



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2004

The Doubtful Hero: An Artist's Journey

Heather N. Falks

Virginia Commonwealth University

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



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

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/3891>

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.

© Heather N. Falks 2015
All Rights Reserved

THE DOUBTFUL HERO: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

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

by

Heather Falks

Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015
Bachelors of Fine Arts in Theatre, Pre Professional Directing, Texas State University, 2007

Director: Dr. Noreen C. Barnes
Graduate Studies Director, Associate Professor
Department of Theatre

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May, 2015

Dedication

For my *Time Tells* ensemble

“This is not our end...”

Acknowledgment

It takes a village to raise a child; it also requires a village to create an original theatre piece. There are many people in my ‘villages’ that deserve thanks for assisting me over the last eighteen months in the creation and execution of my thesis project *Time Tells: a devised theatre piece*.

First and foremost I would like to honor my family. Thank you to my husband, Matthew Minter and our son Kaleb. Their love is my life. I feel very fortunate to have a partner who always supports my passion and work. I would like to acknowledge my parents, Jim and Deborah Falks, for their love and constant confidence in my talents. It’s nice to know my parents are proud of me. Special thanks to my father, without him I would be lost.

Thank you to my sister-in-law, Mary Miller, who cared for Kaleb and cheered me on every step of the way. I am grateful to my mother-in-law, Caroline Carver, who proofread my thesis and gave me helpful notes. I want to recognize my sister, Viveca Falks, for being my life preserver during this endeavor. She moved in with my family to care for Kaleb while I wrote my thesis, I could not have survived Thesis Island without her.

I would like to recognize my professors at Virginia Commonwealth University, Dr. Noreen C. Barnes, Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates, David Leong and Dr. Aaron Anderson for teaching, inspiring and pushing me at every step of my journey.

Thank you to my thesis committee members, Dr. Jan Powell, Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates and Dr. Noreen C. Barnes. A special thanks goes to these amazing women for attending the performance of *Time Tells*, it meant the world to me to have them in attendance. I would also like to thank Noreen for believing in me and providing guidance, and Dr. T for her encouragement throughout the process. Thank you to Dr. Jan Powell for her participation in the production and for sharing her thoughts on my thesis.

I am grateful to my colleagues and friends who attended the Invited Dress Rehearsal and gave me feedback; their participation in the play was priceless. Thank you to Courtney and Phil Vollmer for not only attending the IDR, but also working with the *Time Tells* actors on perfecting scar stage makeup, the results were terrific. Thank you to Laine Satterfield for participating in the show and being a confidant. Laine was influential on the structuring of my thesis to model the Hero’s Journey, without her I would still be trying to “find my voice”.

I am indebted to Marisa Guida for giving her time and talents to the production. Her choreography work left a lasting impression; the actors are known to break into *Dead of Night* choreography when reminiscing about the play.

Thank you to my assistant director, Joe Toscano, whose contributions to the piece was invaluable. Joe consistently said “Yes, and…” and “What if…”. With positive energy he helped the ensemble keep the creative momentum moving.

I owe Matt Treacy a debt of gratitude for agreeing to work on my thesis show and for being the best collaborator I have ever worked with. Matt is a gifted artist and I thank him for creating beautiful music for *Time Tells*.

I want to acknowledge Jason Moore for his continuous support and for providing TheatreLAB with rehearsal space and a production venue. It was fun to create a site specific show in RVA Event Space.

Thank you to DeeJay Gray and TheatreLAB, this thesis would have not been possible if not for the support and collaboration of DeeJay. TheatreLAB and its members were crucial to the success of the production and I am eternally grateful. Finally, I would like to extend my admiration and gratitude to the *Time Tells* cast, designers, and production team. It was an honor to have them as companions on this incredible journey.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter	
1 The Call to Adventure.....	2
Refusal of the Call	2
Meeting My Mentors	3
2 Crossing the Threshold	8
TheatreLAB	9
RVA Event Space	10
Title	10
Auditions.....	11
Callbacks.....	12
3 Meeting Allies and Adversaries.....	14
Casting	14
Selecting a Theme.....	15
Establishing Hierarchy.....	15
Production Designer.....	16
Musical Director	16
Assistant Director.....	18

- Ensemble Homework.....19
- Online Community.....21
- 4 Choosing the Path: Challenges, Temptations, Failures and Successes.....23
 - Building Ensemble.....23
 - Introduction to *Viewpoints*.....24
 - Brainstorm Sessions.....27
 - Composition Exercises.....29
 - Feedback30
 - Writing Assignments31
- 5 Exploring New Conditions33
 - Story Development33
 - Question34
 - Structure.....35
 - Anchor.....38
 - Research.....38
 - Character Development Exercises39
 - Character Interviews45
 - Who is the “Artist”?.....46
 - The “Artist’s” Work.....46
 - Audience Centered.....48
 - Creating the Music.....49
- 6 Treacherous Roads.....52
 - Communication and Commitment.....52

Fleshing out the Story	55
Script Development	56
Trials of Writing the Trial.....	58
First Read Through	59
7 The Ordeal and Ultimate Reward	61
Transitioning into Phase Two	61
Staging	61
Choreography.....	62
<i>Viewpoints</i> in Rehearsal.....	64
Attending to Details	66
Stage Design	67
Scenic Design.....	71
Projection Designs: Third Eye and Seeing Eyes.....	71
Costume Design.....	74
Mask Work.....	76
Rose, Bud, Thorn	77
Invited Dress Rehearsal	78
Production	80
8 The Road Home	83
Devised Theatre: Director/ Shaper To Do List	85
Bibliography	87
Appendices	
A Audition Materials	88

B Games and Composition Exercises.....92

C Homework Assignments97

D “Artist” background.....102

E *Time Tells* Glossary.....103

F Stage Sector Descriptions105

G Visual Projections Outline106

H Usher Script111

I Passport/ Production Program.....112

J *Time Tells* Production Script.....113

K Production Press.....136

Vita.....137

Abstract

THE DOUBTFUL HERO: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

By Heather N. Falks, MFA

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

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015

Director: Noreen Barnes
Graduate Studies Director, Department of Theatre

This thesis documents my role as director of *Time Tells*, an ensemble based, multi-media, devised theatre piece. I address my specific responsibilities when leading an ensemble to create new work and produce it for the public. I identify the problems the ensemble faced and account how I mediated when dealing with conflict. Additionally, I include important professional influences such as, director and author, Anne Bogart and her nine *Viewpoints*; and the work of director and activist, Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed. I explain how exercises from *Viewpoints* and Theatre of the Oppressed aided my approach to team building and helped the ensemble establish a common language for communication. A shared vocabulary and sense of community allowed the ensemble to freely explore character and relationships, which led to formation of the *Time Tells* story.

THE DOUBTFUL HERO: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

It was the first day of rehearsal; the ensemble was gathered around the Brainstorm Boards surveying the questions and responses of the prompts: Art, Intention, Success, and Value. "Do you ever doubt your creative passion?" "What if I'm not good enough?" "What if other people want this more than I do?" These words leapt from the page and took a strangle-hold of me; doubt rose from the pit of my stomach and left a bitter taste in my mouth. I felt overwhelmed by these questions scrawled out on the poster boards; I took a breath, swallowed the doubt and forced myself to lift my eyes from the page. My gaze landed on the individuals who stood before me, my collaborators. Their truth and vulnerability also overwhelmed me; I was touched by their honesty and inspired to silence the doubt with our collective creative work.

CHAPTER 1

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

As far back as I can remember, theatre arts have been my platform for self expression, and yet, for most of my life, I have struggled to recognize myself as a legitimate artist. In fact, I have struggled to understand what constitutes legitimacy in the arts. Success is measured by several things; it appears that money and fame are the most prevalent in American society. Celebrity and monetary success are not high on my list of priorities; I simply want to work and make theatre that is meaningful, yet I often feel as if I am not measuring up.

It was not always this way. In my youth I was confident; I never doubted my abilities or held myself to ridiculous standards. As a preschooler I entertained my family with fantastical stories and impromptu performances of original songs and dances on a makeshift “stage” in our family living room. I would instruct my father to adjust the track lighting, that way I could literally be in the spotlight. Throughout adolescence, when playing ‘pretend’ with friends, I would take the lead and act as director of playtime. I was doing what came naturally to me. I was happy when I collaborated with friends and helped shape a story.

Refusal of the Call

Once I began to pursue a higher education in the field of theatre arts, I let go of the sense of comfort and ease of creative play. In my undergraduate studies I began to compartmentalize my experiences with theatre. For years I limited myself as an artist; I restricted myself to a more

traditional model of making theatre. Expressive and experimental types of theatre intrigued me on many levels but I never had the courage to engage. As a young woman making her way in the world as a performer and director of theatre arts, I did not have the fortitude to step outside of the “mainstream” theatre culture.

It was not until I began teaching children with the School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community (SPARC), that I reignited my childlike sense of playfulness. The children reminded me of the joy of play and delighted me with their creativity. My young students inspired me to find that joy in myself and in my work. Many of my co-teachers at SPARC were passionate about devising short plays with students; in particular, Matt Polson influenced me to stretch beyond retelling the same familiar stories, and Jason Campbell complimented my story ideas with dynamic movement and choreography. Together we created performance pieces with the children that were inspired by themes and imagination. My SPARC colleagues were instrumental in my early development as a shaper of new work, and I began to find that devising with students was artistically satisfying. I was most invigorated when facilitating exercises with my students that fostered creativity, collaboration and a sense of pride in one’s self. My work with youth and collaboration with my co-teachers inspired me to pursue a Masters in Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University. My decision to attend graduate school was based in a need for personal growth, a yearning to explore what it means to be an artist, and discover the type of art I want to create.

Meeting My Mentors

At Virginia Commonwealth University I was fortunate to have studied with distinguished scholars, in particular, Dr. Noreen C. Barnes, Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates, Dr. Aaron Anderson

and David Leong had a significant influence on my growth as an artist. I was introduced to theories, styles and artists that were exotic and alluring. A new world of possibility had opened and I was eager to engage in the type of work which would allow me to explore pertinent cultural issues and share my perspective.

Dr. Noreen C. Barnes has been my strongest advocate in my pursuit to create and direct new work. From the beginning she recognized my desire to break free from traditional models of theatre. Dr. Barnes encouraged me to pursue the study of directing and more specifically create, shape and direct experimental new works. She fostered my curiosity by guiding me towards literature that explored methods used by significant and impactful directors and devisors throughout the ages. Over the years I have immersed myself in the study of work from artists such as Anne Bogart, Michael Chekhov, Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal, Elizabeth Le Compte, Simon McBurney and Nikolai Evreinov. These artists have had a significant influence on my approach to directing new work. They have all inspired me to use my body as an instrument and dig deeper into my imagination.

In conjunction with my studies, I sought out practical experiences creating new work in and out of TheatreVCU. Major influences on my artistry have been numerous. An introductory course on physical storytelling and mask performance, under the instruction of Dr. Aaron Anderson, provided me the opportunity to craft my own mask, devise multiple characters for it and collaboratively create stories for the stage with my classmates. Dr. Anderson guided the class through the process of developing physical characters to accompany masks. He also thoroughly explained methods of teaching and coaching mask performance that have aided me in working with actors. These techniques were extremely helpful in directing a masked actor during the rehearsal process of my thesis project, *Time Tells: a devised theatre piece*.

In Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates' graduate directing course titled *Staging Political Theatre*, I was given an opportunity to further explore the role of director in devised theatre. Through a series of projects, in which we were prompted to write about social, cultural and political issues that were of interest to us; we developed and staged new work using our classmates as performers. Dr. Pettiford-Wates advocated for directors to work from story rather than plot. She also encouraged me to acknowledge fear and navigate through it, which empowered me to take risks with my work.

Director Anne Bogart has been a source of inspiration to me for many years. I was first introduced to *Viewpoints* in a workshop at the South Eastern Theatre Conference in 2012. The workshop was held in a large conference room and there were over a hundred participants taking part in an introductory lesson. The instructor rattled off all nine *Viewpoints* within the span of an hour as we did our best to keep up in the overcrowded and over stimulating environment. Despite my rocky introduction to *Viewpoints* I was hooked and wanted to explore how it could contribute to my work as a performer. I purchased *The Viewpoints Book* by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau and read it in one sitting. The sections on composition were of great value to me as someone new to the field of devised theatre. I connected with the approach to collaborative creation outlined in the book and used it as a practical guide as I experimented with developing and directing small scale devised productions.

My first experience in devising new work with adults was a course titled Non-Realistic Theatre. I served as a teaching assistant for the instructor, Sarah Provencal. This teaching experience gave me much needed confidence in guiding artists in a creatively-collaborative environment. The course included a devised theatre unit in which we used myths and common folklore as source material. The students, instructor and I deconstructed the myths as an

ensemble. We identified the major themes and emphasized the applicable connections to our society. I was given an opportunity to shape the devised work of the undergraduate students. Working with them fueled my desire to devise even further.

Soon after my experience using myths as source material in the *Non-Realistic* theatre course, I was invited to be a guest artist for TheatreLAB's first devised theatre piece *The Antigone Project*. I worked closely with the director, DeeJay Gray, on identifying the relevant themes of the myth and pairing them with current issues. We developed an exciting concept that highlighted how easily media can manipulate and shape a society. It was my job to work with the ensemble on deconstructing the choral odes and emphasizing the pertinent information. I introduced *Viewpoints* to the ensemble and facilitated exercises that led to the development of highly stylized movement pieces.

My first completely original devised creation was developed with the aid of Dr. Pettiford-Wates, in a course titled *Solo Performance*. She introduced me to James Baldwin's concept that the story reveals itself, Dr. Pettiford-Wates encouraged me to abandon all my preconceived ideas of what the story should be and trust that I was the instrument for the story. She introduced me to new methods of generating ideas such as guided imagery, writing prompts and ritualistic practices. After I had developed my story, Dr. Pettiford-Wates helped shape and stage the piece in classroom rehearsals. Through this process of creating and staging my own solo show, I discovered the freedom of crafting my own work and connected deeply to who I am as an artist activist.

All of these valuable experiences left me inspired to continue to create new work. I was interested in creating a piece of theatre that was audience centered, that offered them an experience that was immersive and inclusive. The idea of interacting with the audience appealed

to me and I wanted to include that in the piece. The elaborate construction and leadership of *Time Tells*, a large scale, multi-media, devised production was my self-guided journey through the pitfalls of hell (otherwise known as doubt) and to navigate through the collaborative creative process and emerge more knowledgeable about the craft to which I dedicate my life.

CHAPTER 2

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

The first step toward the conception of a new work was to gather resource materials on devising theatre. There are many publications on the topic and each had helpful suggestions on how to create material and facilitate exercises. I was specifically looking for books that examined the role of the director in devised theatre but found that aspect of the process to be elusive. I found that the job description of a director greatly varied among practitioners of devised theatre, everyone has their own way of leading a group of people and each has their unique perspective to share. I could not model myself after someone else; I had to approach the process in my own way.

Alison Oddey's book, *Devising Theatre: a practical and theoretical handbook*, was most useful to me as I felt it was an excellent introduction to laying the foundation for a devised theatre piece. In the chapter titled "Beginnings" Oddey examines the following questions: "Why Devise? Devise What? For Whom?" (Oddey 27-29). These simple and direct questions prompted me to find answers for my project. First I identified the essential elements that I wanted incorporated into the original piece. The most important elements were story, music, visual art, film, dance, expressive movement and audience involvement. I strove to create an experimental theatrical event that did not subscribe to a traditional format. It was imperative that the piece be audience centered and that the audience felt as if they were incorporated into the world the

ensemble created. Ultimately I wanted to provide a unique hands-on experience for the audience that would both engage and entertain.

TheatreLAB

It was clear from the beginning that in order to achieve my goals of devising a large scale, multi-media production, I would need to assemble an ensemble of performance and visual artists outside Virginia Commonwealth University. DeeJay Gray, Artistic Director of TheatreLAB in Richmond, Virginia, was crucial in making my dreams a reality. DeeJay is a strong advocate for original and collaborative works and supports emerging artists in the Richmond community. He is also a champion for me and my directing work. As TheatreLAB is Richmond's leader in innovative style and provocative theatrical works, he was happy to offer the devised theatre piece a slot in the 2014 season.

