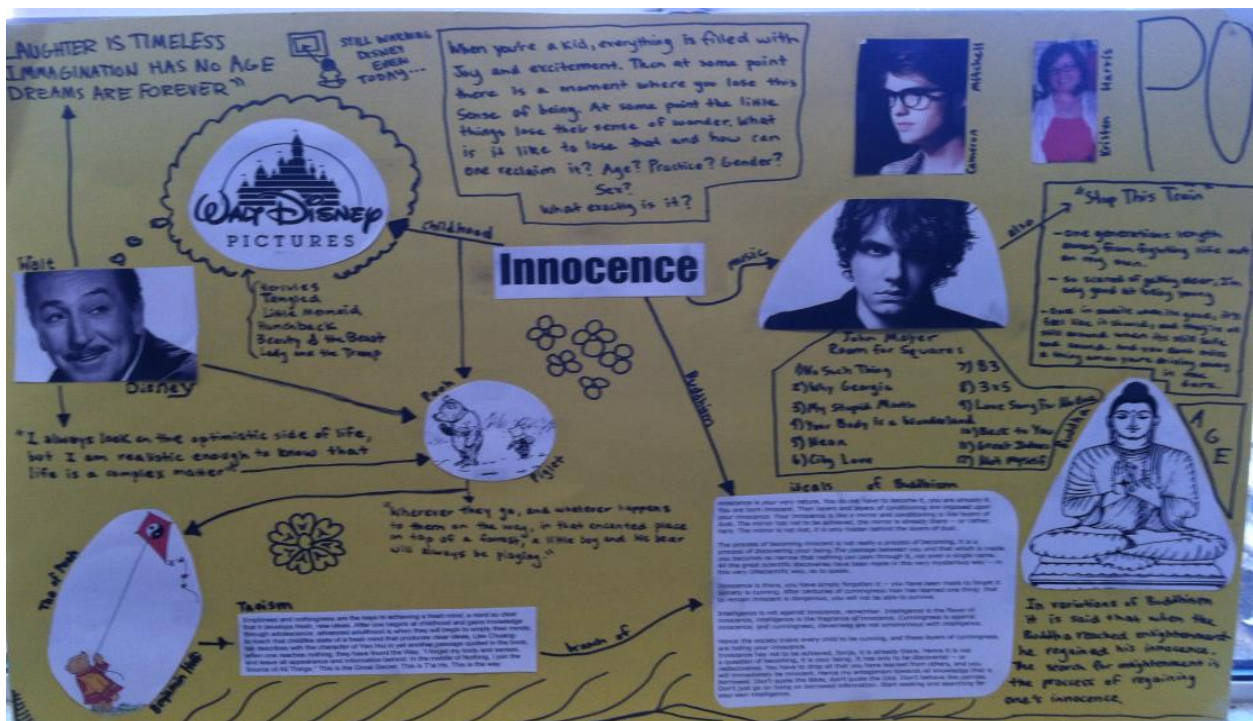
### The Production Approach

This section is an overview of the Theatre Triad process as the approach is applied to production/performance, each phase will be covered in more detail later in this chapter. The process begins with casting. A traditional audition consisting of a monologue or song will suffice but must be followed by an interview. The interview should be tailored for each different production asking specific questions in order to find out what talents in addition to acting skills are available that would contribute to a unique theatrical experience. Certain questions are necessary to ensure a flow to the process, some sample questions that should be asked during the audition/interview are: How do you feel about research? Or, How do you feel about Improvisation? The specificity and nature of the questions should grow based on the experience level of your students and/or professionals. The interview should be followed by a callback consisting of Improv exercises in order to gauge the potential ensemble's willingness to work in this manner. Throughout the creative process I found that eight devisers was a manageably sized group, based on the talents of the ensemble four devisers served as writers, one as movement assistant, we also had four serve as musicians although in the end we decided to forego the live music. Using this approach the type of play that is created will rely solely on the ensemble you choose. For example, if you wish to create a new musical it will only be achievable if you are able to find at least one ensemble member to serve as a Composer.

Once you have cast your ensemble, the next step is to decide on a broad theme. This can be a difficult task, finding something that your entire ensemble can agree on. For our play *Mélange* the ensemble agreed on the broad theme of innocence, which was then broken down into explorations of the loss or regaining of innocence. At this point all devisers should be given some time before the rehearsal process begins in order to do the necessary research and creation of character(s). The ensemble should be urged to approach their research through the eyes of the character(s) they have created.

After the characters have been developed, each deviser should present their research to the rest of the ensemble. The research is very important to the next step of the process, devising through improvisation. The following is a sample storyboard created by Andrew Colletti.

Figure 2



The first step in the rehearsal process is to pair two of the three main components of performance, Voice and Movement. Pairing Voice and Movement without benefit of Text is the style of performance we call Improvisation or Improv for short. The difference between this form and many other forms of improvisation is the fact that it is well informed based on the research the devisers have done. It is through the Improv portion of the Theatre Triad process that the Text is created. In the beginning stages of the Improv portion a format should be decided upon. Will it be a collection of vignettes or a traditional format play etc? I found flexibility is a great attribute when creating a play using this process. It is okay to have an idea of what format you prefer but you must allow it to grow through collaboration into something agreed upon by the whole ensemble. During this portion we wrote as close to verbatim as we could what the actors were saying during their improvisation, to be later edited for purpose of clarity.

Once the Text is complete it is time to begin the next phase of the Theatre Triad approach, focusing on Physical Storytelling. This phase is started with pairing the components of Movement and Text, without Voice, which creates performance styles similar to Ballet or Silent Plays. In this process the ensemble was charged with the task of telling their character's story through Movement. I used different techniques and exercises in order to help the ensemble engage their entire instrument in order to express their characters' story.

The next step was to pair the two remaining components; Voice and Text, when using these two components without benefit of Movement genres such as reader's

theatre, forensics and concert musicals emerge. We chose to approach this portion as a reader's theatre. Several different vocal production techniques and exercises were employed to guide the ensemble toward using the entire vocal instrument, to tell a story, lay the groundwork for positive voice and diction, and create a character voice if desired.

The devised play, *Mélange*, was presented in two acts in December of 2012. The first act of the play told the entire story of *Mélange* with Movement only it served as a prologue of sorts, introducing the entire story of the play physically before hearing the story. The second act was a reading of the play without Movement. The next and final step would be to reintegrate the three components and mount a full production of the devised piece as a traditional theatre production.

### The Devising Process

The first phase in the rehearsal process is to pair the components of Voice and Movement without benefit of Text, creating the genre of performance we call Improvisation or Improv for short. In order to foster creativity and establish the atmosphere required, start each Improv session with your favorite theatre and Improv games. An example of a game we used is "living tableaux", which consists of the group posing for a picture as an ensemble and remaining still until everyone is involved and then letting the "picture" come to life by adding voice and movement. The Rorschach Improv consists of two people posing together creating their version of an "inkblot". Afterwards, two improvisers whose backs have been turned will see the "inkblot" and improvise a scene based on what they see in the "inkblot". Another exercise we used is

what I've heard referred to as Mover/Sounder. It is an exercise in which one person leaves the room and the ensemble decides on a simple task they want the missing member to perform. The mover re-enters the room and the sounder uses abstract positive and negative sounds as clues in order to help the mover perform their task. The long form Improv used in this approach is different than many other forms of improvisation due in large part to the amount of research that has been done by the devisers. Having a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and a well-developed character before starting this phase creates informed and focused improvisations from the ensemble members. Working in this manner allows the actors to work spontaneously as Improv is intended, while keeping the integrity of the growing script intact. In the beginning stages of the Improv the format should be decided upon.

#### Play Format

The format, form, or structure of the play is left completely in the hands of the Director/Deviser and the Ensemble. The format can be anything from a collection of vignettes to a traditional format play or even a completely new form created for the theatrical experience itself. I found flexibility is a great attribute when creating a play using this process. Having an idea of your format preference while allowing it to grow and evolve into something else is very helpful. We decided the format of *Mélange* would be individual two or three person scenes in which one character from each scene would move into the next scene, similar to Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde*. The Improv began after the devisers presented their characters to the ensemble and we determined which characters would work best together in each of the scenes. The circumstances for each

of the improvised scenes were established by members of the ensemble. In order to keep the truthfulness and spontaneity of improvisation we limited the given circumstances to location, time, and whether or not the characters knew one another. To document the story as it unfolded the writer/devisers wrote down as close to verbatim as possible what each of the actors were saying during the improvisation to be edited later for the purpose of clarity and continuity. Several of the scenes were written from one Improv session while several others were written from an amalgamation of many Improv sessions. During this phase we also found a way to connect almost everyone in the story, all of whom live or lived in the small town where our story took place. Once we finished the Improv, portion the writer/ devisers and myself edited the entire play to make sure there weren't any egregious errors in continuity and that the story was clear. The following Section is the play we created, *Mélange*.

Once *Mélange* the play was finished we moved in to focusing on the play with Vocal Storytelling. I quickly learned that the ensemble of seven freshmen and one sophomore were, as many young actors are, more worried about the Physical Storytelling component of the project, so we switched gears and moved right in to the Movement and Text phase of the Theatre Triad approach.

In the next phase of this process the ensemble is charged with the task of telling the story through Movement. I used several different techniques and exercises in order to help the ensemble engage their entire instrument.

Each rehearsal throughout the process began with an ensemble warm up consisting of exercises I have acquired throughout my undergraduate and graduate



training as an actor and theatre pedagogue. Ensemble warm ups are an integral part of the Theatre Triad approach, and are intended to cultivate the necessary skills of acting as a practical art including the inspired use of the body and voice, as expressive instruments.

This section includes some of the exercises employed to enhance the production of physical storytelling.

### The Edge of Balance and Double Direction.

The DAH Theatre in Belgrade, Serbia uses the concept of Edge of Balance and Double Direction in everything they do on stage. Through the rehearsal process this concept was practiced by using a drum to create a tempo that the ensemble would match while moving throughout the space, when the drum would stop beating, the ensemble would stop moving while remaining on the edge of balance with the feeling of double direction (being able to move at any moment in any number of directions). Once the drum would begin beating again the ensemble would begin moving again this time in a different direction following the tempo of the drum, continuing to remain aware that the beat could stop again at any time.

The purpose of this exercise is to create a sense of spontaneity within the body while acting on stage and to remind actors that there are several different tempos, directions, and ways of moving within a story.

### The Laban Efforts.

Using the efforts of speed, weight, and directness created by Rudolf von Laban I created a movement exercise that was character and circumstance appropriate. The combinations of efforts named punch, press, wring, slash, flick, dab, float, and glide were employed by the ensemble using their bodies to produce gestures affiliated with their characters emotions. The effort of flow was also helpful in creating varying levels of intensity through these movements.

### Archetypes.

Archetype journeys, based in the work of Frankie Armstrong and Janet B. Rodgers, proved a useful tool in creating a sense of comfort while using the body as an instrument. I chose three archetype journeys to use in the rehearsal process.

I chose the Creator/Destroyer journey because of its duality and the strong physicality it requires. It was useful in allowing the ensemble to step into an archetypal character outside of themselves. This helped to remove the pressure of judging movement created on their own.

The other archetype journeys were chosen based on the play's theme of innocence. The Maiden and The Initiate journeys both include the loss of innocence an element inherent in many of the characters created by the ensemble. In addition to the theme of innocence built into these archetype journeys, a strong physical storytelling component also exists.

Some other games and exercises used in the physical rehearsal process include: physicalizing an active verb, "dancing" in the dark, character visualization, and Augusto Boal's *West Side Story*.

### Boal's *West Side Story*

This is a group ensemble voice and movement exercise, in which two teams are formed. One team repeats a rhythmic movement and sound six times while advancing on the other team as they retreat. The process is repeated with the other team taking the lead, the series is repeated until everyone on each team has a chance to create the rhythmic sound and movement.