When I initially approached DeeJay with the idea to produce a devised piece of theatre that would involve a lengthy creative process, he was intrigued by the format I proposed. My plan was to have the ensemble meet once a week for seven months to devise a new play and then rehearse the play for four weeks in preparation for a two-weekend run. Neither DeeJay nor I had previous experience with implementing a long conception process in devised work. We had developed good work with ensembles in short time frames but always felt that we needed more time to make the piece stronger. This was our chance to learn if more time equaled a more developed piece.

RVA Event Space

TheatreLAB was a nomadic theater company during its 2014 season and scheduled its four shows at a performance venue called RVA Event Space. The RVA Event Space is located inside Plant Zero, a large repurposed warehouse that has also been sectioned into art studios and an art gallery. The structure of RVA Event Space was a very important component in composing material for *Time Tells*. The layout of the RVA Event Space is a large open space that allows multiple options for staging and seating configuration. There are many unique features including a large metal rolling service door, six thick red poles outlining the center of the room, sphere lanterns of many sizes that hang from the ceiling, and five projection screens. It was my intention to highlight the uniqueness of the space and utilize the technical capabilities available to us.

Title

In preparation for the TheatreLAB Company auditions, in which the directors cast the whole 2014 season, DeeJay contacted me regarding the title of the devised piece. I was initially reluctant to give a title to a play that was yet to be created; fearing it would influence the ensemble and therefore dictate the story. DeeJay strongly felt that TheatreLAB needed to have a name attached to the devised piece in order to properly promote it for the company auditions. He assured me that together we could come up with a title that was ambiguous enough to spark interest without framing the creation of the play. In an effort to be both playful and open to possibilities I offered the title, *Time Will Tell: a devised piece*. DeeJay countered with the title *Time Tells: a devised piece*. As soon as he said the words, I felt the title was right, time is elusive and universal. I also enjoyed the simplicity and the alliteration of it. With the title in place we started promoting the audition and building a buzz around the project. TheatreLAB highlighted

the fact that this was to be the company's third devised piece and opportunities such as this do not come along often in Richmond outside of an academic setting.

Auditions

Initially I feared that many of the actors scheduled for the open audition would be deterred by the commitment requirement of developing and working on a project for the better part of a year. Yet it was my hope that I could entice the actors to give the experience a chance. Due to the unpredictable nature of devising an original work with an ensemble, it was necessary for me to address the interested participants directly to explain what my process would entail. The structure of the open auditions would not allow time to work with the actors on devising exercises, which meant that I could only observe the actors as they read scenes for the scripted plays. Thus a screening process was an essential means to determine who I wanted to invite to the callbacks. I carefully crafted a letter and requested that the participants answer a few questions as honestly as possible. The list of questions was a means to understanding more about each individual's personality, experience level and interest with devised theatre, and what assets they could bring to the ensemble. It was crucial to the success of the project to select committed and passionate artists who truly had collaborative spirits. The screening process served as a method to weed out the individuals who might not be the best fit for the project.

With an open mind and a stack of headshots, I sat through TheatreLAB's open company auditions. I observed as over fifty actors read scenes, and I took notes on their confidence and comfort levels in the cattle-call style audition. I noted if they appeared to be present and connected with their scene partners. To ensure that the ensemble's collective ideas were fully realized it was crucial that I hire performers capable of taking on multiple responsibilities in the

creative process. *Time Tells* was to be a play with music, thus my plan was to hire performers who played musical instruments and were comfortable singing. *Time Tells* was also to incorporate dance and expressive movement; therefore, I was on the lookout for an actor who was an experienced dancer as I planned to utilize their talents by having them choreograph pieces for the show. Fortunately, many who auditioned had training in the many disciplines I was seeking to feature in the play. The screening process helped me identify those few participants interested in writing material for the play. It was my intention to have the entire ensemble create the content of the play and use designated writers to flesh out the script, bring continuity to the story and ensure that each character had a distinct voice.

Callbacks

There was great interest from the audition participants in taking part in our devised piece. The majority of those actors were invited to attend the *Time Tells* callbacks. There were a few select individuals that I intentionally did not invite. I was previously familiar with these particular people and the reasons behind my choices varied from not caring for their work ethic, to knowing that our personalities would most likely clash during the development process.

In order to work with all of the interested actors, I had to break them into four small groups and conduct two separate audition callbacks. I contacted each one and invited them to take part in an evening of games and composition exercises. Initially the response to the callback invitation was enthusiastic, yet as we approached the callback dates, many people emailed me to decline the invitation. On the actual callback dates, several individuals failed to appear. In one particular session, only one out of the four scheduled performers showed up, and I was unable to

conduct the callback as planned. I opted to interview the performer instead. I found it easy to adapt to the situation and was encouraged by the remarkable performers who were in attendance.

Each group was made up of four to eight individuals. To begin, I led ensemble building exercises and games. Once the participants appeared to be relaxed and having fun, I divided the group in half and instructed them to create a five minute play that incorporated specific theatrical elements. It was fascinating to watch how each person approached the exercise and to note if they stepped forward as a leader or if they preferred to be a follower. I studied how they interacted with one another and did my best to assess if they would make good collaborators and cast-mates. Many of them appeared to be unsure of what to do, but it was their willingness to try that captured my attention and admiration.

Overall the structure of the *Time Tells* callback was effective in allowing me to see who among the group was comfortable playing and offering ideas. The ensemble would be taking creative risks and disclosing personal issues to one another. Because devising can often be an intimate act, I made every effort to be cautious in my ensemble selection. From past devising experiences, I understood how important it is to have a balance of personalities. It is essential to evenly distribute the leaders and followers when bringing together a group to collaborate on a new work.

CHAPTER 3

MEETING ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

Casting

After callbacks I was struck with the multiple talents of the actors, many of whom were strong singers, dancers and musicians. It proved to be very difficult to select only eight ensemble members for the project. I quickly narrowed down the actors who had been involved in the previous TheatreLAB devised projects. Due to their history with the company and experience with devising new work, I wished to involve them in *Time Tells*; however, I was weary of casting too many familiar faces. Ultimately, I selected four actors who I perceived to be good collaborators and strong performers.

In choosing the remaining ensemble members I went with my intuition and selected the individuals who appeared to have a sense of ease with play, confidence in presenting ideas, as well as a “Yes, and...” attitude. I was eager to work with new people who would contribute unique talents to the ensemble. The cast was comprised of five females and three males: Amber Davis, Caleb Wade, Chelsea Burke, Christian Hill, Dan Cimo, Maggie Bovolack, Theresa Manitply and Sarah Burke. Several of the actors expressed interest in additional duties in addition to their performance roles, scripting, dramaturgy, choreography, instrumental music. An additional member was added to the ensemble a few weeks in. Michael Todd was initially tasked with crafting visual art for the production, but due to his great contributions to the creative process he eventually became a character in the play.

Selecting a Theme

With the cast in place, my attention turned toward selecting a theme to initiate story development. “How the space is organized and structured for performance is part of the developing process” (Oddey 17). With this in mind it seemed a natural choice to use the Plant Zero building as inspiration for the theme. The environment, artwork, and the artists that inhabited the studios and galleries spoke to me as a strong creative influence. Inspiration was all around us, artists occupied every room of the building, often crafting their art while we crafted ours. We fed off the positive and creative energy in the building. The facilities were not the only factor in selecting the theme for the project; I had a vested interest in exploring what it is to be an American artist. My desire to examine the concept of artistry is rooted in my own question, “Am I really an Artist?” I was confident that the theme was broad enough that it would be open for interpretation and that there was opportunity for the theme to be refined throughout the creative process.

Establishing Hierarchy

“Most professional theatre practitioners admit that equality in the devising process simply doesn’t exist” (Oddey 23). I established a hierarchical structure among the ensemble of artists because I found it to be necessary in order to maintain a sense of structure and responsibility. In preparation for our first ensemble meeting, I scheduled individual meetings with McLean Jesse, the scenic and costume designer, Matt Treacy, the musical director, and Joe Toscano, the assistant director. Bringing these artists into the planning phase allowed me to vocalize my plans for structuring the piece. They were very supportive and helped me identify the essential elements that needed to be focused on going into the first ensemble meeting. Their feedback enabled me to accept that some of the details were better left for the ensemble to sort out.

Throughout the process, I considered these individuals, in addition to DeeJay, to be my creative team.

Production Designer

The scenic and costume designer for the production, McLean Jesse, is the Associate Artistic Director of TheatreLAB and has designed many shows in the Richmond Theatre Community. McLean is a highly respected painter, performer, teacher and designer and was a great fit for the project. Her positive energy and willingness to collaborate was a welcome addition to the team.

Due to the performance venue's spacious layout, industrial architecture and unique attributes, it was essential that the designs be site specific. "The creation of site-specific performance demands different considerations to be taken into account in terms of the actor-spectator relationship, planning and preparation, as well as technical concerns" (Oddey17). McLean was eager to work closely with me in shaping the visual world of the play and the people who inhabited it. Her flexibility in the first phase of the process allowed for ideas to come and go as the ensemble formulated characters and circumstances. Once a structure was in place for character and story McLean built a design around it. The drawings she contributed greatly influenced the ensemble's creation process and the development of the story.

Musical Director

From the onset, original music was an important element that I wished to incorporate into the production. I approached the gifted lyricist and musician, Matt Treacy, about joining the production as musician and composer. His delight and enthusiasm at the request helped boost my confidence in the project during the early planning phase. I felt that my expectations for Matt's

involvement were reasonable; I took into consideration that he was working on multiple projects simultaneously. I anticipated that he would check in with the ensemble periodically and submit music. It was at our first meeting that we determined Matt's job description and time commitment. He served as both musical director and sound designer and was present for all ensemble meetings to collaborate on the creation of the story. He felt that being intimately involved in the composition of the piece was essential to his own creative process.

During our first meeting we discussed the theme and my rough outline of a structure for the play. He was very receptive to the ideas I presented and requested that we create a moment where all ensemble members were involved in making music in some capacity, no matter their musical skill level. Music is a powerful tool to express the mood, tone and energy of a play. I expressed a desire for the music to serve as a way to bring characters together, to unite them in times of trouble. I told Matt that his music would also be essential in scene transitions.

Matt's preference was not to write sheet music unless an actor requested it. He prefers to craft the sound and mood for each character by working with the actors while they are in the process of developing character. Matt has an impromptu style and approach to crafting new work. Once the sound for a show was created, he used rehearsal time to refine it and match it to the movement of the performers. His style is to play along with the actors in performance, staying present in the moment and responding to their actions and energy. This approach allowed for playful interaction between him and the performers in rehearsals and ultimately between him and the audience in performance. His impromptu style also allowed the performers to connect with the audience in new ways, the music inspired them to be more playful.

It was during our first meeting that I shared my rough outline for a preshow with Matt. At that time my idea for the preshow was vague and full of possibility; it was he who helped narrow

my focus to what came to be the format of the preshow. Initially I envisioned the preshow to begin with actors performing activities in specific playing areas, while the audience roamed about the space and chose which performer they wanted to watch. I wanted Matt's music to help narrow the audience's focus to one playing area, which in turn would allow them to focus on one element of the story. Matt likened this idea to soccer players clumped together on the field fighting for the ball, with one player breaking through the tight huddle to score. In this scenario, the crowd's attention is immediately drawn to that player and the focus shifts to the goal. I loved the analogy and it stayed with me during the entire process. I often returned to that imagery and compared it with what the ensemble had developed for the preshow. One of the many things I appreciated about Matt was his collaborative spirit. From the first day he advised me that he tended to bring multiple ideas to the table and would make many "Yes, and..." suggestions. He encouraged me to rein him in, if needed, and I was assured that he would not take offense if his ideas were not used. He seemed to have a solid understanding of what it meant to be part of a collaborative effort.

Assistant Director

Joe Toscano was TheatreLAB's Directing Intern and worked as the assistant director on the majority of their productions in the 2014 season. Joe was new to Devised Theatre and admitted that he did not know how he could best serve me as assistant director. He asked that throughout the process I should tell him exactly what I needed from him. I appreciated his honesty and willingness to learn, I did not consider his inexperience with creating new work to be an issue, and I was happy to take on an apprentice.

One component of his role as assistant director was to act as a sounding board for me. Joe was adept at knowing how to approach the ensemble with an idea, he anticipated how they

would collectively respond to experimenting with new ideas that I offered. His perspective was helpful to me as I prepared material and exercises for the ensemble. He had a great relationship with many of the members and throughout the process and played a crucial role as a mediator and counselor, his assistance in managing conflicts and resolutions among the ensemble was invaluable.

I felt like a mentor to Joe and encouraged him to take the initiative in leading team building games or composition exercises. He thrived when leading warm-ups or games but showed very little interest in creating composition exercises. I wanted him to dig in and create ways to create work but he did not seem like he was ready to try, he appeared more comfortable shaping the piece through coaching and directing of scenes.

Ensemble Homework

Prior to meeting on a regular basis, I sent out homework assignments to the cast. When I first began formulating the homework questions (Appendix C) I found it was a challenge to phrase them in a manner that was leading. I was constantly mindful of this and was careful to keep all of the questions open ended. The homework was an attempt to stimulate thought about the theme Emerging American Artist. I was most interested in how each member of the ensemble individually viewed American culture and how they felt art played a role in that culture. I asked them to define art and identify what makes a particular artist or artwork valuable, popular and marketable. Then I asked them to articulate from where their need to create generates and what drives them to produce art.

At the time, I found myself consumed by concepts and ideas for the story based on the answers I received from the ensemble. I aimed to suppress my ideas in order to allow the ensemble to come together to discover, explore and examine within the theme I introduced. I

often found myself struggling to dismiss the numerous ideas for storyline that flooded my brain day and night. I was fully aware of how strong my voice can be in groups and that I wanted to be a good collaborator in the creation process. I feared that if I went into phase one with preconceived ideas for the story, I would not be collaborating with my ensemble; I would instead be dictating my vision for the play, charging ahead with my ideas rather than our ideas.

After the first few homework assignments (Appendix C), a dialogue ensued with a few artists that allowed me quick access to their opinions on art and experiences as American artists. I did not make a practice of asking follow up questions directly to individual ensemble members but one answer to the question “As an artist, how do you perceive your value to our society?” revealed that one of the ensemble members did not consider themselves to be an artist. This shocked me, as I highly respected this person’s work and creativity. I considered him to be an artist, so how could he not think of himself as one? He told me that it takes skill, knowledge of the business and experience to be an artist. I asked him how he will know when he has acquired enough skill, knowledge and experience. He responded “When my profession is to wake up and make art.” One day I hope to wake up and go to work at my theatre, or my studio, or my artistic business. When it's my primary focus, then I will feel that I'm an artist. Right now, I can't survive on just art.” This statement influenced my decision to expand the theme to include questions about success (Appendix C)

The Homework assignments were of great value to me in shaping the theme. The ensemble’s responses generated so many wonderful ideas and aided me as I developed composition activities. One of the challenges I faced in the early stages of theme development was that the majority of my ensemble and my assistant director were consistently late in returning Homework assignments to me. I expressed the need for their prompt responses in an

effort to convey how important it was to start the creation process on a strong footing. My requests fell on deaf ears and continued to be an issue throughout the entire creative process.

Online Community

The beginning stages of devising theatre can be provocative, inspirational, and a profound ensemble bonding experience. We were at a disadvantage with the limited amount of time we would spend with one another each week; I felt that it was important to have an online meeting place. This would enable us to create a sense of community and find ways connect a group of artists who were mostly strangers. The ensemble members are active users of the social media site Facebook and I wanted to utilize the free and convenient resource as a communication tool. The group page allowed us to instantly engage in conversation and share media. I made the group page immediately after I cast the play and invited everyone involved in the project. Although it was two months before our start date, I was eager to hear what they thought about the theme. To initiate dialogue I proposed questions to the ensemble and presented inspirational quotes and images, and asked them to do the same.

In the beginning, the online conversation wasn't immediately successful; I was the primary user of the group page. It wasn't until I proposed that we play a game that the ensemble begin to use the page. The game was an exercise in expanding our awareness about artists, called "Pick an Artist". Each person was tasked to select an artist they admire to introduce to the group. In turn, each individual selected a new artist to research and share their findings on the group page. Several members of the ensemble immediately responded with their favorite artists. We spent the next few days posting names, video and images, sharing our favorites and discovering new art. It was helpful for me to gain insight on what type of performance and visual art each

ensemble member was drawn to, and what they desired to emulate in their own work. After a few days the group page was finally being put to use as I intended.

One performer emerged as a leader among the other members. She was responsive and helpful to her other members online. She was also an initiator; one example of this is when she posted a Venn diagram with the center word ART. The instructions were to fill in the two circles to reveal what is involved in the making of art. It was fascinating and quite telling to see what each person shared. Much was revealed about the type of art each individual sought out to produce.

Throughout the process and production, the Facebook group page served a very important purpose, providing many breakthroughs and plot points from online conversations. Many of the ensemble members utilized the group page as a sounding board, a place to play “What if...” and “Yes, and...”. Brainstorming in this fashion was highly effective for me. It was easy to post videos, images, quotes and links to articles to the group page and to engage with friends and collaborators in conversation.

CHAPTER 4

CHOOSING THE PATH: Challenges, Temptations, Failures and Successes

To begin the first phase of the creative process for *Time Tells*, the ensemble gathered at our performance venue, RVA Event Space. There was an excited energy that filled the room, as fourteen people were poised and ready to take on the task of creating a new play. We sat in a close circle, introduced ourselves and described our role in the project. I took the lead and presented the creative team and explained their specific responsibilities. Then the actors introduced themselves and shared their skills they processed for the project. I defined my approach to creating new work with Viewpoints, composition exercises and homework assignments. I laid out my expectations for each ensemble member; they were responsible for contributing to the growth of the play. I told them that in order to be successful as an ensemble we had to be respectful, communicative and flexible. The ensemble was agreeable to the terms and appeared eager to begin. I had no sense at that time that I would have an issue with collaboration or contribution of ideas.

Building Ensemble

I anticipated the need to facilitate games that help promote a sense of comfort and ease among the group and create a cohesive ensemble. Several of the ensemble members had a shared history, a small group went to college together and a few others had worked together on prior TheatreLAB shows. This familiarity made for an interesting dynamic among the ensemble. On

one hand I was glad that the majority of the members were friends, on the other hand I was worried that it would be difficult for the members outside of the friendship ring to develop strong relationships. I believed that we would be more successful with our work if we had a strong sense of union.

Oddey advises that “in the early stages of devising, it is important for a company to explore and experiment with a range of stimuli, to understand how the group works in different situations. Exercises in communication, concentration, trust, sensitivity, movement, voice and improvisation are all required for group development”(25). I combed through my teaching files and referenced Augusto Boal’s arsenal of games in the book, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, for activities that would address all of the particular elements needed for effective collaboration. Boal’s book of games was a treasured resource during the creative process of *Time Tells*. I have longed admired Boal’s approach to creating theatre that can positively impact both audience and performer. He believed that all people possess the ability to play and create; and this inherent skill can be used to expedite conversation. Games are a direct way of opening up the lines of communication and creating union (Boal 60).

Introduction to *Viewpoints*

Bogart advises that an artistic process can be collaborative if the ensemble aims for discovery at all times, “*Viewpoints* offers a way to collectively address the questions that arise during rehearsal” (Bogart, Landau 18). When introducing *Viewpoints* to the ensemble I shared my personal experience with the technique when devising theatre, and assured them that the use of it in our work would be of great value to us all. Training in *Viewpoints* is a very effective way of creating a verbal short hand. As the director it is essential to be able to communicate ways of

improving the ensemble's work and give suggestions on how to experiment without having to explain each note thoroughly. The shared vocabulary, the short hand, allows the feedback sessions in rehearsals to be quick and to the point. It also allows for the possibility of effective written feedback.

“*Viewpoints* leads to greater awareness” (Bogart, Landau 19) and encourages attention to detail. The benefits of the technique are numerous; as it strengthens the bond of the ensemble, intensifies the work, and builds community. To begin, we concentrated on each individual viewpoint. Bogart explains that “as each viewpoint is introduced, information accumulates. First, we isolate awareness of that particular viewpoint, then add another to it” (Bogart, Landau 35). For the initial exploration of *Viewpoints*, I observed the ensemble members engage in the work and noticed that it appeared difficult for some people to abandon the need to bring attention to themselves. They appeared to have a hard time surrendering and trusting that what occurs onstage is enough, that they did not need to make something occur in order to be interesting to watch. It is a challenge for some people to simply allow themselves to respond to what is happening around them without feeling self conscious about being watched and potentially judged. “In *Viewpoints* there is no good, bad, right or wrong- there is only possibility and, later in the process, choice.” (Bogart 19). I trusted that the more *Viewpoints* work I led with the ensemble, the better they would be at being open to what was organically happening and allowing the story to reveal itself through relationship building.

Once the ensemble had a sense of how to simultaneously work with all of the *Viewpoints*, I led them in open *Viewpoints* sessions where they were free to play. I find that this type of exercise promotes discovery and attentiveness toward relationships. The musical director would accompany these sessions on guitar, and would drop in and out as he improvised a musical score

to the ensemble's physical exploration of relationships; he understood when the silence was necessary. His music influenced the mood and atmosphere of the ensemble's work for the better.

An exercise called Clay Garden was a significant moment for the group; it was during this exercise that they appeared to be deeply connected to one another for the first time, and it was at this point that the group became an ensemble. Clay Garden requires one actor to enter the space and take a shape, then another actor joins and connects to the first actor, then another actor enters and connects, and so on. Once all the actors are in the space, they are instructed to change their shape, but are required to move one actor at a time. This exercise allows the group to get comfortable working and moving together. It requires them to listen with their whole self, all of their senses alive and ready to respond. The added music increased the success of the exercise because the actors allowed the music to set the mood of the movement at times and at other times they worked against the mood of the music.



(Clay Garden Exercise)

The following rehearsal, the musical director brought in a cello piece that he composed, inspired by the ensemble's Clay Garden exercise. It was an incredibly beautiful song that

brought tears to our eyes. There was a moment in particular that he was inspired by, the ensemble had physically come together in a tight huddle and then gently peeled back one by one without releasing their hold on one another, they were independent yet bound together. We referred to it as the 'flower blossoming'. After hearing the song I was struck by the vision of the ensemble physically intertwined, and then a sudden burst of energy and a quick tempo tears them apart. This vision was the seed of an idea for a movement piece that ended up opening the show.

Throughout the process of *Time Tells* I referred to Bogart's writings to help ground myself in my responsibilities as a director. I also had the pleasure of hearing Bogart speak at the University of Richmond at the beginning of the creative process. It was inspirational to hear her talk about her career, her approach to collaboration, and the process of devising theatre with her SITI Company ensemble. She has a straight forward approach to describing what is necessary to lead an ensemble in the creation of new work, the exquisite pressure of time and a decisive leader.

Brainstorm Sessions

I prepared activities that would help the ensemble engage with the theme and work together to make discoveries. I was weary of spending too much time sitting and talking, therefore, I developed exercises that kept discussions active and the ensemble on their feet. Prior to the official start of phase one of the creative process; I met with the production designer to identify key words and phrases from the ensembles' homework responses. We then decorated poster boards in a bright and colorful fashion for an activity I called Brainstorm Boards. At the first meeting, the ensemble was given art supplies and instructed to build upon the prompts by adding their thoughts, questions, doodles, etc. to the posters. The activity was an interactive and

exhilarating way to think on our feet. It allowed the ensemble to make discoveries and creatively share ideas, which set the tone for future exercises.

The sub-themes that emerged from the Brainstorm Board activity were rich with possibility. We would spend the next several rehearsals discussing art, intention, process success, skill, knowledge and experience. When conversing as a group, it was clear who among the ensemble was eager to speak and share ideas. It troubled me that certain individuals dominated the discussion. I found it difficult to micromanage the flow of the conversation. In an effort to keep the conversation balanced, I would monitor the time given to each member to speak and ask the quieter members direct questions to involve them in the discussions.

In an effort to keep the creative momentum going during the off days, I requested that the ensemble use their journals to jot down ideas, draw, pose questions and take notes. I also requested that they post their thoughts and questions on the Facebook group page. I firmly believed that the immediate feedback they would receive from multiple members of the ensemble was a beneficial way to brainstorm and build off one another's ideas. Throughout the process, I found that an idea introduced in an online conversation would result in a game of "What if" and "Yes, and" that allowed the ensemble to thoroughly examine an idea before they implemented it in the next rehearsal.

A quarter of the way into the creative process, Lynn Thomson came to VCU as a guest artist to conduct a workshop on collaboration. This workshop was a turning point for me as the leader of the ensemble. After speaking with Lynn and participating in her workshop, I felt rejuvenated and prepared to lead the ensemble through the trials and tribulations of developing our play. The workshop provided specific exercises which I conducted in rehearsals with great success. One of the most rewarding brainstorming activities was the "What If: Divide and

Conquer” session inspired from the VCU Theatre Collaboration Workshop led by Lynn Thomson. I assigned four members of the *Time Tells* creative team to serve as witnesses to the ensembles “What If” exercise. I composed a prompt for each actor that was related to their character. The actors worked in pairs and the exercise was timed. The partners had to begin with a “What If” inspired by their prompt and then they would continually build on one another’s thoughts and ideas. The witnesses wrote down notes for the partners and identified the most relevant ideas. At the end of the timed exercise we shared our favorites with the whole group and opened it up to a group freestyle brainstorming session. The “What If: Divide and Conquer” session was a turning point for the ensemble, and it was particularly helpful in allowing the timid members to have a platform to speak out. From that point on the ensemble seemed more eager to contribute. Once we had clearly identified our commonalities as an ensemble, the struggle between desire and doubt, we began to focus our attention on building a story that would examine, explore and celebrate all of the unique elements that made us artists.

Composition Exercises

The early meetings in phase one were divided between brainstorm sessions and composition exercises that encouraged improvisational play. I was careful to not pre-plan too many exercises before we began phase one. I wanted to be open to receive ideas from the ensemble’s initial playful explorations and allow those ideas to shape the composition of the exercises. Preparation research revealed dozens upon dozens of methods and approaches to creating new work. I took the space and resources I had into consideration when I selected bits and pieces from different sources to create my own version of the composition exercises. Each exercise I introduced was accompanied with a set of clear and concise instructions. These

instructions were meant to guide the performers in finding a way to begin talking to one another about possibilities and ideas. These instructions were not meant to be strict rules the performers must adhere to, as I intended for the directions to be broad and open to interpretation. I also had expectations that the ensemble would produce material suited for the theme and deal with art in some capacity. I naively hoped the first few rounds of composition exercises would result in material that could be developed into a story. I found myself frustrated at times when the content of the improvisations did not appear to fit within the constraints of our theme. I later understood that this was the ensemble's way of exploring relationships. It was part of their process of learning how to effectively communicate when composing on their feet.

Later in phase one, after we had established structure and were working on developing character and story, I introduced several different types of composition exercises that allowed the ensemble to focus on character and relationships. Individual images/statues helped the actors identify personality traits. Task work was a key to understanding their role in the community. Group tableaus were a useful tool to manipulate spatial relationships and play with status within the group. Once the relationships were more clearly defined, I encouraged the ensemble to incorporate limited text into their composition scenes. This type of composition work organically evolved into improvisation, the ensemble was given parameters for each improvisation exercise and began to play within the established structure of our play. These scenes helped us better understand the world of the play.

Feedback

After each composition exercise or improvisation I would take time to discuss and debrief. I established from the onset that I preferred that all ensemble members approach giving

feedback to one another by naming one thing they liked, to ask for clarification if needed, and to offer a “What if” suggestion. By proposing an idea with the premise of “What if”, it encouraged the ensemble to use their imaginations and discuss a multitude of ideas without commitment. When a suggested “What if” resonated with the entire ensemble the actors would get on their feet and improvise the scenario. I video-recorded every improvisation and posted it to the Facebook group page for the ensemble to view and comment on. The videos were then later used as resource material for writing the script.

Throughout the process I was hyper-aware of my tone and energy when providing feedback and giving notes. I always strived to be positive and respectful but was aware that at times I responded to their composition work in a manner that I feared could be interpreted as negative or dismissive. I am aware that at times I can speak with a sharp tone. I often checked in with my assistant director to inquire if my feedback lacked a collaborative spirit. He was direct, fair and a very keen observer. He gave me honest answers and provided perspective when I needed it most. When communicating through email or Facebook message I was more successful in articulating my thoughts and concerns. When given time to view the videos I would identify the intention behind the movement and pose questions for the ensemble. I wrote detailed notes to the actors in the form of emails and many of my actors would respond, leading to an exchange of thoughts and ideas.

Writing Assignments

In an attempt break up the monotony of talking about themes and ideas, I would give the ensemble a writing assignment. One of the most successful assignments was to write a narrative from personal experience or from a character’s perspective with a specific point of view. The

narrative writing prompt was Doubt and Fear, which was inspired from questions the ensemble posed on the Brainstorm Board. Those strangle-hold questions from the first day of rehearsal needed to be addressed because they were still looming among us. All members of the ensemble and creative team emailed me personal narratives, from their own perspectives about their experiences with doubt and fear. I printed the narratives out and presented them anonymously to the group during rehearsal. We sat in a circle and they each read a narrative aloud while the others created soundscapes with their voices, bodies and musical instruments. The exercise was valuable in building a stronger rapport with the members of the ensemble. This was the first time they revealed something personal about themselves and it helped connect the group.

I gave an assignment to write a one sentence story. In rehearsal the ensemble used the text to develop movement pieces. I divided them into groups of three, and told them that each person would direct/shape their own story and perform in the other two group members' stories. The instructions were to make three to five tableaux; next they would work on creating fluid transitions from tableau to tableau, then they would add the text to the movement piece. The assignment and composition exercise was beneficial for the actors to have an opportunity to move together and create shapes. They appeared to be communicating effectively and enjoying the work. I had expectations that written assignments would contribute content to our working script; however, we did not use any of the ensemble's written material for *Time Tells*. Despite this fact, I felt that the assignments helped unite the ensemble on the mood and tone of the story we were developing and were lucrative.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING NEW CONDITIONS

Story Development

Inspired by the *Viewpoints* approach to composition, I focused my attention on establishing the anchor, question and structure of our story. These components are the foundation to constructing a new play. Bogart and Landau state that “a question motivates the entire process. This central driving force should be big enough, interesting enough and relevant enough to be attractive and contagious to many people. The anchor is a person (or event) that can serve as the vehicle to get to the question. The structure is the skeleton upon which the event hangs. It is a way to organize time, information, text and imagery” (Bogart, Landau 154).

“Form is a central preoccupation for any company devising a site specific piece of theatre” (Oddey 38). Resources that were to be utilized in the *Time Tells* production included video projections, live music, live painting, live sculpting. The graphic designers, Bryan Unger and Todd Raviota from the design team, The Awesome View, created colorful graphics for the ‘third eye’ projection screen. Annie Colpitts, TheatreLAB’s Managing Director, was responsible for filming from the artist’s point of view for the two ‘seeing eyes’ projection screens. Matt Treacy composed and performed all the music for the play. Initially I planned to have ensemble members paint and sculpt live in front of the audience but this idea evolved over time.

It was essential that the ensemble take ample time to build a strong rapport and explore themes through play and improvisation. The first six rehearsals were productive in

accomplishing those goals. During that time, the ensemble created many individual scenes prompted from composition exercises that were rich with possibility. Many touchstones of the theme, such as intent, impact, process, fear and addiction were incorporated into the composition work. They spent several weeks creating scenes and each one was different, they were like glimpses of different stories. It was my job was to find the correlation among the material the ensemble was producing. I watched the ensemble work and responded with notes, questions, prompts and homework assignments. I put pressure on the group to determine the direction of the story.