The main difficulty in this phase of the process was to avoid the physical story becoming a mime act. It was very important to me that the movement piece remained mostly abstract. There were certain elements which a literal approach was necessary for the purpose of clarity. When we started, the actors' instincts were to tell every word and beat of the story with their bodies, and after a week or so it became apparent that it was necessary for each of the ensemble members to write a narrative of their character's journey, not only in the play but in their lives. This proved to be the most useful element to both tell an abstract story and to show the interconnectedness of the characters in the play. The result was astounding, the movement piece became a beautiful silent prologue to the play. The goal for this phase of Theatre Triad was to instill an awareness of self and a security in the body of the ensemble and it worked

beautifully. Every ensemble member used their entire body as the expressive instrument it is.

The next phase was to pair the two remaining components, Voice and Text. When Voice and Text are used without benefit of Movement, genres such as reader's theatre, forensics and concert musicals emerge. Since the piece we devised was a play the approach we chose for this portion of the process was a reader's theatre. Several different vocal production techniques and exercises were employed to guide the ensemble toward the use of the entire vocal instrument to tell a story.

As part of the daily warm ups and in vocal storytelling portion of rehearsals, I led the ensemble in voice production, diction, and character voice exercises, some of which are detailed in this section.

### Resonators

This Resonator exercise is based in the work of Kristin Linklater and is used to engage the different resonating chambers within the vocal instrument healthfully without strain. The exercise is done by producing a sound and repeating it, focusing using each of the five resonating chambers while supporting the breath with the diaphragm. Each area of resonance has an affiliated sound. The Core- HUH, The Chest- HAH, The Throat- HEH, The Mask (Nasal)- HEE, and The Skull-HOO. Starting from the bottom each resonator is engaged eight times. Once the skull resonator is reached the process is repeated from top to bottom four times.

## Plosives

The plosives exercise, also based in Linklater, consists of producing the voiced and unvoiced qualities of the cognate consonant pairs, pb, td, kg, fv, and sz. It starts with the unvoiced consonant of the pair and repeating eight times, followed by the voiced consonant eight times, then finally alternating the unvoiced and voiced consonants for a total of sixteen times. This exercise promotes crisp diction which is an important tool for an actor.

## Sitting and Standing Statues

I also used some exercises from the work of theatre director Tadashi Suzuki, Sitting and Standing Statues. Starting in one of two neutral positions the ensemble on my instruction would explode into a pose and deliver a passage of text, until I would instruct them back into their neutral position. The statue work was useful in many ways. It proved useful in vocal projection as well as strength training to help the ensemble remain still on stage during the reading in order to allow the audience to focus on the vocal storytelling without being distracted by movement.

Many of the techniques used in the physical storytelling process proved useful in vocal storytelling as well. The Laban efforts were also employed as a vocal technique which aided in the creation of character voices; all of the archetype work had a built in vocal component which helped with vocal expression.

Some other exercises which aided in the use of the voice as an instrument were singing, and "Sirens" and "The Anaconda". Sirens and The Anaconda are two exercises in exploring pitch created by Janet B. Rodgers. (Rodgers 2)

In addition to the exercises done during rehearsal, the ensemble was also assigned the task of listening to radio shows, such as *My Favorite Husband* and *The War of the Worlds*. The goal in listening to the radio shows is to listen for any clues as to how the radio actors are able to convince the audience of what is going on without visual cues. In one case where the character voice was further away from the actor's own voice, we found that listening to audio clips and creating a character voice based on those was helpful.

The reader's theatre version of *Mélange* was successful as an exercise in vocal production and storytelling. The final Phase of Theatre Triad is to reintegrate the three main components of performance, Voice, Movement, and Text. The method of reintegration I would recommend is a remounting of the devised piece, in this case the play *Mélange*, as a traditional production. The elements of voice and movement explored throughout the first phases of the process should have laid the groundwork for a fully embodied performance from the ensemble.

The decision of whether or not to use specific elements from the first steps in the process should be left in the hands of the Director/Deviser based on the audience for which the play will be performed. One way I would recommend integrating some of the movement elements into the production would be during scene shifts and to show the passing of time.

In conclusion, Theatre Triad: An Approach to Devising Collaborative Ensemble Theatre is a useful technique for use in the production/performance of a new play. It can also be formatted to function as a class in devised theatre and even in a studio acting class where it functions as a thorough introduction to acting as a craft. By deconstructing and reconstructing the three main components of performance; Voice, Movement, and Text, Theatre Triad offers a solution to the sometimes uneven or non-existent exposure to voice and movement young actors receive early in their training.

#### Classroom Application

Theatre Triad can be used in the classroom in the same way it is used through the production process, omitting the traditional audition and starting with the interview. Theatre Triad can be taught as a class in devising theatre, (see Figure 6) or an early acting class. The goal for production is to create a new play while the goal as a class in devising theatre is to foster creativity and offer students a well-outlined approach to devising new works that can be applied throughout their careers as members of the professional theatre community. The goal as a studio acting class is to build the foundation of acting skills, including Voice, Movement, Text analysis, work ethic, risk taking, ensemble building, and ownership of material. Applying the Theatre Triad approach to a studio acting class is a good way to instill young actors with the skills necessary to succeed in the theatre. Theatre Triad can be adapted to the needs of any program. It can be done as a one semester first year acting class in very much the same way as the production model. In a year-long format, the ground work can be laid in the first semester through exercises and applied through devising in the second. This

class can be taught by a theatre generalist or by a team of teachers. The approach is broken into phases, each of which can be taught by a teacher of a specialization. The first phase, Voice and Movement/ Improv, can be taught by an acting teacher whose primary area is in Improvisation. Phase two, Movement and Text, can be taught by a Stage Movement teacher. Phase Three, Voice and Text, can be taught by a Voice and Speech teacher. The Final Phase, the reintegration of Text, Voice, and Movement, can be directed by a faculty director or directing teacher as a showcase of the work being done in class, which may be presented to faculty, peers, and family members as an alternative to traditional student showcases such as scene and monologue nights. Showcasing the students' work in this way, will be a much better gauge of their abilities and has a more polished end result based on the amount of work that is done in the classroom. The only difference in either classroom setting from the production/performance approach is the goal.

#### Conclusion

Applying this technique I created was a very enlightening and fulfilling experience. I intend to use this approach again in the future with minor adjustments. In the production/performance version of Theatre Triad the main change I would make would be during the Voice and Movement phase of the process. I would use the reader's theatre performance as an introduction to the play shortly after the play was written before making final edits and the performance itself would consist of a Movement Prologue followed by a full staging of the play.



I encourage my colleagues to experiment with Theatre Triad: An Approach to Devising Collaborative Ensemble Theatre in the studio classroom or if charged with the task of creating a new work either academically or professionally.

If you would like to see Mélange, please visit the following websites:

Act 1 Scene 1- <http://youtu.be/OqnOaZNYeHA>

Act 1 Scene 2- [http://youtu.be/\\_TG-k1EBWzU](http://youtu.be/_TG-k1EBWzU)

Act 1 Scene 2- <http://youtu.be/reMxSFTeWAU>

Act 2 Scene 1- <http://youtu.be/Cm4g2Jw61kl>

Act 2 Scene 2- <http://youtu.be/RIGxzkaseHQ>

Act 2 Scene 3- <http://youtu.be/cEvAP-3OTO4>

Act 2 Scene 4- <http://youtu.be/NiShhm3C8PY>

## Chapter 2

### MÉLANGE

**Act I:** Present day, the action takes place over the course of 5 years In Anytown, USA.

#### **Scene One: Abigail and Tommy**

*(At a bus stop and it's raining. Tommy runs up and stands underneath it)*

Tommy: It's raining pretty hard out there.

Abigail: Yeah it is.

Tommy: It's pretty dry under here.

Abigail: Yeah. Do you wanna sit? I won't bite.

Tommy: Alright.

*(Awkward sitting)*

Abigail: I'm Abigail.

Tommy: Tommy.

Abigail: Nice to meet you.

Tommy: Yeah, nice to meet you; so what are you hanging out here for?

Abigail: It's a bus stop. I'm waiting for the bus.

Tommy: Oh.

Abigail: Are you--?

Tommy: No, no I'm just here to stay dry.

Abigail: Oh.

Tommy: I just thought I'd wait it out under here.

Abigail: Where are you going?

Tommy: I was uhh just walking.

Abigail: Are you from around here?

Tommy: No—just passing through.

Abigail: Oh where are you going?

Tommy: Nowhere specific. I'm sort of hitch hiking per say—but mainly the hiking part—which is just more like walking.

Abigail: Are you homeless?

Tommy: Uhhh—yeah, I guess so—but it's by choice.

Abigail: Okay—uhh why? If you don't mind me asking--

Tommy: I uhh—I've just been travelling.

Abigail: Are you a hippie?

Tommy: No. Do I come off as one?

Abigail: You kind of smell like one.

Tommy: Well there's up and downs to the life style, but hey, I'm happy.

Abigail: That's good. So where have you gone on these travels?

Tommy: I started in Virginia.

Abigail: Oh my sister and her fiancé are stationed down there. Manassas?

Tommy: I don't know Manassas. I'm from the country actually. Goochland.

Abigail: I don't know--?

Tommy: It's near Oilville.

Abigail: That's a place?

Tommy: Uh yeah, consequently there is no oil there. (They laugh) Well what about you? Where are you from?

Abigail: The country. I moved here about three years ago to study music, but I just graduated.

Tommy: Oh cool. So are you going to do music?

Abigail: I don't know uhh it's fun, but I feel like it was kind of a phase. I come from a family of artists and they were always like follow your hearts, and they did, which led to us eating ramen noodles most of the time, but as long as we were happy—it was okay. My dad was a musician and it was kind of like I was following in his footsteps kind of thing, but it's just—I don't know—I paint too but that's not much better. I want to be practical and who makes money as an artist unless you're like Andy Warhol or something.

Tommy: So what are you doing now?

Abigail: Freelance. I work for myself.

Tommy: Oh so you have your own business?

Abigail: You could say that.

Tommy: Well what do you do? Knock on people's doors? Or what?

Abigail: Like a salesman? No those people are obnoxious. I uhh—help improve people's self-esteem.

Tommy: So you're a therapist?

Abigail: A very hands on therapist.

Tommy: So you're a physical therapist--?

Abigail: No, no, no.

Tommy: Well you said hands on, so I thought you meant like physical therapy or something... a massage therapist???

Abigail: It does kind of get a little physical.

Tommy: What?

Abigail: I uhh—keep them company.

Tommy: Oh so you're like a nurse in an old folks home?

Abigail: You are so adorable—No I am not a nurse.

Tommy: Do you make a lot of money?

Abigail: It depends on the week.

Tommy: Would you say you work later hours or morning hours?

Abigail: Are we playing 20 questions?

Tommy: I guess so if you won't tell me.

Abigail: (chuckles) Sometimes I work a double shift which bleeds into the morning but it's mostly later hours.

Tommy: Okay, so what I have so far is that you help people, you work nights, and you are hands on. Sometimes you work double shifts. You make good money depending on the week. You keep people company--I am going to make a guess --

Abigail: After only 6?

Tommy: Well okay let me keep going. Uhhh do you sometimes wear inappropriate clothing?

Abigail: Well that's a little forward.

Tommy: Well we are playing 20 questions.

Abigail: Define inappropriate clothing.

Tommy: Do you wear revealing clothing?

Abigail: Sometimes. Not all the time though.

Tommy: Do you have STDs?

Abigail: Says the homeless man. Why would you ask something like that?

Tommy: Because I think you're a prostitute.

Abigail: Took you long enough.

Tommy: Wait—really?

Abigail: Yeah.

Tommy: You're a prostitute?

Abigail: Yes.

Tommy: (in the realization) Is this—clean to sit on--? Is this like your corner—or something?

Abigail: Thanks fucker.

Tommy: I'm sorry! It's just you just don't seem like the prostitute type.