Question

When exploring a theme it is helpful for the ensemble to compose a question that they are interested in investigating. This allows them to focus their attention and efforts. I asked each of the members to consider the theme and the touchstones they had developed, and to express their main interest in the form of a question. This homework assignment proved to be a difficult task for the group, and some of the members refrained from participating in the exercise, leaving only a few questions to sort through as a potential lead question for the piece. The following are the most thought provoking submissions “What happens to a pair of artists vying for the same recognition?” “What happens to an artist’s inspiration, can you return to it, is there a second chance to thrive?” “What happens when someone gives up a dream to pursue a life more secure?” “What allows the dark side of a person to take over? What happens to the light within?” “...the dynamic between the hero and the coward, instead of hero vs. villain.” “How are aspects of ourselves influenced by certain events?”. I was intrigued by these questions and wanted to incorporate elements of all of them into the story development. I made an effort to

connect the questions to the work the ensemble was creating. In retrospect my lack of follow-up on the “Lead Question” homework assignment was detrimental to the ensemble’s understanding of our story. As the leader I should have spent more time pressing the ensemble to collectively decide upon one question, to help unify and give direction to the play.

Structure

Structure provides the ensemble a format to the story, a framework to work within. Early in the process we determined that we wanted the story to explore multiple perspectives. With this in mind, we brainstormed different scenarios for the story. The most reoccurring idea involved a community of artists and their perspectives about a single artist, who may or may not be physically present in the play. There was a list of touchstones from our Brainstorm Boards that were used in development of the story: intention, impact identity, connection, the light/dark that lives within, the great compromise, success, doubt, fear, perfection, passion, competition, missing a part of one’s self. It was through the lens of these touchstones that we begin to develop the inciting incident of the story. To help explain to the ensemble how our inciting incident would launch us into the story I referenced James R. Hull’s publication *Narrative First: where story is always king*. Hull says the inciting incident is the “event or decision that begins a story’s problem. Everything up and until that moment is backstory; everything after is “the story.” Before this moment there is an equilibrium, a relative peace that the characters in a story have grown accustomed to. This incisive moment, or *plot point* occurs and upsets the balance of things. Suddenly there is a problem to be solved” (narrativefirst.com).

We conducted brainstorming sessions dedicated to developing the inciting incident. To facilitate conversation among the group members my assistant director proposed an event for the

characters that we collaborated on outside of rehearsal. We suggested that the inciting incident be the suicide of an artist in a tight knit artist community. The focus of the story was on the community and their individual responses to the suicide. The tragic loss of their friend would leave the characters to question their own balance of light and dark within and their own intentions. It was suggested that the deceased artist could be played by the ensemble members who were crafting visual art live in performance. Their presence was to be a metaphor; the deceased artist would always live in the memory of the individual community members. During the performance they would be isolated while they worked on creating a piece of art during the performance. This idea was later discarded and replaced with a preshow activity that involved the audience participating in arts and crafts.

The general response to suicide as the event and inciting incident was lackluster. However, it led to further conversation and the ensemble agreed that they liked the idea of examining death, but they wanted to look at parts of the artist that die, not a literal, but a figurative death. They connected this idea to the touchstone “missing a part of one’s self”; which involved the loss of dreams, aspirations, ideas and memories. The construct of telling the story from multiple perspectives was also appealing to the ensemble. We worked on plotting an event that would allow the characters spotlighted moments of response to the event. I believed that this had the potential to be impactful and relevant to the audience at large, offering them many stories within one larger story.

Fresh from the event brainstorming session, two of the ensemble members took the initiative to meet outside of rehearsals and composed an idea for the structure of the play. Their story was about the abandoned muses of artists, who were discarded in pursuit of money, comfort and stability. The proposed setting was a heaven-like environment for the muses. The

proposed event was the welcoming of a newly abandoned muse. The suggested types of muses included: the newly abandoned muse still dealing with the loss, the muse that ruined the artist's career, the muse that was cast off for popularity; other muses only communicated through dance or music. The muse heaven idea was the first fully developed suggestion for structuring the play, and the proposed characters were rich with possibility. I was pleased with their commitment and creativity. I liked the idea but I was uncomfortable with the fact that it was not collectively created. I really wanted the ensemble to find the story through their work rather than have a story and character outline submitted to the ensemble for approval. In an effort to include all, I asked that they share their idea on the Facebook group page for feedback. The ensemble's response was positive but not overwhelmingly excited. They seemed to like the idea but offered no way to build and develop the structure. I pressed the ensemble to continue to discuss the muse heaven setting online, and offer "Yes, and..." and "What if..." for the scenario. Through this course of action the idea evolved. Prompted by someone's "What if", the emerging leader of the performers proposed that the setting take place inside an artist's brain. This idea quickly gained momentum and the ensemble was excited to develop this structure. At the next rehearsal we reviewed the results of the online brainstorming for those actors who refused to participate in online discussions. Then we determined that the characters of the story would be different components of one artist's brain: reasoning, emotions, memories, ideas (muses). They would be a community that lived and worked inside the artist's brain, each one would contribute to the well being of the artist.

Anchor

Once the setting was established, we were prepared to return to the task of creating an inciting incident to the story. There was much discussion about one of our touchstones: fear. We felt that the battle to overcome fear was a universal issue, one not specific to an artist. It was during this exploration that we discovered fear was at the center of our story, it was the anchor. Keen to establish high stakes for the characters, we developed the idea that the artist experienced an influx of fear which caused a nervous breakdown; this would serve as the event, the inciting incident of the story. Fear generates in the part of the brain called an Amygdala, in *Time Tells* this was represented in the form of a character named Amy. Fear, or rather Amy, had a profound effect on the other characters and was often the driving force of conflict among them. Throughout the play there were warning codes of the Artist's distress; during these moments Amy overwhelmed and crippled the other characters physically and emotionally. In these moments, focus centered on the fear that gripped the entire community and halted the Artist's creative productivity.

Research

A fundamental component of the creation process was our research on the makeup of the brain, and the effects of creativity, inspiration, fear and stress have on the brain. The vast amount of information available overwhelmed us at times. It was important for us to learn as much as we could about the brain but be selective in what we incorporated into the world of our play. We did not want the play to be too cerebral; we were attentive to the magical and mystical elements of our story. I took the lead in researching information and sharing it with the ensemble on our Facebook group page. Other members of the ensemble were inspired to investigate how their

character might function in the brain and they often contributed data that aided the development of the play.

Our research confirmed that the brain doesn't operate strictly as 'left brain is logical and right brain is creative'. The brain is made up of many parts on both sides that work together to form decisions, to execute an idea and to create something. We were specifically interested in exploring how these different sections of the brain communicate in order to fully realize a creative idea, or in to put it in the world of our play: the journey a muse must take to meet its Artist. Careful not to directly indicate that the characters were inside a brain, we called the setting a Vessel and the Artist the Operator. We made discreet references to brain function throughout the play but used our developed *Time Tells* vocabulary (see Appendix E for Glossary). Inspired by the set and prop design we linked the fantastical world of the play to our everyday life, making the figurative literal: hormones were compounds such as minerals, liquids, stones, shells, fabric, etc.; memories were tangible items such as a perfume vile, a lunch box, record albums; knowledge was books, files of paperwork, piles of newspapers and photographs.

Character Development Exercises

With the essential circumstances of 'where' and 'why' in place, the actors began to develop the 'who' of the story. To help facilitate this task, I introduced the ensemble to the twelve most common archetypes and required each actor to select one for an improvisational play exercise using shape and gesture. The physicalization of these archetypes was meant to be a launching point, a way to identify the type of character they were most interested in exploring. I used this exercise as a way to get the actors out of their heads and into their bodies. Following the archetype improvisation I assigned the ensemble composition homework called Character

Poses. For this exercise the actors were required to create five character poses that addressed their characters' fear, love, desire, and memory. The actors were free to incorporate objects and costume pieces into the poses. When they presented the poses the actors prefaced each one with a brief description, I recorded it for future use as source material. After they had completed the exercise I assigned small groups and prompted them to combine selected poses into group portraits. Once they had established portraits I asked them to incorporate movement and develop a silent scene. In the postmortem when asked to recall their favorite composition exercise, several of the ensemble members referred to the poses, citing that the activity forced them to find the character through physical expression.

In the class Mask Performance, I learned that shape influences outlook, outlook influences shape, and outlook shapes impulse. The poses and portraits exercises aided the actors in their initial development of the physical shape of their characters. They started by identifying the essence of their impulse, next they found the rhythm, and then they physically manifested it. The exercises also revealed an opportunity for the actors to find the dual side of their character. In Mask Performance, Dr. Anderson taught me that this is referred to as counter mask, a stereo state in which an actor is simultaneously playing two sides of their character. The bolder the physical character choices for each side of the character, the easier it is to find the play between them. Counter mask is a valuable acting tool that is not exclusive to mask performance. I encouraged each actor to identify what their character's counter Mask was and start playing with the dual sides.

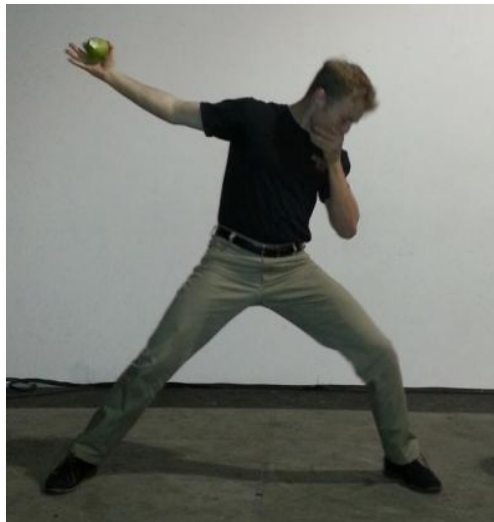
Amy

Personification of fear/ love
Fear of apathy and being conquered
Love of being consumed by fear
Memory of the discovery of fear
Desire for total domination



Gregory

Personification of envy/ ambition
Fear of being consumed
Love of attaining that which you desire
Hatred of insatiable desire
Desire for progress



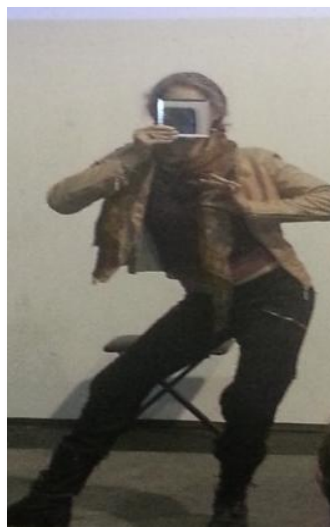
Irene

Personification of knowledge/ naiveté
Fear of being trapped
Love of gaining knowledge
Hatred of confusion
Desire to move forward



Ms.Tic

Personification of intuition
Fear of ego, hate and fear itself
Love of empathy, questioning and examining
Memory of ancestry, wisdom, instinct
Desire for unity, balance, the experience of understanding



Devin

Personification of an idea that is not of this world

Fear of being alone

Love of creation

Hatred of emptiness

Memory of color

Desire for more



Cornell

Personification of a new youthful idea

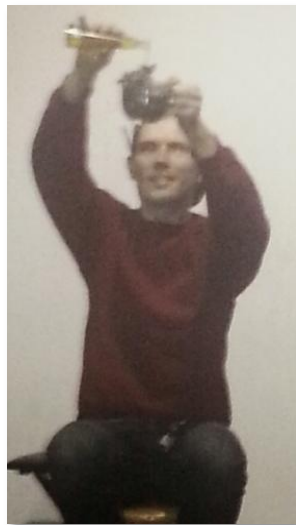
Fear of failure

Love of the creation process

Hatred of the process when it's not working

Memory of the first spark of inspiration

Desire for success, power and fulfillment



Rose

Personification of pain/pleasure
Fear of nothingness
Love of angst and self aggression
Hate of people fixing things in a half-assed manner
Memory of wallowing in pain
Desire to bring everyone pain



Ego

Personification of ego
Fear of getting old and the aging process
Love of self
Hatred of self
Memories of a youthful past
Desire for beauty and the ideal



Personification of memory

(Elements not provided by actor)



Character Interviews

At this point in the creative process, the story was in an outline form and the characters were raw figures. To challenge the actors to make choices about their character, I dedicated a rehearsal to character introductions and interviews. To prepare, the actors selected where their characters operated in the brain and decided what their function was in that part of the brain. They were instructed to present the information and answer all questions in character. Through this improvisational interview the actors intuitively responded to questions that led to discoveries about their specific roles in the community and their relationships with the other brain community members.

Who is the Artist?

After weeks of extensive character development, I led the actors in an exercise that helped the ensemble create the background information of the Artist. The Artist served as the vessel in which the characters lived, the Artist was their environment, and also their reason for existence. We intentionally did not want to be specific about the identity of the Artist in the content of the play. We hoped that audience members would put themselves in the place of the Artist and relate to the situation of experiencing debilitating doubt and fear when in the genesis of creation. However, we understood that it was important for the actors to know who their characters were serving and the reasons behind their actions. Through an exercise I learned in Lynn Thomson's Collaboration Workshop, we created background information on the artist. The exercise required that two actors stand side-by-side with arms wrapped around one another's shoulders. I would ask the actors a question about the Artist in our story and they would have to answer the question simultaneously. For each set of actors, it was difficult to begin speaking in unison, but once they slowed down and listened to one another, they began to gain confidence in their delivery and have fun with the activity. This exercise yielded information about the Artist that resonated with the group (see Appendix D). It was satisfying to create a history for the Artist and determine the many reasons behind the nervous breakdown.

The Artist's Work

This information about the artist was valuable to Michael Todd, who was tasked with the creation of all of the visual art pieces by the artist. Michael was a good collaborator and enjoyed helping execute an idea visually and tangibly. In true collaborative fashion he reached out to the ensemble for their assistance in crafting the look of the art piece he was to make during the

preshow. He posted on the Facebook group page that he envisioned the piece to be a composite, which incorporated paper collage, paint, graphic images, and text. He said that in his mind's eye the Artist was: "Constructing something from multiple parts - it felt weirdly appropriate to me, especially as a sort of echo of how this entire process is happening. Another aspect of this is that this is something audiences could easily participate in, creating collaged images or altered books during the preshow." He went on to say that the books "could be of their own devising, or they could also help fill out and create templates that end up being our artists work. Maybe we have some of his past works around the space as examples. I would love if everyone could contribute even a little something!" The ensemble discussed Michael's ideas of audience participation, we all anticipated that the audience would enjoy collaborating on a piece of artwork and being apart of the show. We helped him decide how to approach creating a piece of art during performance. In character as Cornell, at the Creation Station, Michael led the audience in an altered book tutorial. The audience crafted collages that were glued to the pages of a well worn but sturdy book that served as a canvas. The concept was that the audience was able to interact with the tools the Artist used to create and contribute to the Artist's creative process.



Pages from the altered book made in the preshow.

Michael turned to the ensemble again to collaborate on the final image that the Artist works on at the end of the show, when the third eye projection screen is back online. He posted on the Facebook group page “What would OUR Artist make? What image(s)? What words would the Artist use? Is it Escape The Mainframe, or something else?” We brainstormed about the Artist’s body of work and discovered that the Artist’s commercial artwork was the primary type of art produced and that it was affecting the mental health of the Artist. It was determined that there had to be several examples of the Artist’s commercial work as well as examples of what the muse, (new idea) Cornell was capable of achieving. These images were used for the video projections.

Audience Centered

“A director has two ensembles: the actors and the audience. Composition work is a chance to practice this dual responsibility. Take care of the audience. Do not assume that they know what to do, when to close their eyes, or what will happen next.” (Bogart 145) The *Time Tells* audience was central to the ensemble’s creative process. It was my responsibility throughout the development of the story, to consider how they could be involved. I desired to have an interactive experience for the audience, one in which they could play along with the performers. I challenged the ensemble to find ways in which they could guide the audience to actively participate in the story. As the script was pieced together we combed through and identified moments in which the cast could actively engage the audience. We found moments that the actors could speak directly to individual audience members, elicit their help sorting through the files, seek their opinion on the potency of memory and other small moments that ensured the audience would be engrossed in the world of the play.

“The devising process is able to define a relationship with an intended audience or community from the start, providing an opportunity for audience contribution or participation in the work.” (Oddey 20). At that time TheatreLAB’s predominate audience was made up of artists-our story was their story. I was confident that they would engage in the world of the play, and I was eager to watch them play with the actors. The most interactive section of the show was the preshow. The concept was to give the audience an opportunity to move around the set and participate in activities with the actors. We encouraged them to explore the world of *Time Tells*, otherwise known as the Vessel; the characters never referred to the artist directly. We wanted the audience to feel at home in the Vessel and become part of the brain community. During the preshow there were a series of color code alerts that warned the brain community of the impending mental break. The music followed the code alerts, escalating from light and whimsical, to dark and maniacal. The Artist’s self destructive behavior leading up to the breakdown was documented through the visual images on the projection screens. The characters demonstrated their gradual decline through physical manipulation of shape and shifts in their behavior.

Creating the Music

Music was the heartbeat of the *Time Tells* project; it was at the center of all of the work we created as an ensemble. From the onset Matt sat in on rehearsals and improvised on instruments while the actors talked, played games, composed movement and improvised scenes. Matt was attentive and responded to what the actors were doing, he heightened the mood of the work. Because he was with them all of the time, contributing ideas in discussions and providing music for their work, Matt and the music became essential to the project. He consistently brought

in material for the ensemble to play with; he created a dozen different songs that each had a distinct sound. We cataloged the songs and experimented with the placement of each song in the plot of the story. His music served as a transition between scenes as well as a way to highlight major plot points.

Shortly after the ensemble established that the play's setting was inside the brain of an artist, Matt wrote his first piece for the project called *Escape the Mainframe*. It wasn't so much a song as it was poetry set to a quick tempo. It was brilliant and fun. The ensemble loved it immediately and agreed that it had to be in the play. We knew that the poem was a great opportunity for a movement piece based on the rhythm and energy behind it. Early in the story development process we were not sure where *Escape the Mainframe* would be featured but instead of forcing it into the structure we let it be, knowing that we wanted to incorporate the song and that we would find a way eventually. During a brainstorming session about the conflict between the Muses; it occurred to us that *Escape the Mainframe* could serve as an example of what the (old idea) Muse Devin was capable of producing, it would be a counter to the visual presentation from the (new idea) Muse Cornell. Designating *Escape the Mainframe* to Muse Devin's entrance gave that moment a lot of power. *Escape the Mainframe* was a highlight of the play, the creative team enjoyed hearing it and the actors loved performing it. Before rehearsals began I made the actors huddle up and review the poem and they never once complained; it focused them and brought them closer. In performance they huddled, on their own, because it had become ritual.

After the script was introduced, Matt wrote a song called *Time Tells* that he thought would help make the trial more active and keep the momentum going. He had even incorporated stage directions with specific actions for each of the characters in the song. I had the actors

improvise through the trial as Matt inserted lyrics between their dialogue; but this did not achieve the desired effect. We discussed replacing some of the dialogue with lyrics and having the ensemble sing but there was reluctance among the ensemble to make that change. Finally Matt proposed that *Time Tells* be broken into sections and dispersed throughout the entire play. This solution allowed the council meeting scene to be fluid. The song was also helpful with transitions in other scenes of the play.

The variety and complexity of Matt's music and sound design was impressive. He considered the exposure and musical influences of the "Artist" and created a versatile sound for the production. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Matt; he was a trusted partner in the creative process. He had an incredible confidence in the project; his positivity and trust encouraged and inspired me during times of frustration and distress. Matt's presence and contributions enhanced the devising experience.

CHAPTER 6

TREACHEROUS ROADS

Communication and Commitment

A majority of the actors were active participants on the Facebook group page, we had the ability to share and discuss a multitude of ideas and brainstorm together with immediate access to images, music and video. The active users of the page would share ideas for character development, ask questions about the story and engage in “Yes, and” and “What if” conversations. There were a couple of actors who were more comfortable approaching me through private message to address any sort of questions or propose ideas for their character development. They were not confident in sharing ideas in an open forum before they had discussed it with me; they seemed to need validation from me that their idea was worth exploring. I consistently encouraged all of the actors to use the online page to help each other sort out issues, to lean on one another for support and encouragement. The ensemble members that were very vocal online were also very vocal in the face-to-face discussions. The individuals who were not as engaged with the online discussions also appeared more reserved in person; they would often wait until rehearsal was over to contact me by private message. No matter how the ideas were presented to me, I remained receptive and found a way to navigate through them. However, the amount of private versus group conversations bordered on burdensome, and required me to find ways to introduce other people’s ideas along with my own at every rehearsal.

I prefer working in an environment where people are comfortable sharing ideas in an open forum to allow for group discussion.

Midway through the process, the actor who established his character as Ego, informed me that he was moving from Richmond. He expressed a desire to continue working on the project remotely, and suggested the role of Ego be utilized as voice over segments that could accompany live scenes. I proposed the idea to the ensemble and they were receptive, for several weeks we attempted to incorporate him into the show. We had minimal success because the actor did not attend rehearsals often enough due to personal affairs. He ultimately decided that it was best to step away from the project. I held a meeting to discuss the actor's departure, and the cast was sad to see him go. The ensemble agreed to absorb the character of Ego into the other roles, several members selected specific elements of the Ego character to incorporate into their character. The graphic art on the third eye projection screen also had elements of Ego.

I worked hard to communicate effectively with my ensemble members. I was clear with my expectations for collaboration and cooperation. I asked that they respond in a timely manner when I contacted them. The majority of my ensemble was very communicative and enjoyed talking with me about the project. However, there were actors who were disengaged and put out little effort to communicate with me. Their contributions to our Facebook group page were non-existent; they rarely asked questions in brainstorm sessions, and they did not consistently complete the homework assignments. I sought ways to inspire these actors and increase their involvement. I told them that it was crucial that all members of the ensemble contribute to the online conversations. Because we met once a week, sharing thoughts and inspirations online was crucial to the success of the process. Their minimal effort made more work for me; each week I gathered the most prevalent online material and discussed it with the group during rehearsals.

Valuable rehearsal time was wasted in an attempt to catch everyone up to speed with the development of the plot. Those who were actively engaged in the Facebook group page were more invested in the world of the play.

My assistant director and I directly addressed their lack of commitment on many occasions with no results. We sought out guidance and support from TheatreLAB's Artistic Director. I felt that his involvement would add weight to the serious nature of the issue. It was agreed that we needed to set meetings with these problem actors to discuss their lack of effort toward the creation of the piece. It was important to meet with them in a private setting, as I did not want to spend valuable rehearsal time dealing with these issues. I also firmly believed that the rehearsal room needed to be a positive work environment. I made several attempts to meet in person but the actors evaded my request for a meeting for months on end. My assistant director respectfully lobbied to give the actors time to step up and commit to the project. I was receptive to the idea, but I did not have high expectations. Because both actors called out of rehearsal frequently and did not follow up on homework assignments, I made the decision to dismiss them from their responsibilities to the group. It was a very difficult decision to make but I felt that it was best for the ensemble and the production. I was honest with the ensemble about why I had to let the actors go and they supported my decision.

After their departure the ensemble became stronger, they appeared united in their goals and focused in their efforts. As an ensemble, we discussed the possibility of recasting the roles of the characters that represented memory and pain/pleasure. It was determined that the role of pain/pleasure had become an essential character in the plot and needed to be recast. I brought in an actor by the name of Chandler Hubbard to step into the role of pain/pleasure. Chandler joined the ensemble three weeks before we entered the second phase of the process, in which we would

be meeting nightly rather than once a week. During the last few weeks of phase one he was given opportunities to work with the cast on fleshing out the story and participate in improvisations. Chandler was receptive to the work that was already established and fully contributed to the process of finalizing the story.

Fleshing out the Story

To contribute content to the play, we spent rehearsal time with the actors on their feet composing the story through improvisations. Outside of rehearsal I worked on the format of the story. The inciting incident of the Artist's nervous breakdown naturally led to an outline for the plot. The story was about recovery after the breakdown, and the journey to transformation. When improvising we focused our attention on the creation of the rising action, climax and resolution. I felt that it would be another anchor for the ensemble and help move the story forward. For weeks the actors played with possibilities. The ensemble would establish the circumstances of the scene before the actors got on their feet to play. We spent hours on specific sections of the plot, playing with different outcomes. I recorded the actors, and outside of rehearsals I would mine through the videos to identify the material that enhanced the scenes. I would give a title to each improvisation scene and file it under the appropriate chapter of the story. I made note of what I wanted to add to the play and shared it with the two designated script writers. They would use my notes and the videos for source material when writing the script.

At times there was a lack of specificity in their improvisational work, and this prompted me to assign a homework assignment in which the actors had to compose a character outline detailing what their character was doing during every chapter of the story. They were instructed

to give a brief description of where they were in the vessel during each chapter of the story, the action they were engaged in, and with whom they were involved during that time. This assignment proved to be useful for me as the shaper of the story; I was able to identify any discrepancies in the plot and address this with the ensemble.

Script Development

It was my goal to have the script written before we moved into phase two of the creative process. In order to accomplish this, I had to make sure that the actors had an opportunity to play on their feet with all of the proposed plot points. That way they could sort through what was essential to include in the story, and what was unnecessary. They would improvise through each plot point in the story while I filmed them. I cast a writer to be in the show to perform and to be the main writer on the script. It was their job to mine through the videos of the ensemble's improvisations and write scripted scenes. I urged the main writer to keep the writing clear and concise, and to use the improvisations as a writer's guide. The work the ensemble created, their characters and relationships, was precious to them, and I wanted to make sure that the scripted scenes reflected that work. I felt that the story was coming together collaboratively and I wanted to honor that in the writing.

Throughout the scripting process the main writer was adamant about giving each character a distinctive voice; to avoid pedestrian dialogue. Some of the final script is transcribed as exactly what the actors said in rehearsals, the majority of the dialogue is more akin to interpretation of the ensemble's improvisations by the main writer. There are additional scenes outside of the *Time Tells* outline that were submitted to me, each one funny, philosophical and

poetic. However, these scenes were often lengthy, which was the not how I was shaping the piece. I chose not to include these scenes in the final script. These scenes were not based on the rehearsal video footage; they were focused on back story and relationships. I wanted to incorporate the ideas that the main writer had developed but did not include the scene that was written. In rehearsal I directed the ensemble toward minimal dialogue in their improvisations. I wanted the majority of the play to focus on music and movement because all of the improvisations for the council meeting involved in depth exposition and dialogue and the main writer had submitted a lengthy scene.

The main writer and I saw the shape of the piece differently from the very beginning, which made it difficult to understand one another at times. At different points during the scripting process, I was worried that the main writer was disconnected from the material. I reached out and made myself available, at all times, to answer questions and address concerns. I did my best to bring together the information to make the story clear, and help construct the script. Oddey says “devising with people who think differently than one’s self changes the process of working together” (Oddey 34). I respected this person and I wanted to work well together and to communicate effectively. At times we were frustrated and my assistant director would always be there to listen, council, and fix the situation if he had the power to do so. He had a way with people and together we sorted out all of the details and came to a new understanding of how to write the text. We left room for improvisation and non verbal communication in our final drafts of the script.

Early in the writing process, the Musical Director expressed an interest in writing scenes for the script. The music had a strong presence in the play and with Matt’s help we shaped where each song belonged in the script. When he joined us I assigned him specific sections of the story

that had not been written. Once they both had enough material to submit, I created a shared Google document where we all had the ability to edit the script. I worked closely on piecing the scenes together, and made it my job to ensure their scenes flowed well and that the transitions were clear and concise.

Trials of Writing the Trial

Early in the process a more reserved member of the ensemble proposed that the rising action of the story involve the characters aiding the Artist to make a choice. When he introduced the idea to the ensemble, I immediately recognized that it was an opportunity for the audience to be involved and shape the direction of the story. Through a series of “What if?” exercises the idea of a ‘choice’ developed into a trial where the audience served as jury, then it evolved into a council meeting where the audience served as council members who voted. This idea of the Artist making a choice was the only significant contribution toward the development of the story made by that particular ensemble member. At the time, it seemed very important that I include this idea into the play; thus the trial became a pivotal plot point before the story had been fleshed out. This meant that we had to work around the trial and manipulate other plot points of the story to make the trial work, which proved to be difficult. Throughout the development of the story we struggled to solidify how the council meeting would be constructed because it was so vastly different from the rest of the material the ensemble created. Each time the actors improvised the council meeting it mimicked action that one would see and hear in a courtroom, but it seemed too grounded in reality and felt inappropriate for the world of our play. In an effort to break free from that constraint, I asked the actors who played the Muses and their designated defenders to

write their own council meeting scene. These actors met outside of rehearsals multiple times to collaborate on the structure of the scene. They wrote it, handed it into me, and I gave it to the main writer; who incorporated the majority of the dialogue into the script. The main writer was adamant that each character have a distinct voice; and had to rephrase some of the actor's lines and in addition new lines to help the flow of the scene. There was a slight pushback from the actors in regard to these revisions. It appears that they interpreted the assignment differently than I intended. I blame myself for not clearly stating from the beginning that the scene was simply a writing assignment, and that the main writer was ultimately responsible for the text that was used in the script. The assignment was meant to give the actors structure to the scene, and to help them better understand the purpose for the council meeting.

First Read Through

On the first day of phase two, the ensemble sat down to read a rough draft of the script. I made it clear to the ensemble that it was a working copy of the script and to prepare to make changes. Hearing it read aloud for the first time was a revelation to me. I better understood where the problems in the story were and quickly met with my assistant director to identify the ones we had time to fix in rehearsal. My main issue with the script was that there were many scenes which would be better communicated through movement, using little to no dialogue. I made several edits to the dialogue and directed the actors to use their bodies to tell the story. In subsequent rehearsals I used *Viewpoints* exercises to help the ensemble find other ways of expressing their message.

After the read-through, several of the actors expressed concern about their character's dialogue and many of them sent me emails with detailed notes of suggested revisions. One

member even submitted a new version of the trial scene. I acknowledged their concerns and thanked them for their suggestions. I reminded them that I was shaping the piece, and that I would make the appropriate changes to the script, but that I would not be able to incorporate everything. At that time I felt that I could not replace the entire council meeting with a new scene, many people worked very hard on creating the scene and it could not be discarded. I did, however, incorporate some suggestions into the scene; it was requested that a mystical moment between the Muses and the other members of the brain community be inserted to help the council members make their decision on which Muse (idea) should be implemented by the Artist. The insertion of expressive movement and music helped flesh out the scene.

CHAPTER 7

THE ORDEAL AND ULTIMATE REWARD

Transitioning into Phase Two

I scheduled four weeks for phase two of our creative process. Stage Manager, Melissa Rayford, joined us a week early to help us transition into phase two and kick us into preproduction mode. At this time, I attempted to step back from my organizational duties. In an effort to unload some responsibility, I requested that the actors contact Melissa for all production related issues; scheduling, costumes, props, etc. My request mostly fell on deaf ears; it appeared difficult for some of the actors to adjust to phase two and they were more apt to come to me with questions, ideas and requests, I think mainly out of habit. In turn, I relied heavily on the support of Melissa and Joe; both individuals have calm demeanor and helped keep me centered during the hectic weeks before we opened the show.

Staging

We developed a preshow for the play that allowed the audience freedom to move about the space and interact with the characters. We designed the play to start when the Artist began the descent into a nervous breakdown. This caused the Vessel to be in Code Red, which meant audience members had to sit down to brace for trauma to the Vessel. Each audience member was assigned a seat and told where to sit on platforms located stage right and stage left. The seating configuration was similar to ‘in the round’ seating. In rehearsals we worked through the

movement of each moment and figured out how best to use the space and make sure the audience could see the action. The majority of the blocking happened organically with consideration of spatial relationship and how it informs the audience. There were a few exceptions to this organic staging approach; I had to block moments where the actors were roaming aimlessly and without purpose.

During rehearsals, it proved difficult to run the first half of the show, which was designed for improvisation, without a live audience for the actors to interact with. The most the actors could do was use the script as a guide to keep the shape of the piece, while they improvised moments that shed light on their relationships. My assistant director and I observed that some of the actors were hesitant when improvising; they used repetitive gestures and language to express themselves and frequently initiated conflicts with other characters. We worked with them on being clear about what they wanted and finding multiple tactics to achieve their objectives. In order to keep each moment fresh and the interactions between characters authentic, they had to make an effort toward “constant clarification of original aims and objectives” (Oddey 45).