Abigail: Well what does a prostitute look like?

Tommy: I'm picturing Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman, but more like her on crack.

Abigail: So you imagine a crack whore?

Tommy: Well, yeah—but what I'm saying is that you are more like the Julia Roberts who isn't on crack—how did this happen to you?

Abigail: What do you mean?

Tommy: Why? Why did you become a prostitute? You were going to do music and painting then one day you decided to be a prostitute?

Abigail: I like the freedom.

Tommy: How do you get freedom through sleeping in a fancy bed with people for money?

Abigail: It's really amazing sex.

Tommy: Like angels singing, trumpets blowing?

Abigail: It's not even the sex. Fuck the sex. Have you ever just done anything? Like eaten the greatest bowl of ice cream or connected with someone or something and just felt amazing afterwards?

Tommy: I can see where you are going—

Abigail: I know my method may seem a little unorthodox--

Tommy: Just a little. But like how did you know? When did you realize that this was it?

Abigail: Like music was great and I still paint and everything, but--but--I don't know like, I met this guy. Ummm back in undergraduate and we were just complete strangers and we were talking for hours and we went back to this apartment and I was 18 and out on my own and making crazy decisions. The next morning, he was gone and there was this note thanking me and a wad of cash; at first it was a little confusing but I remembered the night before and it was the most amazing thing. It wasn't even the physical. When you look into someone's eyes and you feel complete. I realized I wanted to do that. Not go "fuck" a bunch of guys. Because you know it's not that. I just wanted

to touch people--emotionally. I don't want to live—I guess the normal life—I don't want to you know get married, have a job, pop out a few kids, and then grow old with a guy I might not even like after 10 years, and then die. That just doesn't appeal to me--

Tommy: I mean I guess I get where you're going with it. I just think it's—different—it's just so weird—

Abigail: It's not weird to me. If anything, choosing to be homeless is weird. Do your parents know you are doing this?

Tommy: (nods) They told me to do what makes me happy.

Abigail: Are you happy?

Tommy: Yeah. It's just like—I feel like we are always told to follow this model. You can either sink or swim and when you're swimming you're following the model and when you're sinking—well, you're not.

Abigail: So you're sinking.

Tommy: Well I swam for a bit. But I decided it was a time to sink. But I'll have to stop eventually and do something with my life. But I'll still apply what I learned from it all. I have a ton of memories, but I can't be doing this when I'm 65 years old.

Abigail: Isn't that like giving in though?

Tommy: If someone makes me do it, then yeah. But if I'm the one who decides to do it, then yeah it may fit the model that I am supposed to fit, but if it's my own decision, then isn't it free?

Abigail: What were you doing before this?

Tommy: I was going to VMI.



Abigail: Oh the military?

Tommy: Yeah. When I left, about 6 months ago, I just felt like my life wasn't doing much. I had just graduated and I was standing there and I just felt so lost. I felt like I had to go somewhere

Abigail: You didn't want to go into the army?

Tommy: It was something my grandfather wanted me to do. I always liked the structure of it—but I don't know like I just wanted to leave. I wanted to get out. At least see other side of life. I wanted to try something new. Break free. I was tired of hearing that we need to grow up and get good grades and get into a good school and work our asses off and then rinse and repeat, you know. I wanted to break out of that. I was afraid—I am terrified of being that guy sitting in his cubicle day by day still telling the same damn joke.

Abigail: I completely respect that.

Tommy: And I'm not technically homeless. I think of it as one big camping trip.

Abigail. But you don't have a home.

Tommy: Yeah I know.

Abigail: But if this is what you want to do and you're happy then that's cool. Why shouldn't we not be able to do what makes us happy?

Tommy: Whether it's hitchhiking or—being a prostitute.

Abigail: Yeah (They have a moment) Looks like its stopped raining— (They have another moment)

## **Scene Two: Tommy and Kiki**

*(Kiki sits at a table in a coffee shop, waiting for her blind date. Tommy comes walking in. He sees Kiki and goes over to her)*

Tommy: Kiki?

Kiki: Tommy?

Tommy: Yeah, nice to meet you.

Kiki: Nice to meet you.

*(They shake hands and sit)*

Tommy: Okay, so I've never really done this kind of thing before but Sally said you were really great.

Kiki: Yeah, she said good things about you.

Tommy: So I guess we'll start off with uhh—what do you do, Kiki?

Kiki: Oh I teach kindergarten.

Tommy: How do you like that?

Kiki: Oh I love it, the kids, they're perfect.

Tommy: Well they aren't all the time.

Kiki: Well most of the time—

Tommy: I sub down at the YMCA, I teach gym and these kids are always running around like crazy doing their own thing.

Kiki: Well they're just kids—

Tommy: I know, but when it comes time for business. They don't get authority.

Kiki: You can't expect business out of kids.

Tommy: But when they get to the gym they're just running around—

Kiki: They're just kids, they're just expressing themselves.

Tommy: But it's just pure chaos.

Kiki: Sometimes. So uhh—so is that all you do? Or do you have another job?

Tommy: I'm actually job hunting at the moment. Looking for something more full time.

Until I start basic training, I'm going into the army.

Kiki: Oh.

Tommy: Yeah, I actually just went on this—well—uhh journey I guess, and then I finally realized that I wasn't exactly going anywhere, so I had to straighten up my act.

Kiki: Did you like this 'journey?'

Tommy: Oh yeah, I really did. It was great, but unfortunately in today's society you can't really afford to be a free spirit unless you're independently wealthy of course.

Kiki: Yeah I guess, but I think that sounds really cool. Did you learn anything along the way?

Tommy: I met a lot of great people—but you know when I got back to the 'real world', I still couldn't wrap my head around why everyone has to be bad to each other all the time. No one really just appreciates each other and it's really terrible.

Kiki: That's a great thing about kids. They're free from that. But when you get older, if you do the wrong thing, you are the wrong thing and people hate you for it or they think you're a sinner or something. I just really hate that.

Tommy: Yeah society has this model and we have to fit that model and we can't be

anything outside of it. If you try, it just backfires and hits you right across the face, hurts like a bitch and you really never recover.

Kiki: Sometimes I wonder if that's really how it has to be. Why can't we just stand up and break through that?

Tommy: That's how it should be.

Kiki: You seem like a really open minded guy; I think it would be a shame for you to do just what you're "supposed to do" because at the end of the day, you could just get hit by a bus, you know.

Tommy: Yeah. Well is there anything you wanted to do, but couldn't?

Kiki: Well, I mean—we all have our baggage that we all really want to say but can't because we're afraid of being wrong or losing the respect of the people and you're not this perfect little thing anymore. What are you then?—I don't know—

Tommy: You know, when I was on my journey, I met this girl at this bus stop—fancy place right—and she—she believed in something that was perfectly normal to her but definitely went against today's age. She—I don't know—she just didn't care what anyone else thought. She loved to do this and she was going to do it.

Kiki: What was she doing?

Tommy: Do you really wanna know? I'm not sure if this is an appropriate setting.

Kiki: No, I really want to know.

Tommy: She was—uh—she was a prostitute.

Kiki: Oh wow.

Tommy: Yea I know; it was so weird because she wasn't only doing it for the money or

the sex, she had this crazy—I don't know—sense of hope from it.

Kiki: From being a prostitute?

Tommy: She felt like this was the one thing to her that made her feel—I don't know—complete I guess. It was the one thing she felt like she needed to do to give back. It didn't matter what anyone else thought. This one thing kept her going.

Kiki: Well that's certainly not my cup of tea, but whatever floats your boat I guess. But that's an interesting way of thinking.

Tommy: I know, it's so radically different from everything she's been taught, but she just does it because she doesn't care what other people think.

Kiki: Was she like this—little saucy thing?

Tommy: What?

Kiki: Was she—you know—what you think of—

Tommy: Boney, teeth falling out? No.

Kiki: Well what she like? Was she rough? Or sweet? Or innocent? Or what?

Tommy: She just looked like an average Joe. If she hadn't told me, I would have never guessed. When she told me, I was like whaaaa?

Kiki: That's really something—that's wow, that's pretty cool. I've never really had that sort of experience but if that's what makes her happy, I think that's incredible. She's doing what she needs to do and that she's not abandoning her morals just because she likes to do one thing.

Tommy: You know my whole life my dad was always telling me—well my grandfather was always telling my dad that he had to get out there and climb that ladder but then

my dad would always tell me to do what I love, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. Just be true to yourself—

Kiki: Alright well, I came on this date because Sally asked me to and she's a good friend. I figured if we had a mutual friend, it be fun, and you are...I really like you a lot but I don't think that you should expect anything more from me.

Tommy: I wasn't—expecting anything.

Kiki: I'm doing what I need to do.

Tommy: Is this because of the prostitute? Because I did not sleep with her! We just talked—like this far from each other.

Kiki: Oh no, it's not. Although I do question. Just kidding.

Tommy: I—

Kiki: I wouldn't expect anything more—purely platonic.

Tommy: Oh.

Kiki: Because—I'm pretty sure that I am not interested in men so—

Tommy: Oh..... well all the power to you.

Kiki: I'm doing what I want, right?

Tommy: That's good, yeah.

Kiki: You're actually the first person I've ever told. It just kind of came out—pun not intended—God that was brilliant, oh my God. I finally said it.

Tommy: Cool, I don't know what to do now but you know what, let's continue this conversation, because you know we're here, and we might as well get some food.

Kiki: I'm sorry, was that--?

Tommy: No, no I get it.

Kiki: I just try so hard and try to be bubbly and good all the time—

Tommy: You seem it—

Kiki: And my family is very supportive and they love me and they think I'm perfect—

Tommy: Do you think this makes you not perfect?

Kiki: I don't know. Do you?

Tommy: No. No, not at all.

Kiki: Thank you; I just—I don't want anyone to look at me differently—to think that I lost—you know what made me—me.

Tommy: Well if it means anything, I don't think that you telling anyone will actually change who you are—it's just two words, or three, "I'm gay" or "I'm a lesbian." Those words aren't going to change you; it might change you momentarily to other people but it won't change you.

Kiki: I guess you're right; I wish more people thought like you. I appreciate you, this is the most in depth conversation of any two people, except maybe a prostitute.

Tommy: You know, Kiki, this has ruined blind dates. I swear I am never gonna stop having conversations like this.

Kiki: Well I really appreciate what you did for me, I really do. And I'm sorry I'm a lesbian. There I said it. I'm a lesbian.

*(Kiki and Tommy have a moment)*

### Scene Three: Kiki and Ashley

*(A too-noisy nightclub. The music is at a point where the actors have to be talking in raised voices to be heard. Others are dancing in the background)*

KIKI: Oh hi.

ASHLEY: Hi

KIKI: Wow, Ashley! It's been – wow!

ASHLEY: Yeah, it's been a while.

KIKI: How've you been?

ASHLEY: Oh, you know, busy – school and everything

KIKI: Right, you were working on your Masters?

ASHLEY: In History\*

KIKI: That's great.

ASHLEY: It's kept me on my toes.

KIKI: When do you graduate?

ASHLEY: I graduated two months ago.

KIKI: It's been a while.

ASHLEY: It really has.

KIKI: I've missed you.

ASHLEY: Same here. Well, now that I'm done maybe we can reconnect. All I have to occupy my time these days is job hunting.



KIKI: Any luck with that?

ASHLEY: Zip.

KIKI: How it goes sometimes. So what're you doing here?

ASHLEY: Oh, Sally dragged me here.

KIKI: Sounds like Sally.

ASHLEY: It's not really my cup of tea though.

KIKI: Too loud?

ASHLEY: Yeah.

KIKI: Yeah, I've never been too big on these places either.

ASHLEY: They're so crowded.

KIKI: It's like a cage. Hey, can I get you a drink or anything?

ASHLEY: No thanks, I don't –

KIKI: You don't drink? Shoot, I'm sorry –

ASHLEY: No, no, its fine, lots of people do.