Choreography

An actor with strong dance experience was selected for the ensemble. I was upfront with the actor that choreography was part of the position. The actor was eager to choreograph a solo belly dance, and a group dance that signified the transformation of the Artist. Throughout the process the actor worked on the solo piece alone at home, meeting with Musical Director on a few occasions to finalize the rhythm of the music and then it recorded on an mp3. The solo piece was the beginning of the final song and ensemble dance. The actor seemed reluctant to use rehearsal time to choreograph the final ensemble dance; I felt that the actor appeared to be unsure

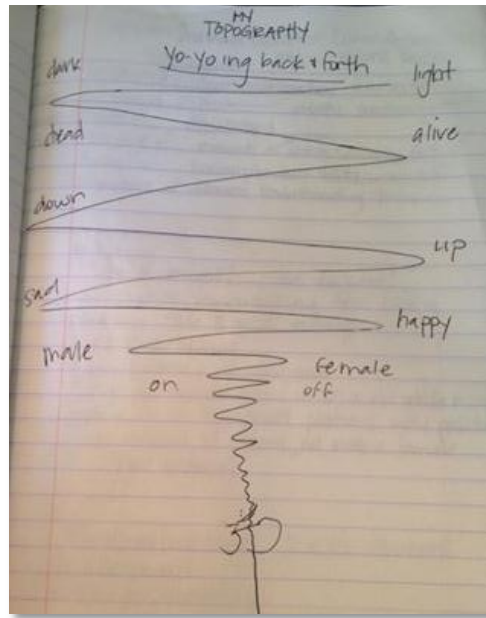
what the movement should be and indicated that more time was needed. I sensed that the issue was that the actor did not want to dictate choreography to the others. As an alternative I asked that the actor guide the ensemble through the song, because they moved well together but needed someone to initiate. The actor led the ensemble through play and exploration with the music, and together they choreographed the final scene of the show.

When Matt first introduced his sexy blues song *Dead of Night*, I knew that I needed to bring in an experienced choreographer to help stage the song. *Dead of Night* was not merely a dance break in the play, it was designed to reveal the (new idea) Muse Cornell. The construct of the play is that each audience member is an idea that enters the brain of the Artist, these ideas are called Sparks, out of these Sparks come the Muses that are selected by the community to be implemented. Cornell is ready to fulfill his desire to work and doesn't want to wait to be chosen. During a climactic moment in the song he bursts onto stage from the audience and joins the dance. For a dance scene this intricate, I needed someone whose style of movement would complement the play. I asked my friend and VCU alum, Marisa Guida, to choreograph the dance number and she graciously agreed. The ensemble loved working with Marisa; she has a fun style of working, she's energetic and focused, and holds high expectations of her actors. It was good for them to experience direction from outside of the ensemble; it challenged them in a productive way. Marissa had them seductively moving through the space to the sexy blues song. She incorporated a moment for each character to physically express his or her personal response to (new idea) Muse Cornell's arrival in the community. The song and dance was a highlight for the ensemble. The actors loved to rehearse it and were dedicated to delivering a polished performance, and at the beginning of every rehearsal they would conduct a dance call.

Viewpoints in Rehearsal

The world of *Time Tells* is best described as otherworldly, abstract and disjointed. The inhabitants of this world behaved in a manner that reflected the environment. Tempo, Duration, and Repetition were all invaluable tools for the actors when honing their characters body and voice. *Viewpoints* work with Shape was also useful for the actors to physically transform when damage took place in the brain and for their transformation back to health. Bogart distinguishes between gesture as Behavioral Gesture and Expressive Gesture as, “Behavioral Gestures are prosaic and Expressive Gestures are poetic” (Bogart/Landau 49). The world of *Time Tells* was better suited for Expressive Gesture, and it was my mission to push the actors toward poetic movement. In rehearsals I urged them to be more expansive with their gestures, less descriptive with their movement and behavioral with gestures. *Viewpoints* vocabulary was efficient when communicating in the rehearsal room and allowed me to be specific with direction. The preshow was an opportunity for the actors to establish the concept of Expressive Gesture with the audience. When the Artist began the descent into a nervous breakdown, Code Orange sounded and the characters responded physically and vocally in a heightened style. This continued throughout the play at various levels of intensity when Codes were announced (Appendix J)

When it came to topography of the world, the Vessel, we started by dividing the space into different areas of the brain, the action that took place there was meant to match the function of the brain. We researched which parts of the brain were most susceptible to damage during distress, this informed our *Viewpoints* work and led us to discover that the part of the brain that was damaged was dense, while the fully functional parts of the brain had light topography. The actors moved through the space with awareness of the topography.



Character Homework: Ms. Tic's Topography

The Architecture of the space included RVA Event Space's built in features as well as the set and prop pieces we brought in to fill the space. Bogart and Landau explain that working on Architecture as a *Viewpoint* permits the actors to "learn to dance with the space, to be in dialogue with a room, to let movement evolve out of surroundings" (Bogart/ Landau 10). It was important for the actors to build intimate relationships with the architecture that symbolically represented components that exist inside the brain.



Ms.Tic's Apothecary

Attending to Details

Anne Bogart's book *A Director Prepares*, served as a refuge for me during the late hours after rehearsals in the final weeks before opening night. I reviewed the highlighted passages over and over, looking for guidance and mustering up courage. Bogart's seven essays addressed many of the issues I was experiencing; her emphasis on risk, articulation and concentration resonated with me and I took her advice to directors to heart. Bogart advocates for directors to "act in the moment" (52). I attempted to attend to every element of the play but there was not enough time to do so properly. The structure of the creative process was disproportionate and I should have spent more concentrated time refining specific moments in the play. We were nearing production time and there was focus on getting the play 'show ready'. Many issues in the script went unresolved. When I did set time aside to refine moments, the majority of that time was spent on polishing the council meeting scene. My goal for the scene was to ensure that the actors played

the scene with high stakes and had a sense of urgency in their actions. There was a high level of energy needed to accelerate to story's climax and the scene required repetition.

Transitioning into the council meeting appeared tricky for the actors; oftentimes their movement was nonspecific and their intentions were unclear. To help them find their tempo and shape in all of the scene transitions, I led them through a *Viewpoints*-inspired exercise. I laid out a dozen colorful plastic dots in a row across the RVA Event Space and told the actors that each dot represented a pivotal plot point from the beginning of the play to the end. They travelled across the floor experiencing the play in a new way, attending to the intention behind the transitions. When they landed on a dot they had to strike a pose that represented what their character was doing in the moment. This exercise was a favorite among the actors and during our postmortem several of them cited this exercise as very influential on their performance.

Stage Design

The RVA Event Space is a large open room that allows for a variety of staging configurations. The designer and I determined that it was best if I designed the layout of the stage to best suit the play. I chose to place the audience 'in the round' seating. The actors' playing areas were inside and outside of the seating arrangement. The ensemble identified each area as parts of the brain; not every section of the brain could be reproduced but we chose to recreate the main sections that served our story. The ensemble assigned names for each section and we hung painted signs from the ceiling to indicate each sector of the Vessel.

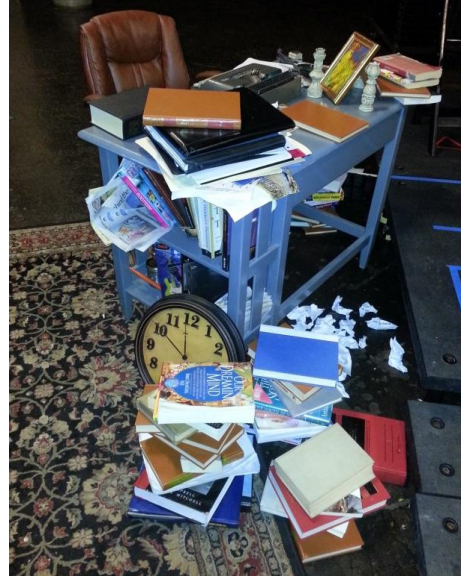


RVA Event Space

RVA Event Space

The space had five available projection screens, a hundred removable slim curtain panels, and over a dozen 5x7 platforms. We used three of the projection screens as the seeing eyes and the third eye of the Artist. We hung the curtains on the perimeters of the room to define the playing spaces, and the platforms were used for audience seating to allow for better viewing of the action on the floor. Upstage was designated as the area near the projection screens, and we called this area the Frontal Lobes, which are responsible for planning and making logical decisions. During the council meeting scene the panel of judges operated from upstage in this area of decision making. Downstage was called the Temporal Lobes; they are responsible for music, sound and memory. This area is where the Musical Director set up his instruments and

performed. Center stage served as the Hippocampus, which creates meaning in the brain. The trial of the muses took place center stage to signify the Artist's journey to making a decision. Stage left, near the large metal door to the restricted area, was the Amygdala, which is responsible for emotional reactions. This area was called Amy's Den, and Amy would retreat there in times of extreme happiness and distress. She located herself in front of the restricted area to protect the Artist from unwanted memories and dangerous ideas. The apothecary was located stage right to represent the right brain, and the library was stage left to represent the left brain. The bar where audience members purchased refreshments was called Cafe Cerebellum and was located downstage near the entrance to the space. My assistant director worked as the bartender; he created a character that was appropriate for the play and interacted with the performers as well as the audience. The stage manager and light board operator were visible in the space; their 'booth' was located in the upstage right corner. The women wore accessories that appropriately placed them in the world of *Time Tells* and behaved in 'character' at several points during performances when audience members visited their 'booth' and engaged in conversation.



Ms. Tic's Apothecary, Irene's Library (top, left to right)

Peter's Tavern (bottom)

Scenic Design

Whenever the ensemble discussed what the Artist's brain might look like we always referred to it as cluttered. To acquire all of the items to create a sense of dishevelment, we shopped at thrift stores and raided closets, attics and basements. We were on the search for items that symbolically represented memories, senses, knowledge, trivia, hormones, chemicals, etc. A challenge the scenic and prop designer faced was to make the set look full and cluttered and yet make it manageable for the ensemble to move in and out of the space. The RVA Event Space was not a theater and it needed to be clean during business hours; we loaded in and out for the entire four week rehearsal process and for most of the run. McLean suggested that we use baskets for the items in the Apothecary and stack books and files along the floor in the Library. This created the illusion of fullness to the playing areas.

Projection Designs: Third Eye and Seeing Eyes

In her book, Oddey discusses the integration of arts forms in devised theatre and its appeal to the artists and audiences alike. She says, "by integrating video, soundtrack, visual and physical imagery together as performance text, one is presented with a multifarious vision from which the audience can choose how to experience the work" (19). Visual projections screens were available in the RVA Event Space and I was adamant about using them. It was exciting to have access to the technology that could benefit the production. The use of film in theatre productions is appealing to audiences and engages their senses in alternate ways. I asked the ensemble to inquire within their artists' circles for graphic designers and filmmakers that would be interested in working with TheatreLAB on our production. I was introduced to Todd Raviotta and Bryan Unger of the design team, The Awesome View. Todd's specialty is layering color and

images on film, while Bryan's forte is in graphic design. These gentlemen collaboratively design visual art to accompany live performance of music, dance and theatre. Their mission is to “create unique experiences which leave audiences inspired and with a deeper connection with themselves, the performers they came to support, and the community with which they experienced the performance” (www.facebook.com/THEAWESOMEVIEW).

The Awesome View joined our ensemble six months into the creative process. I brought them in once the story was solidly developed and the ensemble could articulate the look of the world in which their characters inhabited. The images for the ‘third eye’ were layered photographs, animations and graphic designs. Each sequence of visual projections was utilized to inform the audience of the inner workings of the Artist’s mind. I worked with the ensemble on determining which scenes should be accompanied by visual sequences. They hoped to incorporate a moment of interaction with the projections on the ‘third eye’ screen. The designers needed every movement of the actors to be detailed in writing in order to make the sequence work. We discussed using video clips to cue actors and actors to cue video clips during the sequence. It was a very difficult moment to stage but was worth the time and effort. The sequence was a pivotal moment for (new idea) Muse Cornell; we used the visual art that Michael had created to represent the old art the Artist had produced and had Cornell manipulate the colors and design of the art to prove that he was innovative and worth taking a risk on.

Initially, I gave them our working copy script with an explanation of how I wanted to use graphic design to depict the inner workings of the Artist’s ‘third eye’, the mirror to the soul. I naively thought that Todd and Bryan would read the script and be inspired to create images for the sections I had pinpointed. Todd being a seasoned filmmaker and editor recognized that I was new to this type of multi-media work and gave me guidance on how to approach writing shot

lists. He challenged me to be even more specific in my descriptions. He asked me to write down exactly what I wanted for each moment and to be as pictorial as possible; this aided them in editing clips and sequences for each section of the play. Todd warned that the end result of the videos may vary from my shot list descriptions but they would do their best to design what we asked for. They had limited time, funds and resources for the project but were fully committed to providing us with quality designs. Todd and Bryan exceeded my expectations and designed beautiful images to accompany the music and movement of the play. I was proud of the work they created and pleased to add this form of art to our production.

TheaterLAB's Managing Director, Annie Colpitts, filmed and edited the video projections that represented the 'seeing eyes' of the Artist. Annie filmed the day to day activity of the Artist through a first person point of view, filming with one hand and using the other to physically engage with the world. Using the shot lists that I created, Annie was able to visually produce the Artist's descent into a nervous breakdown during the preshow. The 'seeing eyes' screens went dark after the Artist passed out from excess alcohol and drugs; they didn't come back on until the end of the show when the Artist reconciled the trouble and chose to move forward. The last moments of the show included video of the Artist awakening and initiating a new project. This video was in the background as the actors busied themselves with tasks to assist the Artist on their new creative journey. The 'seeing eyes' video sequences were meant to give the audience a glimpse at the Artist's outside life in juxtaposition to the life they were experiencing inside the Artist's brain. I wanted to use these 'seeing eyes' screens sparingly because I did not want to over-stimulate the audience with visual images. I think I was successful in that effort, but regret that the screens may have gone unnoticed by some the audience members due to their location in the space.

Costume Design

In addition to her scenic and prop design duties, McLean also served as the costume and makeup designer for the show. The entire process was collaborative in nature, McLean understood that costuming the characters was part of the character development process for the actors. To begin the design process, she requested that the actors select a scheme of colors for their characters. Her concept was to make every character mystical and otherworldly by overemphasizing certain aspects of their personalities with costume pieces. To aid the actors in their color decisions, I provided them information about color psychology, a non-verbal form of communication. The psychology behind colors and how individual colors register with audiences and the impact colors have on audiences' perception of the characters was necessary to consider. After the actors selected their colors, McLean designed specific looks for each character. She came to a rehearsal and showed the actors her costume renderings, answered questions and made arrangements to meet with each actor to build the costumes together. They pieced the costumes from the actors' closets and thrift stores; whatever they didn't find McLean crafted by hand. The characters' makeup design evolved naturally from the actors working with McLean and experimenting with different exotic looks. This trial and error method proved successful; specifically they were able to create continuity among the design for the Muses by creating a masked look to resemble the mask Ms. Tic wore.



Muse Cornell



Muse Devin



Irene and Peter Rose



Gregory and Amy



Ms.Tic

Mask Work

Through the exploration of character poses, one of the actors discovered that her character was a mystical old woman that resided in the pineal gland. At first I felt that her choice to develop this character presented problems. I was concerned with how the young actor would embody an old woman convincingly, and how she would sustain the physical shape of the character. The biggest issue we faced was transforming her youthful face into a weathered old woman's face. I approached her with the idea of using a half mask. This would allow her to speak clearly without obstruction to the mouth to create the illusion of an old woman. The actor had not worked with masks in performance before, but was receptive to the idea. I was delighted that she was willing to try and eager to put it into practice the techniques I learned in Dr. Anderson's Mask Performance class. I inquired if Michael would be willing to help me make the half mask and he graciously accepted. I was confident that I could construct the base of the mask using the techniques I learned in class; but I wanted Michael to treat the mask and make the face features out of plasticine clay and acrylic paints.

To assist in the development of the body of Ms.Tic, I shared my observations of how the actor was holding herself and suggested ways in which she could position herself so that it would

not be rough on her back. I found moments which she could exit or sit so that she could stretch out to relieve tension in her body. The mask was not high quality and did not fit flush to her face; I understood that it was difficult to wear and worked with Michael to fix it. When the actor did work in the mask I gave her notes that focused on clarity of movement and the expansion of moments. When a performer clearly executes a gesture and slows the tempo of a moment, it “allows the audience to process the information” (Wilsher 126).