KIKI: No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have assumed –

ASHLEY: I used to, it's fine.

KIKI: Why'd you stop, if you don't mind my asking?

ASHLEY: Family, mostly. Things with my mom got worse; I had to take some responsibility in my life.

KIKI: Is she okay?

ASHLEY: Lung cancer.

KIKI: Oh. Will she be -?

ASHLEY: The doctors are hopeful.

KIKI: I'm really sorry, Ashley.

ASHLEY: Thanks.

KIKI: So, can I get you something...virgin?

ASHLEY: A ginger ale would be great.

KIKI: *Motions at bartender* (this can be done on the fourth wall or somewhere off stage)

ASHLEY: So how have you been? Still teaching?

KIKI: Still teaching.

ASHLEY: How is it?

KIKI: Honestly, I really love it. People don't think kindergarten would be as gratifying as it is, but the kids, they really light up my life, you know? They bring an enthusiasm about learning and life, even, that most adults lack. It's refreshing.

ASHLEY: I'm so happy you love it.

KIKI: It's corny, but I feel like it's my calling.

ASHLEY: I don't think that's corny at all. Anything new?

KIKI: Well... (a la Samantha on Bewitched)

ASHLEY: What?

KIKI: I just...I think I might be...a lesbian.

ASHLEY: Oh.

KIKI: Yeah.

ASHLEY: When did you decide that?

KIKI: I didn't decide.

ASHLEY: No, no, I didn't mean it like that.

KIKI: It's okay.

ASHLEY: When did you figure that out?

KIKI: It's...it's one of those things where you've always known but didn't know you knew...you know?

ASHLEY: I understand

KIKI: It just makes me feel weird and guilty and yeah.

ASHLEY: You can't decide who you are, Kiki.

KIKI: It's just... I always thought I was so perfect, you know? And people, they expect me to be perfect but with this, I just feel like I'm not. It feels...subpar.

ASHLEY: No one's perfect.

KIKI: I think you're kind of perfect.

ASHLEY: Oh sweetie, I'm far from perfect.

KIKI: This is crazy. I've actually been meaning to call you; it's so weird I saw you, serendipitous almost.

ASHLEY: I'm glad it happened.

KIKI: This whole thing is so overwhelming. I just wish I could be myself...

ASHLEY: Trust me, once you do you'll be the happiest person in the world.

KIKI: Speaking from experience?

ASHLEY: Yeah; a couple of years ago, right after I graduated undergrad actually...I kind of had a moment of enlightenment, if you will, and just decided to let everything go.

The feeling is... beyond description.

KIKI: That's really something. I guess I just haven't gotten there yet.

ASHLEY: This might sound stupid but I feel like...when you look inside of yourself it's sort of like looking in the mirror; you see your reflection staring back at you and in that moment you have the ability to decide who you are. And it's silly, but eventually looking in the mirror becomes easier, natural even, and you get used to who you are. You accept it; you accept yourself and realize there is nothing wrong with you. It permits you to just ...

KIKI: Be... You're really incredible, Ashley.

ASHLEY: So are you.

KIKI: Gosh, I feel like I'm back in high school.

ASHLEY: Yeah, this is like homecoming or something. It's so sweaty!

KIKI: I don't normally dress like this...

ASHLEY: Me either; I feel like a total tool bag.

KIKI: Same. You know, I feel like you see all parts of people, Ashley. It's...remarkable.

ASHLEY: I see the good in people.

KIKI: I just feel like...if people know, they'll look at me and not see me anymore. Just this projection, this dirty, flawed --

ASHLEY: Who gives a shit about what other people think?

KIKI: I do! I feel like...I'm supposed to be such a good person, all my kids look up to me, you know? And my parents think I'm perfect...

ASHLEY: Screw them.

KIKI: What?

ASHLEY: Screw them if they think you're imperfect. They need to accept you. The real you, Kiki. You're beautiful. You shouldn't have to pretend for them.

KIKI: Well, I really like you. And I'm not pretending.

ASHLEY: Thank you for being honest. *(Beat)* I like you, too.

KIKI: I don't know how to do this...

ASHLEY: Me either.

KIKI: You would know better.

ASHLEY: Not really, I'm not much of a...

KIKI and Ashley: Go getter?

ASHLEY: Yes.

KIKI: Wow.

ASHLEY: Yeah.

KIKI: Huh.

ASHLEY: Yeah.

KIKI: Our minds were kinda in sync there. *(Beat)* So do people think you're a...you know...do they think you're dirty, when you do stuff...like this?

ASHLEY: Jesus freaks do, but I don't really care about what they think.

KIKI: Yeah...I just don't want anyone to think I lack...goodness.

ASHLEY: You'll always run across people like that, but you just have to learn to turn the other cheek. Ironically, that's in the bible.

KIKI: They should read that part.

ASHLEY: They really need to take notes.

KIKI: I've never really thought about all of this before...in this way.

ASHLEY: It's weird to think about, right?

KIKI: It's heavy. I mean, I feel wrong and immoral but...I'm not.

ASHLEY: See? You're on the right track.

KIKI: I mean, I am a good person. Usually. Not in traffic.

ASHLEY: I can't imagine you with road rage. "You sit down and think about your bad driving, you big old jerk!"

KIKI: Don't make fun of me just because I don't cuss. We can't all get away with that...

ASHLEY: True.

KIKI: So...I've really missed you...a lot. And I think we should keep hanging out.

ASHLEY: I agree.

KIKI: Really?

ASHLEY: Yeah.

KIKI: So what do you wanna do?

ASHLEY: I'm indecisive.

KIKI: Well...how about we go get coffee. And you're gonna drink one of those stupid pumpkin spice drinks...

ASHLEY: Excuse me for enjoying the taste of the best vegetable ever.

KIKI: It's not a veggie! It's a fruit.

ASHLEY: Fruits come from trees.

KIKI: Well then what's a grape, huh? They don't grow on trees.

ASHLEY: Well regardless, we're getting coffee.

KIKI: Wanna go now?

ASHLEY: What time is it?

KIKI: Dunno.

ASHLEY: Okay, sure. Let's get out of here.

#### **Scene Four: Ashley and Michael**

*(A cemetery. Ashley stands, alone, by a gravestone)*

ASHLEY: So I went to the coffee shop today. Ordered myself a pumpkin spice mocha...I know how much you hate those. But I've always loved the taste of pumpkin, and I don't know why but it always reminds me of when I was a kid and would just sit outside under that old tree and sniff the pumpkin patch and...I don't know. I sat at the same table that we used to -- well, it just --- I thought it was good for me to do that, you know? Just go to the place that we always went and ... I felt like you were there and I could -- I could find the courage, the strength to finally come here and... Fuck, this is weird. Talking to cold marble and a dead person in the ground --

MICHAEL: ...can I help you?

ASHLEY: No, I was just...can I help you?

MICHAEL: No, I...I was her cousin. Kiki's.

ASHLEY: Oh.

MICHAEL: My name's Michael.

ASHLEY: Ashley.

MICHAEL: Did you know her?

ASHLEY: I...yes. We were friends. Good friends...she was...oh. I mean, sorry. How are you -- coping ---?

MICHAEL: Not horrible, all things considered. You know, she always told me not to cry. I know she'd want me to remember her -- as she was. Whole. Happy.

ASHLEY: Kinda hard sometimes considering her last few months were...yeah.

Have...have you been here before?

MICHAEL: A few times.

ASHLEY: More than I can say.

MICHAEL: Is this the first time?

ASHLEY: Yeah. Kinda shitty of me to only show up now but...better late than never, right?

MICHAEL: I'm sorry...but how did you know Kiki?

ASHLEY: Oh. We were partners.

MICHAEL: Oh! You were --

ASHLEY: Yeah.

MICHAEL: Come here. *(They hug)*

ASHLEY: I'm sorry.

MICHAEL: I'm sorry I didn't know --- we've met before, right?

ASHLEY: Maybe?



MICHAEL: I think Kiki took you to that picnic --

ASHLEY: -- oh yeah, the family picnic for Thanksgiving --

MICHAEL: You look different.

ASHLEY: Thanks...

MICHAEL: No, I meant...different...in a good way, not like...bad different.

ASHLEY: It's okay, I get what you mean. (*Motions to headstone*) Who designed it?

MICHAEL: Her mom.

ASHLEY: It's really beautiful. Was she religious? She never really mentioned...

MICHAEL: She was quiet about it, but I think, deep down, she believed in something...

ASHLEY: So why'd you come here...today?

MICHAEL: I just...needed advice. Sometimes I come here because I feel like she could...tell me what to do.

ASHLEY: She always knew what to say. If you don't mind my asking...what did you, er, want to ask her?

MICHAEL: I'm trying to make a...huge life decision. I felt like she would help guide me.

ASHLEY: You know...I think the last time I saw you were what, a senior in high school. What've you been doing?

MICHAEL: Not too much...been working at my dad's shop.

ASHLEY: Are you gonna inherit the business?

MICHAEL: Not likely.

ASHLEY: Oh.

MICHAEL: Yeah. I graduated and then did...nothing, really. Stayed here, lived with my

folks. Turned twenty-one recently and I guess that was the final straw for my dad. He laid down the line; said to get out and do something for myself, you know? There's not much left here for me.

ASHLEY: I'm sorry.

MICHAEL: My dad's pushing for the military. That's...the decision; I wanted Kiki's guidance on it --

ASHLEY: That's a really big decision.

MICHAEL: I'm not at the point in my life where I can support myself on my own, so the way I see it the military's about my only option, other than staying with my parents and working at Burger King, scraping by...

ASHLEY: Do you have anywhere to go.... A friend to stay with or something?

MICHAEL: Not really. I'm still at my folks' place and no place is really hiring anymore if you don't have at least a bachelors...

ASHLEY: Well....it seems to me that right now; your only option might just be to take the step into the military. I know it's a huge - huge - step, and I can't even begin to imagine what it must be like for you...This...shit, this may sound corny but what does your heart tell you?

MICHAEL: Kiki would always tell me that...to follow my heart, I mean.

ASHLEY: Were you two close?

MICHAEL: We were the closest in age of all the cousins.

ASHLEY: How old are you? Twenty-five-?

MICHAEL: Twenty-one.

ASHLEY: Right. You said that.

MICHAEL: It's okay.

ASHLEY: You're a baby.

MICHAEL: I am. How old are -? No, wait, you never ask a woman's age --

ASHLEY: You're damn right.

MICHAEL: Sorry --

ASHLEY: I'm joking. I'm twenty-seven.

MICHAEL: Not that much older than me.

ASHLEY: I feel older. Especially now...I feel like I've aged at least forty years.

MICHAEL: Have...have you ever had a moment where you *feel*/Kiki?

ASHLEY: All the time. It's especially strong here...uncomfortable, even.

MICHAEL: Whew.

ASHLEY: Sometimes...sometimes I'll wake up at night and think that she's there, you know? Like...I feel something there, but then I'll look and of course I'll be alone.

MICHAEL: I've had that happen, too! Last night I woke up in a cold sweat, panicking...I'd had this dream, just a normal dream, but Kiki...she was in it, just her face over and over and over again. It's...I don't, or at least didn't, believe in this stuff but I feel like she was pulling me here.

ASHLEY: That's...wow. I dreamed about Kiki last night, too.

MICHAEL: Wow.

ASHLEY: I mean, do you think...is this just one huge fucking coincidence or...well, that's ridiculous.

MICHAEL: I don't know where you stand but I feel like Kiki wouldn't fuck around.

ASHLEY: No...she was a very straightforward person.

MICHAEL: You don't think -- no, that's stupid.

ASHLEY: What?

MICHAEL: Maybe...maybe she wanted to bring us together...to meet --

ASHLEY: To help each other.

MICHAEL: Yeah.

ASHLEY: Maybe.

MICHAEL: But I mean, we're complete opposites.

ASHLEY: Maybe that's why we need each other.

MICHAEL: Maybe.

ASHLEY: And I find it really hard to believe that we both dreamed of her and we both came here at the same time and just happened to meet and talk...it's weird and creepy, but I don't think it just happened without reason.

MICHAEL: I suppose we could try to help each other.

ASHLEY: What're you doing after this? There's this coffee shop near here...Kiki and I used to go there all the time. We had our first date there, actually. Maybe we could go?

MICHAEL: I'd like that.

### **Scene Five: Michael and Grace**

*(Michael sits alone on a bench and seems to be preoccupied with himself. Grace enters from offstage and notices him. She looks at him shyly and in a very subdued manner. It's very clear that she wants to talk to him, but he doesn't even notice her. After a slight pause, she walks over to him and slowly and hesitantly sits down.)*

Grace: Uhm...hi.

Michael: *(noticing her for the first time)* Hello. *(He smiles)*

Grace: I don't mean to intrude but...are you...Michael Anderson?

Michael: Yea...

Grace: *(slightly more confident)* You went to Lakeridge?

Michael: Yea...

Grace: I went there. *(Michael doesn't recognize Grace and makes some sort of audible "I don't know")* No No, its fine.

Michael: Were you...?

Grace: *(quickly)* I was a freshman and you were a senior.

Michael: Oh.

Grace: You still playing football?

Michael: No that was a high school only sort of thing so... I'm actually in the military now.

Grace: *(noticing a little discomfort)* Did you...want to do that?

Michael: Not really. It's just...my life's currently going nowhere...but. Did you, go to

college?

Grace: No, there's nothing there for me.

Michael: Well, what are you doing right now? I mean...with your life?

Grace: Nothing really...

Michael: Are you...are you alright?

Grace: Yea...yea. I'm fine. So. You're back now?

Michael: Yes. For a little bit. Once you come back you're allowed a bit of leave so I'm actually here with a buddy of mine from the unit, Tommy. Tommy Voorhies. Because let's be honest...Who doesn't like the fair? That's who I'm here with...are you here with anyone?

Grace: O no...I'm here by myself. *(Beat)*. Do you...even remember me?

Michael: Honestly...I don't. I'm sorry.

Grace: No that's okay. I came to every game but you wouldn't have known that.

Michael: No. Actually I think I might remember you... Amanda! Right?

Grace: That was your girlfriend.

Michael: Oh. I'm sorry.

Grace: If anything you should be sorry to Amanda. It's okay. I wasn't your best friend or anything. I'm Grace.

Michael: Well. It's nice to officially meet you Grace.

*(They smile at one another. Michael holds out his hand looking for a handshake)*

Michael: So...you said you dropped out of school?

Grace: Yea. There was really no point.

Michael: No college?

Grace: Yes. No. I didn't...don't have any money

Michael: Have you thought about Community College?

Grace: Yea well...I suppose. Probably not though. *(Beat)* You still with Amanda?

Michael: No. No. That was only a high school only type of thing. We actually broke up our senior year summer. She was going there...I was staying here... that sort of thing. Are you dating anyone?

Grace: No. No I'm not. What about yourself though? I'm sure a guy like you has to have someone around their arm.

Michael: No. I'm taking a break. It's kind of hard right now. No guarantees things can work.

Grace: So why'd you come to the fair?

Michael: Who doesn't like the fair? Why are you here?

Grace: BECAUSE THE FAIR IS AWESOME. *(beat)* So...I heard your brother won the Pulitzer prize. Wrote that book. How's that going?

Michael: It's tough being in his shadow but you get used to it.

Grace: I could only *imagine*.

Michael: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Grace: No...

Michael: So you were an only child then?

Grace: Yes.

Michael: Well that couldn't have been but so bad. Hell, you got your parents all to yourself.

Grace: Uhm. Not really. Well, I did for a little bit. That is, until I got put into foster care. Which I just happened to get kicked out of actually.

Michael: Oh wow... I'm really sorry...

Grace: Not your fault. That's what happens when you turn 18. If you're unlucky enough to not get adopted. But... Here I am. At the fair. I got kicked out 2 weeks ago.

Michael: I'm sorry...

Grace: It's not your fault, they don't care whether you have a place to go or not.

Michael: Well there must be some positives at least right?

Grace: Of course there are.

Michael: Would you mind my asking?

Grace: You shouldn't ask me because you feel obligated. That's stupid.

Michael: Not everything's stupid you know.

Grace: I'm just hoping that...someone will come and save me. Like a knight in shining armor or something. Like the stories my mom used to read me when I was 3 or 4.

Michael: I'm sorry I feel really bad about complaining about my brother and all now...

Grace: It must be nice to have a brother though I'm sure. I used to have a brother once. Well sort of... Billy, really sweet kid. Got adopted.

Michael: Can't you keep in touch though?

Grace: He's dead. Died two summers ago. He had some sort of childhood leukemia.

Michael: Everyone in your life...



Grace: Died? Yep. Seems that way.

Michael: So if I keep talking to you...will I... *(makes some sort of dying noise)*

Grace: You are such a prick! Why would you do that?!

Michael: I'm sorry! I was just trying to make a joke! Lighten the mood.

Grace: It was a bad joke. *(Beat)*. You know I used to write you love letters. I had this kind of big...massive crush on you. I would always write these letters and every time I would walk to put them in your locker I couldn't do it. At first I had some fantasy that just maybe you'd actually read them and then maybe...like me. But always when I would get halfway down the hall I would snap back to reality and realize that there was no way that would ever be possible.

*(Beat)*

Michael: You should have at least tried

Grace: Would you have actually read them? Or even looked at them? Or would you just have thrown them away?

Michael: I probably would have read them...my locker was always empty.

Grace: But you wouldn't have liked me. People like you can't like people like me.

Michael: Never know until you roll the dice.

Grace: You had a girlfriend!

Michael: I mean...girlfriend...more like; she threatened that if we broke up and she didn't win prom queen she'd kill me.

Grace: ...She didn't win.

Michael: Guess it backfired.

Grace: I would have liked to gone to the prom. It could have been fun. It's actually tomorrow night.

Michael: You know...I'm free tomorrow night. You want to crash it? (*Grace tries to object*)

Why not? It'd be fun and silly. I actually hated my prom.

Grace: Didn't some kid punch someone and get kicked out or something?

Michael: Guilty as charged. But that was just me in high school.

Grace: Seems like you've changed since then.

Michael: Not my spirit though.

Grace: I dunno...you're just...nice. Michael: Thanks. You're not so bad yourself. (*A moment between the two.*)

## **END OF ACT ONE**

**Act II:** 2 Years Later, over the course of a few months.

### **Scene Six: Michael, Lauren and Grace**

*(Lights up on act to in a Diner Michael and Lauren are at the end of a conversation, they are saying goodbye because Michael is going to Germany, and Lauren has important news)*

Michael: I know, and I'll miss you too, but we'll Skype whenever we can, it's only 8

months we can make it.

Lauren: I know we will, but you've only been back for 3 months and now you're leaving again, do you have to go.

Michael: Yes, I do. I wish I could stay but I can't, but I'll be back before you know it.

Lauren: I have to tell you something.

Michael: Look, I'm late for my goodbye dinner with my parents, can't we talk about it later. I'll Skype you as soon as I get there, we'll talk then, I love you but I have to go.

*(Grace enters as Michael leaves)*

Grace: What can I get you?

Lauren: Just a coffee and water for now, thanks.

Grace: Are you alright?

Lauren: Excuse me?

Grace: Sorry, it's just...you look upset.

Lauren: Yeah, well...boyfriend troubles, you know.

Grace: I used to know him.

Lauren: Michael?

Grace: Yeah, we went to high school together. We didn't really talk much.

Lauren: What was he like?

Grace: Eh, football player, y'know? Cute...bitchy girlfriend.

Lauren: Oh wow. Hopefully that's er...not his "type."

Grace: Well, it was high school.

Lauren: True.

Grace: But yeah, we both left and...Damn, haven't seen him in ages. Right, I'll get you that coffee.

Lauren: He's being deployed. Army.

Grace: Yeah well... he's doing the right thing.

Lauren: I just don't want him to leave. I mean, I need to tell him something...but now, with him leaving, it will have to wait --

Grace: How long have you two been together?

Lauren: A year.

Grace: How'd you meet?

Lauren: In a library...I was in there studying and he came in looking for...some book, I forget what it was. Anyway, he had asked me if I knew where it was and I had told him yes even though I didn't know for sure. We ended up looking for it together. Never found the book.

Grace: You guys gonna get married?

Lauren: Someday, maybe. I'd like that.

Grace: That's sweet.

Lauren: So when's the last time you saw Michael?

Grace: A little over a year ago.

Lauren: But he graduated six years ago.

Grace: We met up...briefly.

Lauren: At a reunion?

Grace: No, we just ran into each other by chance.

Lauren: I see.

Grace: Yeah. Well, I'll get that coffee --

Lauren: No. Tell me more about Michael...how you know him.

Grace: Well he...I guess we dated?

Lauren: In high school? I thought you guys never talked?

Grace: No, not in high school, God no. He never would have given me the time of day back then. I was a freshman when he was a senior so...yeah. We met at this fair... he was there with a military buddy, Tommy... anyway, he'd ditched Michael to talk to some girl so he was all alone, and so was I...he ended up taking me to prom, which was crazy since neither of us actually went to that school anymore, kinda crashed it I guess, but ---

Lauren: That's...sweet.

Grace: It was fun...he's a good guy.

Lauren: I know. So what happened to you two?

Grace: We just weren't the right fit.

Lauren: Oh. (*changing the subject*) Do you go to college?

Grace: Community.

Lauren: Well that's nice.

Grace: I'm sure you go to some big, top dollar university.

Lauren: I study in the city.

Grace: Of course you do.

Lauren: What's that supposed to mean?

Grace: Nothing. So what're you studying?

Lauren: Nursing. I want to help people. What do you want to do?

Grace: Dunno yet. I mean, at least I'm in school, I'll figure it out --

Lauren: What do your parents think?

Grace: Haven't got any.

Lauren: What do you mean?

Grace: Mom died when I was really young; dad died in jail..

Lauren: I'm so sorry. Did you have any other family?

Grace: No. I was put in foster care when I was twelve. Being thrown from family to family wasn't picture perfect, if you know what I mean. I got kicked out when I turned eighteen -- never got adopted, you see. They don't care what happens to you once you're an "adult." That's when I met Michael...again. He kind of saved me in a way....He helped me cope. Helped me see that the world isn't as fucked up as it seems. Helped me see the good in people. He gave me to kick start that I needed.

Lauren: Did you two stay in touch?

Grace: Huh? No, today was the first time I've seen him since. Something's bothering you. You know you can tell me. *(Long Pause)*

Lauren: I'm pregnant. I don't know what to do. My family has always been very religious. They would...frown upon me having a baby. The Bible says you should be married before you have sex. But I mean...I felt like it was the right time....he was my first.

Grace: That's sweet.

Lauren: I'm just so confused. My whole life my parents have shown me what to do...told me what to do. And they've always said abortion is a sin, but for me it's okay...I mean, I can't ruin my life.

Grace: What do you want to do?

Lauren: I don't know.

Grace: It's your life.

Lauren: Kind of.

Grace: Kind of?

Lauren: The first decision I ever really made for myself was to have sex and that turned out awesome.

Grace: Well, you can listen to your parents or you can do what you want to do. I know you don't know what you want to do but if you think getting an abortion is the smart way to go then...well, that's your decision. And do it, but don't do it because your parents say so.

Lauren: How would I be a nurse if I had a baby? How would I finish school? No way my parent's would help out -- they're disappointed enough as it is.

Grace: Well, I never exactly had parents to disappoint, but I imagine some of the stuff I've done would have probably disappointed my mom...but that's part of growing up. Making mistakes. Letting people down. It sucks, but no one is perfect. My mom had me in high school. She was fifteen, and her mom refused to help out but...she took care of me.