In rehearsals, the actor was inconsistent with her shape as the old woman, frequently did not wear the mask, and vocalized that she disliked her costume pieces. When I addressed these issues she told me of her discomfort. I urged her to rehearse as she intended to perform. Dr. Anderson advised us that the problem of the actor is the problem of the mask. If the actor manifests their discomfort or insecurity in a physical way, it can hinder their ability to engage with the mask. This was at the forefront of my mind as I tried to resolve the issue. After much consideration I arrived at a solution to relieve the discomfort. I constructed the metaphor that the layers of clothing and the mask were like plaque that weighed down the Artist’s intuition and creativity; as the Artist recovered from the breakdown, Ms.Tic shed these layers. I directed the actor to remove the layers of clothing at pivotal plot points of recovery, to slowly uncurl her body and stand tall, and finally to peel off the mask at the climax of the story. The actor responded well to this idea and made an effort to achieve the desired physical result.

Rose, Bud, Thorn

Phase two resulted in a few isolated moments of tension and stress among the ensemble; in an effort to air out our grievances the leader among the performers introduced the rehearsal ‘check in’ activity called Rose, Bud, Thorn. This exercise allowed each ensemble member to

share their thoughts and feelings about the work. Rose- one thing about the rehearsal that was positive. Bud- one thing that they wanted to work on. Thorn- one thing that was problematic. The first few nights we were able to sit in a circle and share, but it was difficult to sustain that activity because we were using every second of our allotted rehearsal time on running specific moments of the play. I attempted to engage the ensemble in the Rose, Bud, Thorn activity on our Facebook group page, but the majority of the ensemble did not participate online and eventually petered out. There was a much better response from each member when we were sitting together and talking after a night of rehearsal. The activity led to healthy discussions and healed hurt feelings among many members; it was a valued opportunity to reflect and make new goals.

Invited Dress Rehearsal

One week before we started technical rehearsals, I invited about a dozen colleagues and friends to an Invited Dress Rehearsal. Initially the actors appeared nervous and reluctant to show their work to anyone outside of our circle. I believe this uneasy feeling fueled them to put in extra work. In preparation for an audience, I observed them making every effort to ensure that the show was ready, meeting on their own to rehearse, run lines and apply makeup. Their commitment level to the production was truly inspiring. It was clear that they loved their story, and that they wanted to share it with an audience; however, it seemed like they wished they had a more time. In hindsight, I should have scheduled multiple Invited Dress Rehearsals throughout the process. With this type of work it's important to provide opportunities for the actors to interact with audience members.

On the night of the IDR the audience met outside of RVA Event Space, and I gave them a brief run-down of my hopes and expectations for the night. I asked them to engage with the

characters, explore the space and take mental notes of the experience. I encouraged them to make themselves at home in our world. As they walked into the world of *Time Tells*, I was overwhelmed with curiosity and fear. How would the audience respond to the piece? Would they understand that the characters live inside a brain? Would it deter from the message of the play if one doesn't understand the brain/vessel concept? I had so many questions for my audience members, after the show I invited them to contact me with questions and critique.

The main feedback that I received was that the characters needed to be more specific about their role and function as a member of the brain community. I also was told that in the preshow it appeared that the actors didn't know how to answer questions from the audience members. They appeared timid and struggled to convey an air of mystery about the world they lived in, and still be very specific with their actions and intentions. I take responsibility for their lack of preparedness. I believe that if given more time to revise and refine their story and character relationships they would have felt more confident in the details of the established circumstances.

I am eternally grateful for my friends' and colleagues' participation in my thesis project; each person is instrumental in my life and I value their opinion and trust their taste. With their help I gained insight on the production that aided my direction of the play. I believe the actors gained insight from the experience as well. Many of them described feeling awkward and ill prepared the first time they talked to an audience member. They were forced to improvise their way through answers to questions that they did not have the answer to; it scared them and made the reality of the production very real. We discussed the feedback and I addressed my concerns, I pushed them to dig deeper into the world we had developed. The actors spent the following week

of technical rehearsals plotting out activities that would help the audience engage in the world of the play.

Production

The support of a professional theatre company throughout the process was invaluable. TheatreLAB's connections, resources and audience base granted us the opportunity to reach a broader audience. There was pre-press for the production, in addition to critiques from Richmond's top theatre reviewers, which drew interest to our project and sold seats. Opening night of *Time Tells* was not only sold out, but we had to make an overflow section for audience members. The other three shows sold very well and we were pleased with the turn out. I was told that *Time Tells* drew in a larger crowd than the previous two TheatreLAB devised pieces. It was a great sense of accomplishment for all of us.

By opening night the actors were ready for an audience to play with and eager to share their work. I felt incredibly proud of my ensemble and I was ready to see them shine! The first weekend went by in a flash, as we were all riding high on the excitement of interacting with an audience. We decided to hold a touch up rehearsal on the Thursday before the second weekend of the run. The cast was eager to get back together and work out any issues they experienced in performance. They focused on elements of the play that they felt needed the most attention and treated the rehearsal as more than just a run through, but a chance to make the show better. The last two shows were on point; everyone seemed to be more at ease with improvisation and interaction with audience. I noticed many of them taking bold risks with their performances and having fun with their choices.

I found it interesting that during the entire run, a total of four performances, Muse Cornell and Muse Devin each received two votes from the audience. The ensemble joked that we

had crafted a social experiment, and that the voting system said a lot about the mental state of our audiences. If one voted for Devin than they were apt to hold onto the past and reconcile mistakes, if one voted for Cornell than they were focused on the future and moving forward without looking back in reflection. We worked very hard to ensure that the muses were on an equal playing field and created dialogue and action that supported both muses. We wanted the audience to be legitimately torn between the new idea and the old idea, just like the “Artist” was experiencing. I also found it fascinating that there were so many different responses to the show, and the varied interpretations of the play’s message by the audience at large. This was exhilarating to me, as I had hoped that the audience would see the show through their own frames of reference and put themselves in the place of the unseen “Artist”.

The communal feeling between most of the audience and the performers was a great success for the production. Many people who saw the show commented on how they enjoyed the experience of exploring the space, handling the props, creating artwork and participating in activities with the actors. Others felt uncomfortable engaging in the ‘play’ world we had created and shied away from the actors. I witnessed several people talking in small clumps outside of the main pre-show action. In conversations with some of these individuals I learned that they chose to observe rather than engage because they felt overwhelmed by the atmosphere and the action that was taking place. One friend confided that she has mild social anxiety and at first felt uncomfortable in the *Time Tells* environment. She told me that it took awhile before she was able to enter the playing areas and interact with the characters; she was disappointed that the preshow was short because she felt that once she was comfortable, the mood changed and the audience was directed to their seats. When incorporating audience interaction in future projects I will

make sure to consider the time it may take audience members to become invested in the world of the play.

The ensemble crafted a story that was representative of our collective experiences as artists in the throes of creativity. Naturally we had moments of doubt, and fear crept up on us at times, but because we were invested in our work and confident of our message, we felt empowered to accept that those feelings are a normal part of the creative process. We allowed ourselves to truly be present in the moment and rejoice in it. By sharing our story we were open and available to connect with our audience, which was an intention of the piece.

CHAPTER 8

THE ROAD HOME

The last leg of my journey is dedicated to reflection and intention. I have spent months analyzing the creative process and production of *Time Tells*, and I have identified what can be improved upon, what to omit from the process, and what is most important to include in the next devised project that I direct. Serious consideration of my intention behind the creation of new work has revealed that this work allows me to be most authentically myself, and provides a platform where I can express my unique perspective. Devised theatre that addresses political, social, and cultural issues is a form of activism. I feel it is necessary for people to physically come together to witness, experience and discuss the current state of the world from many perspectives. Theatre has the potential to connect people to the issues on a more personal level. It is my hope that the work I create will inspire audiences to further the discourse on how we can effectively make positive changes in our society.

Oddey tells us that “leadership is essential in order to focus direction, establish the way forward, and maintain an overall eye on the developing work” (105). It is a heavy responsibility to be a contributor and leader in the development of new work but it is a paramount position. Naturally, the role of the director will be different every single time a group comes together to collaborate on a new work; the makeup of an ensemble influences the results. However, there are a few elements of the position of director that will never change; a director must serve as the leader, organizer, moderator, guide, shaper and final decision maker.

Through my experience with *Time Tells* I have learned many important lessons. First and foremost, I must articulate my vision clearly and often. It is important to talk about commitment openly and honestly, and establish expectations with the ensemble members. Collaborative creation requires the director to be responsive to the needs of the ensemble, but not necessarily cater to the needs of the ensemble. A director must allow the ensemble to express their ideas and opinions freely and frequently because it is vital that everyone is heard. It is also important that the ensemble understands that many ideas will not be incorporated into the final piece. The final outcome of the play is determined by the director. I have learned the true value of a strong creative team for support and perspective. On a more personal note, I learned that a director has to be emotionally objective and not allow their feelings to get hurt by the behavior of the ensemble. This is nearly impossible, which is why a strong creative team is necessary. I now have a greater appreciation for the human form and the amazing things that can be done with it. Lastly, I now trust that a message can be communicated through the beauty of movement, music and essential text.

“A combination of instinct and learning is required to devise theatre. This can only be discovered through experience” (Oddey 26). Experience is what I desire; I seek opportunities to practice what I have learned and to experiment with new methods of devising. My wish is to continue to explore the role of the audience in this type of work and play with ways in which an audience can actively participate in the storytelling. I believe that many people in Richmond, like me, seek an alternative experience when attending the theater. As a director I am interested in immersing audiences into a world of my making and giving them a chance to interact with the architecture and players of that world.

The following is a list of strategies I would like to incorporate into the next devised piece that I direct. It is my intention to keep a log of all my future devising experiences and revise my “To Do” list as needed.

DEVISED THEATRE: DIRECTOR/ SHAPER TO DO LIST:

1. Develop three phases for the creative process: phase one is dedicated to composition and story development, phase two is dedicated to scripting, revising and refining material, and phase three is comprised of rehearsal and IDR’s.
2. Ensure accountability among ensemble members by collectively creating a list of expectations and have the entire ensemble sign it as a contract. If the contract is violated the director/shaper has grounds for dismissal.
3. Introduce *Viewpoints* on the first day and work with the technique exclusively for the first part of phase one; giving the ensemble time to develop relationships and a solid kinesthetic response to one another.
4. If using a broad theme to prompt new work, have the ensemble narrow the theme and identify two to four touchstones to build upon.
5. Require each ensemble member to pose a question that is related to the touchstones. Examine these questions as a group and select one to explore.
6. Introduce theme specific guidelines for composition exercises.
7. Assign theme inspired prompts for written work.
8. Pair physical and vocal activity with presentation of written work.
9. Assign Character Poses homework and immediately follow up with Character Interviews.

10. Integrate *Viewpoints* exercises into all phases to give the ensemble opportunities to hone their skills.
11. In the composition phase, assign each member of the ensemble as a leader of a scene or chapter. This ensures that the work is completed, that the other members have contributed to the composition, and everyone is satisfied with the results. This approach gives the director one person to check in with for an update about the progress of each scene/chapter. This may ensure consistency in the quality of work the ensemble creates.
12. If using musicians and composers, involve them in every phase of the process. Ideally they are integrated into the composition of the story.
13. Designers must be involved in every phase of the process. Their vision for the piece is vital to the creation.
14. *Rose, Bud, Thorn*: incorporate this ensemble ‘check in’ routine into all phases of the process.
15. Host a minimum of three IDR’s during phase three of the process to allow the ensemble more opportunities to interact with audience members.

Bibliography

Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Bogart, Anne. *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Print

Bogart, Anne and Landau, Tina. *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. New York: Theatre Communication Group, 2005. Print

Hull, James R. *Narrative First*. Hull, James R. 11, Nov. 2010. Web. February 1, 2014

Oddey, Alison. *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. Print

Scott-Kemmis, Judy. *Empower Yourself With Color Psychology*. Scott-Kemmis, Judy. 2009. Web. April 20, 2014

Thomson, Lynn. *Teaching and Rehearsing Collaboration* Theatre Topics: Volume 13 Number 1 Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003. Print

APPENDIX A

Audition Materials

Screening Process

Time Tells, TheatreLAB's last production in the season, is a devised piece. It is scheduled last because it has yet to be devised. The framework of the production is in place; all we need is a group of committed artists to come together as an ensemble to create the story.

Are you interested in collaborating on the development of a new play? Over the next ten months the *Time Tells* ensemble will explore ideas of social and cultural significance through a series of exercises and improvisations. The result will be a scripted performance piece that is crafted carefully to reflect the vision of the ensemble

Due to the nature of this type of work we will begin preparation immediately. There will be a meeting in November and in December in order to get to know one another and generate ideas. In January we will begin meeting every Sunday to work on exercises. This schedule will continue until June when we will be meeting more often in preparation for an August production.

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. Be honest and thoughtful!

1. Explain your level of experience of working with an ensemble in devising new work.
2. If you do have prior experience with this type of work, what was your favorite part and what could have been improved upon in the devising process?

3. If you're new to the devising format, please tell me what interests you most about being a participant in this project.
4. As a collaborator what do you feel will be your greatest asset to the ensemble?
5. In one sentence or less tell me why you think theatre is important.
6. Do you have any unique or hidden talents that might add to the production?
7. Do you have any musical abilities?
8. Are you comfortable with stage movement?

Email on Oct 23, 2013

I want to thank you for your interest in *Time Tells* and invite you to call backs. Mind you, this will not be your normal call back. We will be working in a small group, playing games, working on devising exercises and getting to know one another. This is an opportunity for me to see how you move and work with others. Wear clothing in which you will be comfortable in.

I am looking forward to seeing you soon. Please let me know if you'll join me at The Shop for callbacks. There are two dates with two separate callback times. Respond to this email with your first and second choice for your callback.

The Shop
Zero East 4th Street
Richmond, VA 23224

TIME TELLS Callbacks

November 3rd at 5pm & 7pm

November 10th 5pm & 7pm

Thank you,

Heather Falks
Theatre VCU MFA Candidate
SPARC Acting Faculty

Email on Nov 13, 2013

Thank you for auditioning for TheatreLAB's devised piece, *Time Tells*. I enjoyed watching your callback and your work on the composition exercise. Thank you for being open and willing to play. Although I cannot offer you a role for this production, I still very much hope to work with you on future projects!

TheatreLAB appreciates the time and effort you put into your audition and for your interest in *Time Tells*.

Thanks again and I hope to see you soon!

Heather Falks
Theatre VCU MFA Candidate
SPARC Acting Faculty

Email on Nov 6, 2013

Thank you for your commitment to the *Time Tells* project and welcome to the ensemble! I am eager to begin working with all of you. Over the next few weeks I will contact you with "Homework" assignments. The HW will consist of questions and tasks. Please be prompt in your responses. I ask that you trust this part of the process and remain open to this style of devising. Your responses will serve as a jumping off point for our work as an ensemble, and will help shape the framework of the story we are to create.

I will be in touch soon about our first meeting in January. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Heather Falks
Theatre VCU MFA Candidate
SPARC Acting Faculty

APPENDIX B

Games and Composition Exercises

Games

Tell a Secret (Ensemble Building)

Share a Personal Object (Ensemble Building)

Awesome! (Ensemble Building)

Columbian Hypnosis (Boal 63)

The Circle of Knots (Boal 67)

A Round of Rhythm and Movement (Boal 88)

The Orchestra and the Conductor (Boal 96)

Walk, Stop, Justify (Boal 98)

Good Morning (Boal 119)

Cat and Mouse (Boal 119)

Sculpture Sequence (Boal 127-129)

Complete the Image (Boal 130)

The Found Object (Boal 148)

Ensemble Shapes (Bogart, Landau 55)

Run to Center (Bogart, Landau 27)

The Chase (Bogart, Landau 28)

Floor Pattern- Expressing Character (Bogart, Landau 56)

Tag Shape (Bogart, Landau 58)

Counting (Bogart, Landau 65)

Grid Work (Bogart, Landau 70)

Open *Viewpoints* (Bogart, Landau 71)

The Obstacle Course (Bogart, Landau 77)

Three Up/ Two Down (Bogart, Landau 81)

Circle, Clump, Line (Bogart, Landau 84)

Changing Places in Space (Bogart, Landau 85)

Clay Garden (*Viewpoint*- inspired)

Character Lanes (*Viewpoints*-inspired)

One Voice (Thomson)

“What If?” Divide and Conquer (Thomson-inspired)

The following composition exercises are inspired *Viewpoints*

Composition Exercise #1 (2 players)

Partners are assigned open scenes and given a small bag of objects and instructed to investigate

the bag. Ask each person to select one object and allow this object to inspire a character.