Lauren: How?

Grace: She got a job. Worked every shift she could. She couldn't finish school but sometimes that doesn't happen. I didn't graduate. I'm not saying you shouldn't finish your degree. If you have a baby it'll be hard; maybe take a semester off or something, get a job. Waiting tables isn't so horrible. Horrible...is being out on your ass at eighteen with nowhere to go. Sleeping on a park bench.

Lauren: Did you...?

Grace: Yes. That's how I met Michael.

Lauren: You lived in a park?

Grace: Where else was I supposed to go?

Lauren: I just don't think I could do it...survive like that.

Grace: Things will be okay...whether you have the baby or not.

Lauren: It's just...things like this aren't supposed to happen to me.

Grace: They're supposed to happen to people like me?

Lauren: At least you could handle it.

Grace: I didn't handle it. That's why Michael and I broke up. I got pregnant and miscarried... I didn't tell him. He got mad when he found out that I didn't tell him about any of it -- He felt betrayed, led on. That's why, that's why I didn't say hi to him today.

Lauren: That makes more sense. Ahh, what am I going to do? I won't see him for three months and by then it'll be over and done with.

Grace: So you've made your decision?

Lauren: I'm not sure. Listen...thank you, for sharing your story and for listening. I'm



sorry for everything that's happened to you.

Grace: Right. So let me get you that coffee.

### **Scene Seven: Lauren and Franklin**

*(Two people sitting next to one another each in their own chair. A young girl and an elderly man. They try not to notice one another. After some wonderful moments of awkwardness the conversation begins)*

Lauren: Hi.

Franklin: Hm? Oh. Hi.

Lauren: Whatcha reading?

Franklin: Hm. Nothing interesting. It's a car magazine. I don't know much about cars though.

Lauren: Yea...I shoulda brought something to read myself.

Franklin: What would you read? That Cosmo magazine or something?

Lauren: Haha yah I guess. My mind's actually a little too cluttered to think right now. I got here a little too early.

Franklin: We will end up being here forever though. No point in showing up early.

*(Chuckles, is beginning to warm up).* What are you in here for?

Lauren: Just some testing. Nothing too serious. You?

Franklin: I think I may have broken my rib.

Lauren: How...did you manage that?

Franklin: Embarrassing. I was shopping for groceries. Specifically cereal. I was in the cereal aisle because I had just run out of Life earlier that morning. Unfortunately the Life was placed on the top shelf, which is terrible placement and just an overall bad choice. Anyway, I couldn't reach it and then attempted to get some height by standing on the lower level portion of my shopping cart. I'm sure you can see which direction this is headed. I fell and it hurt. Just goes to show...you shouldn't climb on carts.

Lauren: Oh my gosh! That's too funny.

Franklin: I know. But please don't make me laugh.

Lauren: It's funny...Do you have kids? I'm sure they'd think this was hilarious.

Franklin: Yes. I have three. A son and two daughters. My son is somewhere off in Silicon Valley doing some computer science mumbo jumbo, one daughter is in Manassas happily raising her family, the other is currently living in the city pursuing her music career.

Lauren: That sounds interesting. I'm sure you must be proud.

Franklin: O I'm very proud. I used to do music myself so it's very nice to see the daughter following in her old man's footsteps so to speak.

Lauren: When'd you stop?

Franklin: When it simply became impractical. It didn't bring in the necessary income.

Lauren: When you start a family I can see why stopping would make sense.

Franklin: That's not entirely the case. You can find ways to make ends meet.

Lauren: I guess...it must all be in the timing.

Franklin: Maybe. It just happened at a difficult transition in my life. I was always looked

up upon as one of the older parents. It wasn't very flattering.

Lauren: I'd think it would be more awkward to be one of the younger parents though.

Franklin: Don't get me wrong, I still looked young, I just had an older number attached to my name. I once looked as young as you; I've been where you are. Families are strange. No two are the same. They are often times just wonderful messes.

Lauren: I'd say I'm pretty close to my parents for the most part.

Franklin: For the most part? Is that because of all your crazy teenage stuff? Your donuts in parking lots?

Lauren: No no haha. No, I always did well in school and went to church, did as I was told.

Franklin: You sound like a good kid.

Lauren: I've always tried to be. But recently...things have gotten a little...messed up. I mean...did your kids do anything that you didn't agree with?

Franklin: Of course. But I just had to accept it. Kids will be kids. We as parents just have to accept that. Such as when my dad accepted me with my music, I need to support my children throughout whatever they face in their lives.

Lauren: My parents aren't quite the same way. Your kids are lucky.

Franklin: Your parents seem...they should understand. As long as they know that whatever it is, I mean, if you wanted it for yourself, or that you loved it then, they should be fine with it.

Lauren: I think the ego would get to them. Being the best family in church earns you a reputation. When things get crazy...You just try to do what they want. Just try and be

one big happy family.

Franklin: That sounds unhealthy.

Lauren: It can be at times. There's just a lot of pressure. When you mess up, you simply fix it by doing what you're told.

Franklin: I can slightly understand where you're going.

Lauren: Some people think that what I'm doing is stupid and wrong.

Franklin: What are you doing?

Lauren: Nothing...Just...something people wouldn't agree with if I went through with it.

People would look at me differently. I wouldn't be the same person.

Franklin: It's fine. Do you mind if I ask?

Lauren: You don't believe the whole test thing, do you?

Franklin: I didn't want to be rude.

Lauren: Promise you won't judge?

Franklin: Here's something I do with my daughter. (*Holds out hand and extends the pinkie*). I pinky promise.

Lauren: I'm going...I'm going to terminate my pregnancy.

Franklin: What are you worried about?

Lauren: I have to have this abortion. If not, I'm pretty sure my parents will disown me.

Franklin: I don't think that would happen.

Lauren: I think it would.

Franklin: You're their child. I can promise you, they aren't going to do that.

Lauren: Some things are worse than that...

Franklin: What do you mean?

Lauren: My parents have always been my best friends and now they're treating me differently and I just don't know what to do.

Franklin: I'm sure they will understand. Life is always changing.

Lauren: This is different.

Franklin: I don't see how this is different. I can't see a problem.

Lauren: I guess you need to be in my situation to understand.

Franklin: Maybe. You are too stressed.

Lauren: I don't think having a kid is going to take away from that.

Franklin: Just make sure that you are happy. You're parents won't always be here. You worry about this...your parents too much.

Lauren: I don't know. This goes beyond my parents. My entire life has been a representation of a perfect little angel. I wouldn't...I wouldn't know how to be anything else.

Franklin: You can still be yourself when life changes still. When I had kids I was the same person I was before only with different responsibilities.

Lauren: I'm just too young. Although...there have been a lot of people with babies younger than me and they've survived.

Franklin: Or you could even be super old like me. I don't think there is an age limit. I believe it's a personal responsibility. It's more a willingness to be able to adapt. Just do what makes you happy. Not your parents or anyone else, just you. If you don't mind me asking...Where's the father?

Lauren: My boyfriend Michael...He's not around. Army. He left for Germany a week ago.

Franklin: That sounds troublesome.

Lauren: It'll be fine. It'll be okay. He comes back in 3 months.

Franklin: Is this fair to him? Do you know his address? I feel like you have to tell him.

Even if you didn't keep it you should tell him. You should talk to him about it first. It's only fair. It's only right.

Lauren: I guess I could write...

Franklin: You can't rush into these things. You *need* to think. How far along are you?

Lauren: 20 days. Did you know that the 21st is when the heart starts beating? (*Beat*)

Part of me can picture it. Me. Michael. Us together. This baby. A family.

Franklin: Sounds like you really like this guy.

Lauren: I love him. He's perfect. Maybe...maybe we could do it. I could struggle. I could work somewhere. I...we could make things work. We can somehow find a way to make ends meet.

Franklin: If it makes you feel any better...everybody struggles. No one's life is perfectly laid out for them.

Lauren: You're a real interesting fellow. I think... I think I'm going to go home and write a letter...talk to my parents.

Franklin: Good luck. You'll need it. (*Realizing what he's said*)

I'm sorry.

Lauren: It's okay. It was nice meeting you.

*(Lauren gets up from her chair and exits. Franklin goes back to reading his magazine.)*

### **Scene Eight: Franklin and Abigail**

*(Franklin sits in a Chinese restaurant waiting for his daughter. Abigail comes in)*

Abigail: Dad?

*(Franklin turns and sees Abigail standing there. He gets up and goes to her for a hug)*

Franklin: Abbie! I've missed you.

Abigail: Missed you too. *(They sit at a table)* How have you been?

Franklin: I've been good.

Abigail: Is everything okay?

Franklin: Oh I've just had a little rib trouble, but I'm still kicking; catching up on my Price is Right. You know with Drew Carey it's not the same. How are things with you? What have you been doing?

Abigail: I've been painting actually. I've been kind of—I don't know—going on this soul searching thing—midlife crisis at 25 sort of thing ...I'm just kidding.

Franklin: Oh honey, I had mine at four.

Abigail: *(chuckles)* I missed you dad.

Franklin: So what do you paint?

Abigail: Oh people and wildlife. I go to Central Park a lot.

Franklin: Did you ever see your mother paint?

Abigail: Mom actually inspired me. I was going through the attic before I moved up. I found this one that she did, the one with the cave and the waterfall with the dog—

Franklin: Oh yes, I love that one.

Abigail: Yeah, I didn't really get it but I still really liked it.

Franklin: I never knew what any of them meant.

Abigail: Yeah, it's like modern art.

Franklin: Oh like the square things? The canvas with a circle and a line through it? I think most of that stuff is stupid.

Abigail: You don't like Rothko? He doesn't move your soul?

Franklin: I feel like he has meaning behind his paintings. It's just meaning that I don't get. Gosh, I just feel like half of the artists are con artists nowadays.

Abigail: Well if it still has passion behind it, then it's still art—uhh dad I've been wanting to tell you something—

Franklin: What is it? Is everything okay?

Abigail: Oh yeah! Everything is great—it's just—

Franklin: How much money do you need?

Abigail: No I'm fine with money.

Franklin: Then what is it?

Abigail: This is something I've been meaning to tell you for a really long time. And it's just—I'm just going to come right out and say it—

Franklin: Okay.

Abigail: So I met this guy and it was crazy. We just started talking out of the blue. We



were perfect strangers and we talked about life for like 5 hours. It was ridiculous. It was amazing. I don't even know to describe it. He wanted to know who I was, the real me and peer into my soul. That night we slept together and the next morning I just felt so free and like I felt like something had awakened inside of me and finally I was...open...alive. It was amazing.

Franklin: So you're seeing this guy now?

Abigail: Uh no. He left the next day I woke up to a wad of cash and a little note thanking me... It was a little off setting at first but then it got me thinking. Mom was an artist and anything can be art if there is passion behind it; so I've been experimenting with that concept a lot lately. *(She waits for his response)* You don't look happy.

Franklin: It's because I'm not.

Abigail: I'm not being unsafe or anything—

Franklin: It's not about that, Abbie. It's about—you have been lying to me. You were going to do music.

Abigail: I graduated! And it's not like music was a promising profession, dad.

Franklin: So prostitution is promising?

Abigail: It's not like I'm out on the street corner.

Franklin: Well then what are you doing?

Abigail: I'm having sex.

Franklin: Abbie, you have sex with someone because you love the person.

Abigail: I connect with them. That's what I want to do. You're not in love with a guy because he buys something for you.

Franklin: I just don't approve of this.

Abigail: This is a different time, dad. The world changes. It is the oldest profession.

Franklin: I just don't think it should be something you should be throwing around.

Abigail: Mom was the only person you had sex with, dad. I don't expect you to understand--

Franklin: Don't bring Mom into this, Abigail.

Abigail: It's like painting on commission. If you're passionate about it, then it's art. You do it because you have to, because you need it to survive. I'm not doing it for the money; if I were I would be living in a much nicer apartment than I do. I'm not going to stop, dad. But I've been wanting to tell you. I knew you wouldn't approve, but it's helped me so much as a person. (Beat) Do you hate me?

Franklin: I don't hate you. I'm just disappointed. I could never hate you.

Abigail: Do you not love me anymore?

Franklin: I love you more than anything, Abbie. Nothing is going to change that.

Abigail: I still paint though. You can show your friends my paintings and stuff.

Franklin: I just want you to be safe.

Abigail: I want you to know that I'm not doing it for the money. It's a necessity for me. It's an emotional necessity. I am connecting with people. It is love; it may not be permanent but it is there. And maybe I feel like they need to be loved. They don't need to sex. Sometimes they just need someone to hold them, and I need that too—you and mom always told me to do what makes me happy and this makes me happy, dad. It really does.

Franklin: (beat) I have always told you to do what makes you happy—I just thought that would be music, or painting—or something else. Never in a million years would I think that it would be something like this—I still see you as my little girl, it's hard to— (he takes her hands) but I still love you, I could never stop loving you. You are my daughter. This is going to take some getting used to, I'm afraid, but if it makes you happy then—(he sighs) it makes you happy—(beat) You know, I've been missing you a lot Abbie, and—and the reason I invited you here was I wanted to tell you something.

Abigail: (joking) Are you a prostitute too?

Franklin: (joking) Yes.

Abigail: I guess it runs in the family.

Franklin: (chuckles) I was going to ask if you wanted to move in with me.

Abigail: Oh.

Franklin: The house is big enough. I'm not using all those rooms.

Abigail: But why now? I've been gone so long.

Franklin: I just miss you—and it just feels like it's time.

Abigail: I miss you too, but it's like going back in time—

Franklin: Anything wrong with that? We had some great times together—you, me, Rose, mom and Matt. I just think it'd be good for us.

Abigail: But what would I do? There is no future for me here.

Franklin: I'm sorry. I just thought that you might want to—I know you have this new profession, but I thought that it was time. I'm living in that big old house every day that holds so many memories and I'm so—I just miss you, Abbie. Can't you picture it, me

and you in the old house? Giving it some life again. It'll be fun. I know it will be. It's just—I just thought you would want to.

Abigail: I do, I do.

Franklin: But I don't want to get in the way--

Abigail: Okay. What if, we compromised? And I split times between the city and you.

Franklin: I would like that.

Abigail: Getting out of the city for a while could be good for me.

Franklin: And I was thinking we could get a dog.

Abigail: What kind of a dog?

Franklin: A bulldog, name him Larry or something nice like that.

Abigail: That'd be cool.

Franklin: Maybe you could take him to the city. Don't prostitute him please.

Abigail: (chuckling) I won't I promise. (They both laugh, a nice moment)

Franklin: (His ribs hurting as he laughs) Ohhh—I'm sorry, I'm not fully recovered.

Alright, let's get some food already—I've heard that the kungpow chicken here is excellent.

**END OF PLAY**

## Participant Testimonials

"At first I was little iffy about what I was getting myself into. I had never done a devised piece before and when Keith was explaining how we were going to join movement and voice together, I was so confused. Perhaps a little scared, but I felt like it was good to try something new. The experience as a whole was like a journey. I am a writer, but I have never written from improv before. I found it really interesting, because in the improv, the scenes just sort of evolved. People knew who their characters were. They had a place, and a situation, and they just went with it. It was a really cool experience. I have written plays on my own but never with collaboration. It is an experience I'll definitely revisit. Working on *Mélange* definitely changed how I approached acting entirely. Especially the movement segment: I have always had a problem incorporating my body when it came to a character. I would just stand there and say the words and do the same gestures over and over again in a cycle. It was definitely a show that I needed to be in because it played against my weakness. *Mélange* forced it out of me, and taught me to just basically do it and see what happens. We had no speech during the movement section, but we still had to convey a story. It was so difficult. I remember thinking, "How are we going to do this?" Without being too literal, and doing sign language, but still telling a story. It definitely made me a better actor. I am so much more aware of my body now. What is my body doing? What kind of physicality does my character have? How does my body language read? What am I saying with my body? I learned that I can go farther. The movement actually took me to places that even the script couldn't. I was able to feel it all through my body. It was such an interesting experience. Now I just need to merge the two, the speech and movement, because *Mélange* helped me see them apart. It is time to put them together which I can do in my acting class."- Maudeleora Kaufman

"*Mélange* was overall an extremely positive experience for me. I have never been a part of something that pushed me to go places I have never gone as an actor and performer, but that is exactly what this did. I learned what it is like to create a character and story purely from my own mind and how to mend that together with my fellow actors. I had to fully rely on and trust my body to follow my own instincts which created a much more genuine performance. The movement part especially pushed me, but I think it may have been one of the best learning experiences of my life. I now feel completely comfortable using my body to explore parts of a character as well as myself, and feel very much on the road to fully understanding where movement fits into modern acting. That is something that is very difficult to explain and grasp without actually experiencing it. I think that the improvisational portion was also extremely helpful. As someone who has never done improvisational work before, it was wildly terrifying and exhilarating at the same time. It lets an actor be in the moment without all the messy thinking that goes along with "acting." Not to mention, it also teaches you

how to keep the scene alive and how to react quickly even though you do not know what the other person will say or do. It really allows you to have the thoughts that your character would and then to express them however you feel. It brings a new truth to a relationship between two characters. Ever since, I have been able to experiment with characters freely and confidently armed with all of the tools I have taken from this experience. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to go through this because it has added tremendously to my educational experience here at VCU. I think it is something every beginning actor should go through before attempting to build on their skills because it gives you the solid basis that you need. Overall this experience was priceless.”- Annabella Bradstreet

“Going into this project I was quite confident, as I had worked on a collaborative piece before. I assumed this process would be fairly similar to what I had previously experienced, so I did not feel nervous. As the process began, things were positive and fast paced- I was extremely hopeful about the future of our project. However, once the initial improve section was completed (this was the section with which I felt the most comfortable in retrospect) things became much more challenging. Perhaps the greatest difficulty I personally faced was the movement section. I am extremely uncomfortable dancing, and although this section was technically "movement" rather than dance, it required a bit of dancing as well. While this was very hard for me initially, I slowly began to push myself, and with your encouragement and assurance that rehearsals were a place to experiment, I came around. I became gradually more comfortable with the movements and eventually was able to perform them on stage without fear. This was a very challenging experience, but I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to push myself in such a way- I can see this comfort with movement showing up in my acting class which is very exciting. Finally, the only part of the process with which I was not *entirely* satisfied was the script. While I think we all did wonderful collaborative work, I wish the script had been revised a few more times by the group, as it had a few parts which seemed, at times, a bit cheesy. Ultimately, however, this was a very positive experience and I am extremely proud of everyone's hard work!”- Miranda Tower

“Going into *Mélange*, I was wary of such an undertaking because I had never worked on a movement piece, but I was excited at the idea of it. When the main theme was decided to be innocence, I was excited for the direction in which we would take it. I had devised a piece before, but creating the show through improv was an interesting take on writing a piece. Overall, I enjoyed developing *Mélange* because it blended improvising a script and improvising movement.”- David Rogozenski

“*Mélange* was not just a play, but an enlightening experience for me as an actor. Due to the abstract nature of the material, *Mélange* greatly helped me pave my way to understanding physicality in acting, and greatly improved my understanding of physical theater.”- Patrick Bello

"When I joined the cast of *Mélange*, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew it would be an experience I have yet to endure, and I was excited to start it. I must admit, that three hour rehearsals every night for almost three months was quite the wake up call. We started from complete scratch, generating an idea and fiddling around with it until we made a complete product. We were stretched, yanked, and constricted from constant physical and psychological experiments/activities our director pushed us through. At times I thought I was going to lose my marbles, but I was able to keep it together with the help of Keith and my fellow cast members. Personally, I have a really hard time letting myself go and this experience really pushed me to break away from anything holding me back. This process was the first necessary step to help me get out of that restraint, I won't forget how hard I was pushed and how much I learned about myself, both strengths and weaknesses, and how far I am able to go. It was unique."

- Connor Haggerty

"I've always been a physical actor. I've always found character physically before emotionally. However, this process was surprisingly very challenging for me. Finding a character's emotional impact through only movement was extremely challenging. It was like a huge wall was in front of me blocking me from finding what needed to be found. However, once I let go and broke through the wall it was one of the most rewarding things I've experienced." – Andrew Colletti

"When I auditioned for *Melange* it was still titled "The Keith Fitzgerald Project." I didn't know a single thing about it other than that it was intended to be a devised piece. I auditioned on a whim and couldn't stay for callbacks because of a time-conflict, so when I left I assumed this was a show I wouldn't be working on. I am so grateful that wasn't the case. This process was unlike anything I had ever experienced. Before this show I had helped write one devised show (*You, Me, and Everyone We Know*) and had performed in two shows that had been written as a result of collaboration, so devised work wasn't foreign to me. However, the way Keith helped us approach writing this piece was so fresh and raw that any previous experience I had went out the window. The work was so focused in the here and now and required an incredible amount of honesty and dedication. The use of improvisation to help write our character's stories was something entirely new and quite challenging. As the days went by I watched the concept I had jotted down on paper become a fully rounded character, watched as ideas we had all thrown out began to meld together and become a genuine world in which our story could flourish. Being able to create a character and see them fully realized is a really marvelous thing, and such a privilege for an actor. The character I created – Abigail – was a character that I was then forced to live with day in and day out during this process. It was a challenge but also incredibly frustrating. The more I discovered about her the more I discovered about myself. It was a symbiotic relationship unlike anything I had ever experienced in my process before. I started this process at a point in my training where I was still trying to get the wool out of my eyes and figure out what I was doing with my career. Working on this show really helped to clarify a lot of questions that had until that point been unanswered. It helped me

reevaluate my own processes and to help develop new ways of approaching a character and a story. The silent movement piece helped me to get in-tune with my body and raised my confidence ten-fold. Throughout the process all of us agreed that this show was almost like taking an extra acting class. Keith was equal parts director, teacher, and friend. He helped create a safe environment that allowed us all to grow. He allowed us to make bold choices, and yes, sometimes that resulted in failure, but from that we only grew stronger. I struggled in the beginning of the improv process; Keith was always there to help guide me through it. He never let a rehearsal go by without imparting some technique and tidbit on us. I watched my cast grow tremendously over the weeks that we worked on this show. It was a challenge for all of us, and, at least for me, not at all what I had expected when I auditioned. As cliché as it is, I genuinely did leave this project a stronger actor and a stronger person. Keith really has something with how he approaches devised theater. He is a brilliant director and wonderful teacher. I can't wait to see where his method takes him in the future." – Morgan Barbour



## Reference Materials

## Reference Materials

Bicat, Tina, and Chris Baldwin. *Devised and Collaborative Theatre: A Practical Guide*.

Ramsbury, Marlborough Wiltshire: Crowood, 2002. Print.

Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Graham, Scott, and Steven Hoggett. *The Frantic Assembly: Book of Devising Theatre*.

New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Johnstone, Keith. *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1981.

Print.

Oddey, Allison. *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. New York:

Routledge, 1996. Print.

Orti, Pilar. *Your Handy Companion to Devising and Physical Theatre*. Lexington,

Kentucky: Paperplay, 2011. Print.

Rodgers, Janet B., and Frankie Armstrong. *Acting and Singing with Archetypes*.

Milwaukee: Limelight, 2009. Print.

Rodgers, Janet, ed. *The Complete Voice and Speech Workout*. Milwaukee: Applause,

2002. Print.

### Figure 3

#### **Audition/ Interview Notice:**

Shafer Street Alliance Laboratory Theatre

#### ***The Keith Fitzgerald Project (Title TBD)***

Director/ Deviser, Keith Fitzgerald is seeking an ensemble of 4-12 enthusiastic and creative collaborators from the VCU Community in the devising and performing of a brand new play.

- Performer/Devisers
- Writer/Devisers
- Designer/ Devisers
- Choreographer/Devisers
- Etc...

Auditions will be held on Thursday September 20 from 7-10 in PAC B53 and will consist of a 1-2 minute monologue, character performance, or skit that you have prepared, Followed by a brief informal Interview. Undergraduates and Graduates are encouraged to audition.

For my Thesis project I am acting as Director/Deviser of this piece using a formula I have developed as an approach to devising collaborative ensemble theatre. This process will consist of Improvising our way to play, performing the play as a reading and in the final stage performing the play as a movement piece.

After the show is cast we will have one initial meeting to put together a schedule and for me to explain the work and the approach. Regular rehearsals will begin the second week of October so First Years and The Company of *Noises Off* are welcome to audition.

There will be a sign-up sheet in the student lounge. Please E-mail me with any questions you may have, [fitzgeraldkg@vcu.edu](mailto:fitzgeraldkg@vcu.edu).

**Figure 4**

**The Keith Fitzgerald Project**

**Audition Questionnaire**

1. Name:\_\_\_\_\_. E-mail/Phone Number.\_\_\_\_\_
2. What Role are you Auditioning/ Interviewing For: (Circle all that apply)
  - A. Performer/ Deviser
  - B. Writer/Deviser
  - C. Designer/Deviser
  - D. Choreographer/ Deviser
  - E. Other/Deviser\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Have you ever worked on a Devised Piece before?
  - A. Yes
  - B. No
4. What intrigued you to audition/interview?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. What were your last three theatre projects?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
6. On the back side of this form please write down your evening schedule including conflicts from Wednesday Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>. Please attach a resume and headshot. **(DON'T PANIC!!! Only if you have one with you.)**

## Figure 5

Keith Fitzgerald

Thesis Project/ Course Proposal

Theatre Triad: Devising Ensemble Theatre

**Instructor:** Keith Fitzgerald

**Course Description:** Theatre Triad is an approach to devising collaborative works using the main components of the art of acting: Voice, Text, and Movement. The Theatre Triad is the basis of the creative process. It is experimental and springs from my idea of exploring individual and combinations of these components to fully develop a theatrical performance.

**Purpose for Course:** This work is intended to encourage student actors to tap into their creativity while also allowing them experience in various different theatrical exercises such as improvisation, reader's theatre, "silent plays" (movement pieces with no words), and also devising a new work.

**Course Design:** This course is intended for sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students who wish to explore new works and non-traditional theatrical performance styles. Ideally this course would have a maximum enrollment of 10 students in good academic standing, and/or an audition requirement.

**Course Structure:** This course should meet once or twice a week for a total of 3-4 hours. Each class will start with a standard physical and vocal warm-up. In the first half of the semester the focus will be on the writing of a play which will come directly from

improvisational storytelling. The latter half of the semester will focus on text analysis, script scoring, and vocal variety and characterization, which will culminate in a staged reading of the devised play. The final piece of the puzzle would be a performance, ideally in the first slot of the spring SALT season, telling the same story as a “silent play”.

**Course Needs:**

1. A large studio classroom.
2. Possibly a Movement Track Graduate TA.

**Required Materials:**

Students will be required to keep a journal of discoveries and reflections. Students must also bring water and clothes that allow them to move. Any other materials including a few readings will be provided by the instructor.

## Figure 6

### Theatre Triad

#### Devising Ensemble Theatre

Keith Fitzgerald

[fitzgeraldkg@vcu.edu](mailto:fitzgeraldkg@vcu.edu)

Office Hours By Appointment

(SAMPLE SYLLABUS)

Fall 2012

Then

There

**Course Goals:** Theatre Triad is an approach to devising collaborative works using the main components of the art of acting: Voice, Text, and Movement. The Theatre Triad is the basis of the creative process. We will be exploring individual and combinations of these components to fully develop a theatrical performance directly from our own creativity.

#### **Required Materials:**

- **An open mind, creativity and the willingness to learn and have fun**
- Pen or Pencil
- Notebook

#### **Grading:**

*Attendance and Class Participation. 60%*

This is a performance class, so willingness to participate, ability to take constructive criticism, and creativity are very important.

*Writing Assignments 20%*

You will be required to act as scribe at times in class, you will also be responsible for keeping a journal of your thoughts and reflections throughout the term. You will also be responsible to see at least two theatrical performances and to write an observation specifically focused on movement and voice.

*Etiquette and Professionalism. 20%*

**Clothing and Decorum:** In keeping with departmental policy, you are required to wear movement clothes during class. Clothing should be solid black, white, or gray with no logos. **ALL** Jewelry and accessories of any kind **MUST** be removed before class.

**Attendance Policy:** You will be *allowed* two undocumented absences. If you have to miss class due to illness, family matters or for department approved professional reasons, please let me know in advance if possible. **BE ON TIME** and ready to work for this and all of your classes. Please be aware that arriving late twice is equal to one absence.

I can't wait to explore this work with you all!!! Keith

### Theatre Triad Class Calendar

(Sample)

Week One: Introduction to the Course and the Work. A Brief History of Devised Theatre

Week Two: Joseph Chaikin and Open Theatre. Short documentary about Jean Claude Van Itallie's The Serpent. Anne Bogart and SITI Theatre. Interviews with Anne Bogart and excerpts from SITI Theatre's Antigone.

Week Three: Breaking down the Triad. The components of Acting: Voice and Speech, Stage Movement, and Text.

Week Four: Breaking down the Triad. The components of Acting: Voice and Speech, Stage Movement, and Text.

Week Five: Improvisation and recording the story.

Week Six: Improvisation and recording the story.

Week Seven: Improvisation and recording the story.

Week Eight: Improvisation and recording the story.



Week Nine: Edit the devised play.

Week Ten: Edit the devised play.

Week Eleven: Finish editing. Assign roles. Text Analysis, Scoring etc.

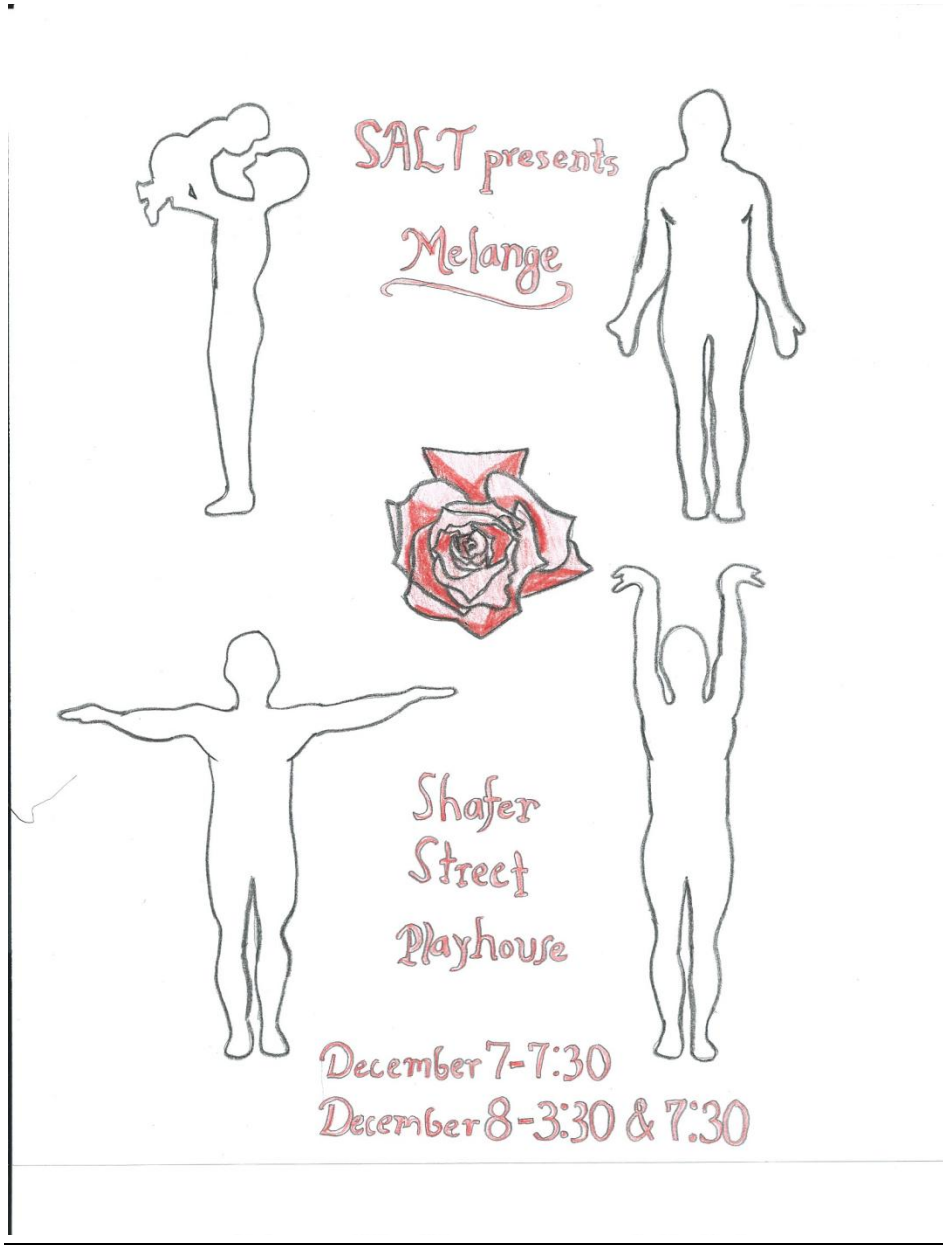
Week Twelve: Text Analysis. Scoring etc.

Week Thirteen: Rehearsal for Final Exam Staged Reading.

Week Fourteen: Rehearsal for Final Exam Staged Reading.

Week Fifteen: Rehearsal for Final Exam Staged Reading. Final Exam Performance of Staged Reading of the devised play. Wrap up.

Figure 7



# Mélange

**Definition:** *noun*, a mixture; medley.

Director/Deviser's Note:

Storytelling is an age old tradition. Theatre is storytelling. Mélange was an experiment that became a brand new play devised by nine people. The devising process began with telling a story with body and voice, this created the text, or story. What you will experience tonight is two unique adaptations of the same story, one told with the body independent of voice, as a prologue, and the other told with the voice independent of the body. Enjoy the show.

-Keith Fitzgerald

Director/Deviser

SPONSORED BY

THE VCU GUILD OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

## Performer/Devisers

In Order of Appearance

Abigail.....Morgan Barbour  
Tommy.....Andrew Colletti  
Kiki.....Miranda Tower  
Ashley.....Connor Haggerty  
Michael.....David Rogozenski  
Grace.....Maudeleora Kaufman  
Lauren.....Annabella Bradstreet  
Franklin.....Patrick Bello

## Crew

Stage Directions.....Shelby Marie Smith  
Writers.....Morgan Barbour  
Andrew Colletti  
Maudeleora Kaufman  
Keith Fitzgerald  
Movement Assistant..... Annabella Bradstreet  
Light Board.....Blake Patrick Albertson  
Sound Board.....Veronica Brady

\*There will be a ten minute intermission between acts.

**Special Thanks**

Heather Falks

Noreen Barnes

Lorri Lindberg

Michael Hegarty

David Rike

Richmond Triangle Players

Program and Poster Design by:

Andrew Colletti

## Vita

Keith George Fitzgerald was born on August 2, 1981, in Southampton, New York. He graduated from Westhampton Beach High School, Westhampton Beach, NY in 2000. He studied Acting at Suffolk County Community College from 2000-2004 before receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre with a concentration in Musical Theatre from Point Park University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2007. He has directed productions in both professional and college settings including *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *The Jag*, and *Mélange*. He currently resides in Richmond, Virginia.