They must find a way to incorporate the object into the open scene.

Composition Exercise: 2 (4 players)

Two sets of partners form a group of four; using the same characters established in the open

scene exercise, they create a new scene with this dynamic of characters.

At least one person should transfer a physical quality to another performer by using a piece of fabric or by physicalizing the transfer with a gesture or movement.

Exploit, manipulate, examine or play with the concept of time.

Employ entrances and exits.

Create a single unified movement.

Incorporate objects into the scene in a new way.

Composition Exercise #3 (2 players)

Players from the four person group switch partners and bags of objects. Using the same partners the new partners create a composition with three active sequences. There should be a clear beginning, middle and end (not necessarily a resolution).

Examine the contents of the bag. Pass the objects around and discuss initial reactions. At least one of these objects needs to be used in the composition.

Read the following excerpts of text aloud. Select a portion of text to incorporate into the composition. Utilize repetition but be careful not to abuse it.

“You can’t teach whistling. You just do it.”

“What men do not observe because their intellect prevents them from seeing would fill many books.”

“Everything is exacerbated by her refusal to take the prescribed medication.”

“At least they got the chance to run away.”

Composition Exercise #4 (1 player)

Develop 3 silent gestures that express the personality of your character.

Gestures have a beginning middle and end. They can be expressive or behavioral.

Expressive: abstract physicalization of an idea or emotion.

Behavioral: communicative to others

Next combine players gesture sequences

Composition Exercise #5 (3-4 players)

One Sentence Stories

Each person will stage and direct their own one sentence story play using their group members as performers. Each director develops 3 images represent the beginning, middle and end of the story.

Composition Exercise #6 (4-5 players)

Using the characters from the character poses homework create a 5 minute scene that focuses on relationships.

Incorporate all of the following:

Point of view

10 lines of text

2 specific movements: push, reach, catch, kiss, jump, fall, run away

Interference from outside the Brain

Repetition of movement by all in 2 key moments

A countdown that creates tension

Composition Exercise #7 (4-5 players)

Create an alternate ending to Composition Exercise #6

Composition Exercise #8 (4-5 players)

Silent movement scene that explores the essence of character relationships. (Bogart, Landau 17)

APPENDIX C

Homework Assignments

12/09/13

In your own words, how would you define art?

How do you know if something is of artistic value?

What makes an artist successful, popular and marketable in our society?

12/16/13

Where does your need to create generate from?

When did you know you were an artist? How did you discover this about yourself?

Would you say that your choice to pursue the arts has been supported by family and friends?

01/06/14

As an American artist, what would you say is your personal artistic contribution to society?

In your opinion how can performance art thrive in a mass media driven society?

01/26/14

Write a "One Sentence Story" and bring it to the next rehearsal.

02/09/14

Things Overheard: jot down as many pieces of conversation as possible over the following week and bring them to rehearsal for an improvisation exercise using the text.

02/23/14

Complete the following statements:

When I think of the future of our society, I see...

When I think of the future of our society, I fear...

When I think of the future of our society, I hope...

03/09/14

Write a point of view narrative about doubt and fear.

03/23/14

Please keep our recent conversations about art, intent, knowledge, skill, craft, process, product, experience, investment, etc. at the forefront of your mind this week as you select an object to be used in our composition exercises. The object should embody or relate to our themes.

04/06/14

Character Poses (Bogart, Landau 171)

Create five character poses

Fear of...

Love of...

Hate of...

Memory of...

Desire for...

04/13/14

Interview Preparation: decide on what your character personifies in the brain, determine your role and function in the brain community, create a name for your character and prepare a task or activity that your character may engage in during the pre-show. You will be addressed as your character and asked a series of questions, please respond as your character.

05/04/14

Complete the following statements:

Our world looks...

Our world sounds...

People in our world...

05/18/14

"My Story" Topography

Develop an image time line of the most important events of our play from your character's perspective. First create 5 frozen images that illustrate these events. Then create the transitions to each image/event. These transition movement pieces should focus on the character's tempo, duration and topography during the journey to the next event.

06/01/14

Reminder: Please make sure to send me your interpretation of the Question we are seeking to examine with this story. We've talked about this before but it's been awhile, things have changed and evolved since our last look at the Question.

06/15/14

Develop a scene breakdown/ action outline for your character. Where is your character located in the Vessel and what is your character actively doing for each beat of the play?

07/06/14

In preparation for upcoming rehearsals I would like for you to look over Uta Hagen's Six Steps.

THE SIX STEPS

1. WHO AM I?

What is my present state of being?

How do I perceive myself?

What am I wearing?

2. WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

What time is it? (The year, the season, the day? At what time does my selected life begin?)

Where am I? (In what city, neighborhood, building, and room do I find myself? Or in what landscape?)

What surrounds me? (The immediate landscape? The weather? The condition of the place and the nature of the objects in it?)

What are the immediate circumstances? (What has just happened, is happening? What do I expect or plan to happen next and later on?)

3. WHAT ARE MY RELATIONSHIPS?

How do I stand in relationship to the circumstances, the place, the objects, and the other people related to my circumstances?

4. WHAT DO I WANT?

What is my main objective? My immediate need or objective?

5. WHAT IS MY OBSTACLE?

What is in the way of what I want? How do I overcome it?

6. WHAT DO I DO TO GET WHAT I WANT?

How can I achieve my objective? What's my behavior? What are my actions?

APPENDIX D

“Artist” Background

Artist’s Name: Darwin Fizzlebottom

Age: 36

Location: Boston, MA

Darwin does not have a college education, but he has formal artistic training. Darwin started working with steel as his medium, creating large structures. He stopped doing large pieces and started doing smaller ones due to the weight of the larger pieces. His most critically acclaimed piece to date is The Portal, created eight years ago and constructed from steel of many colors. It took a total of seven months to create The Portal, which was also his last large piece. It was previously on display in Omaha. It was bought by his domain name (website). He stated he was currently working on nothing, but then we found out he was writing poetry. Some of Darwin's smaller pieces are on display in malls, so they are easily accessible to the public. He has made a decent amount of money from his artwork.

APPENDIX E

Time Tells Glossary

Original Spark: first memory of creativity

Recent Spark: most recent successful work

Chocolate Liquor: Ms.Tick's concoction

Sweet Stuff/ Syrup: Peter's Dopamine

Sector X: restricted section where memories and ideas are locked away

On-line: brain is functioning

Off-line: brain is not functioning

3rd eye kiss: ritual

Dead of Night: Name of Peter's Choice memory

Council: trial

Chair: Judge

Councilman: Gregory

Representatives: Peter and Amy

Potentials: the sea of muses

Rekindle/reignite: to bring back the creativity

Vessel: Brain as a whole

Artist: Operator

Mainframe: The portion of the brain our community thrives in

Code Yellow- the community is on alert and ready for action

Code Orange- the community is feeling the stress of the situation and tension hangs

Code Red- community is on lock down and must prepare for the worst.

Emerge from the Potential: how we select muses

Sparks: creativity

Ideas: Muses

APPENDIX F

Stage Sector Descriptions

SECTOR A (apothecary)

SECTOR C (cafe cerebellum)

SECTOR D (Amy's Den)

SECTOR E (exit for bathroom)

SECTOR F (First Language Rehearsal Room)

SECTOR I (initiation station)

SECTOR L (library)

SECTOR R (recreational center)

SECTOR T (Peter's Tavern)

SECTOR X (restricted area)

APPENDIX G

Visual Projections Design Outline

THIRD EYE

So Delish 10 min. on loop x 3

Code Yellow 5 min

Code Orange 5 min.

Code Red 30 sec

Aftermath 1 min. 30 sec

Original Spark 1 min

The Dead of Night 4 min.

New Muse Revealed 1 min 45 sec.

Connection 30 sec

Comeback Kid 10 sec.

Musion 1 min

Unification 30 sec

Amy- yellow Irene- grey Gregory- green Peter Rose- red Ms.Tique- magenta Devin- black -
Cornell- white

Code green 10 min.on loop x 3

Code green: The Artist is in a creative and productive mode of operation, happy, successful, the life of the party, yet at times, doubt gets the upper hand. Each character is connected to a specific color and the character's colors are used in visual sequences that are layered with images (flames, color explosions like fireworks, sparklers that create shapes, ocean waves gently lapping the sand, river flowing over a rock, clouds drifting in the sky, busy streets, colorful skylines) Occasionally a somber and dark image replaces the peaceful and light images (stormy skies, spooky forests, etc.). There is an overall sense of ease with just a hint of struggle. The tempo of the images is steady and rhythmic.

Code yellow 5 min

Code yellow: The Artist is working but is unfulfilled by the work. Many consider the Artist successful and talk about how the Artist is going to "make" it! The Artist begins to feel anxious and spends less time working and creating, and more time engaging in behavior with negative consequences. The Artist tries to ignore the oncoming feelings of anxiety and despair, but caves in under the pressure. The images are identical to code green but they are flashing by at high speed and appear soiled, tarnished and altered slightly.

Code Orange 5 min.

CODE ORANGE : The Artist is plagued by doubt and old demons. At this point the Artist stops creating completely and shuts the world out. (Images of flames blowing out, ocean waves crashing, raging river rapids, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunami, mud slides, collapsed buildings, damaged bridges) The images go in and out of focus, they are chaotic, dark and frightening. By minute 4 they begin to flicker and become static. Footage from the seeing eyes can be used and manipulated for this sequence.

Code Red 30 sec.

CODE RED: static to black screen. Out of the blackness rises a large single flame of multiple colors. It separates into individual weakly lit flames (red, purple, yellow, green, blue). The flames dissipate and are gone within a 30 second time period. Trauma = blackness

Code Green starts out in quick time. The Artist is creating and enjoying life, yet there are glimpses of negative behavior (time 10 minutes & loops three times). Code yellow (time 5 min) is the artist descending into a real funk. The artist is not satisfied with working on art, and is demonstrating destructive behavior. Code Orange (time 5 minutes) and the images slow drastically. The Artist stops working. (going out at all hours of the night to bars, roaming the streets alone, abuse of drugs, alcohol). Code Red (time 30 sec). The Artist retreats from the world and is isolated in a room. The last image is of the Artist at a closed door, a hand reaches out to open it but pulls away. The artist strikes the door with a closed fist and then retreats completely. At this point the eyes shut down. Trauma = blackness

Aftermath 1 min. 30 sec.

AFTERMATH: Ms. Tique is standing directly across from the screen and is connected to the Third Eye. The screen comes back online and images faintly appear. She begins to literally SUCK the images off the screen and bottle it for later use. (sacred geometry/liquid genetic code that is being drained off the screen) 1 min

Next she attempts to access instinctual information. (atoms, electrons, molecules, DNA genetic code fused with time lapse images of evolution, Shamanic ceremonies and ancient ancestral ritual) These images flicker on and off and increasingly grow dark and faint until they completely fade away. 30 sec

Original Spark 1 minute

Original SPARK: An out of focus image of a child's hands immersed in paint on paper appears. The memory is of the very first time the artist acknowledged the thrill of creation, the original spark. The memory has a hard time fully engaging, it comes in and out of focus, as if the Vessel's ignition won't fire. *The images on screen become very faint by :45 seconds and slowly fade away.*

(footage can be found on Annie Colpitts' Youtube channel)

The Dead of Night 4 min.

DEAD OF NIGHT

My lover leaves an album The Third Eye opens and is flooded with deep rich colors that form a pool.

On my iTunes

And coffee with the cream and sugar in.

Everybody sees how she pleases me.

Jesus, he got that figure right...slight and slim and tight.

And like a bad sound-byte [the color begins to lighten. The pool is still and quiet as a bright light shines from the depths of the pool]

Or like alluring light

She came on me

In the dead of night.

Now lately we been dealing in the darkness. [pool of color and light begins to swirl like a whirlpool]

But lightening will reveal her in my hands.

That's why when a storm rolls in

We get warm. Amen!

An we chide and we scold and we fight.

But then she sighs and she says "alright"

in that transcendental, elemental dead of night.

A quick commute, [when the compound is complete at minute 2:15 the pool bubbles violently and explodes like lava. At this very moment, Cornell comes out of the audience and joins Amy in the dance]

Forbidden fruit...shoot me dead.

The setting sun,

A little fun...and then you'll hear that sound.

Beleaguered by the early morning hours,

She gives me her powers

Aint nothing quite like a sin

I the bus, and she the station

And I relate to her elation.

Quiet, the moon pulls the tide.

She'll lose her senses [lava effect subsides and the pool of color is still with a bright light shining from deep within]

Till she's lost her sight.

In the dark's devastation

She sparks my creation.

That dead of night...

In the dead of night...

New Muse Revealed 2:15

NEW GUY (new muse revealed) Ms. Tic leads Cornell to the library and helps him rummage through the stacks. Together they select files with images of past work. First placing his hand on the image, Cornell makes a sweeping motion toward the 3rd eye and the image (mountain scape) appears on screen. He repeats the motion - another sweep, another image (city scape) appears on screen, image (sunset), sweeps, pauses. Total, the three images will be on screen for about 30 seconds (the first image the full 30, the second image 20, the third image 10). The community is still unimpressed; the New Muse approaches the images and, with a dramatic gesture, causes the images to shatter/dissolve/separate/etc all three images on screen explode into different shapes and swirling colors, so that the original 3 images are no longer distinguishable - just the many parts of their collages mixing together in a frenzy of color and shape. The community members are thrilled. (the previous two lines take 30 seconds).

Amy stumbles forward and, with another sweeping motion from her to the screen, bursts of brilliant yellow flood the entire screen, and then isolate into several yellow shapes that join the mixture. Gregory is next, and with another sweeping motion, the screen is flooded with green that then isolates to several brilliant green shapes that join the medley. Peter is last, and with another sweep from him to the screen, brilliant red floods the screen and then isolates to a few shapes. (each 5 seconds apart) Cornell approaches Irene, but she does not allow him to repeat the

gesture. The colors and shapes on screen, previously swirling aimlessly, begin to organize themselves slowly, their motion slowing, an order seems to be taking place...(1 minute)

Perfection 1 min.

The community members are going crazy - and then it dawns on them how out of control Cornell could get if they don't act quickly. With enthusiasm, they converge around him, sitting him down and beginning to make "alterations." The image on the screen that was about to form does not complete itself. Instead, as the community members primp Cornell, he becomes flustered - they haven't let him finish. The colors and shapes swirl again, at first at the same rate, but quickly picking up speed and motion until it's total chaos - the colors darken from their brilliance and become eerie. (1minute)At the climax of this scene, Cornell and Devin yell "STOP" in unison, and the images on screen either fade out or disappear suddenly, all at once.

Connection 30 sec.

CONNECTION: When the muses meet for the first time there is a burst of colorful light. In this chapter time freezes, the other characters are still. The muses are beginning their journey toward unification. 30 seconds

Comeback Kid 10 sec.

COMEBACK KID As Devin begins the poem the Third Eye flashes a large flame, it is a dangerous flame that leaps from the screen. 10 seconds

Musion 1 min.

FUSION/MUSION: As Ms.Tique escorts the losing muse to the Third Eye the screen bursts into a *silhouette of flames against a solid background. Once the muse enters the flame a large ball of energy (same color as flames) appears on the screen and bounces all around and joins the flame. When the ball of energy unites with the (black/white) flame the flame turns into a brilliant display of color and bursts like a firework. 1 minute.

* 2 versions of this sequence are needed: If Devin is sentenced to death the background is white and the flames are black. If Cornell is sentenced to death the background is black and the flames are white.

Unification 30 sec.

UNIFICATION Creative energy flow! A portal opening, colorful light flowing in and swirling

Reawakening: The seeing eyes open and we see the same image as before, the Artist stands before a door. Now we see the Artist open the door and enter a studio and begin to create a piece of poetic visual art.

APPENDIX H

Time Tells Usher Script

Good evening, Sparks! Before we enter, please note that the bathrooms are to the left and down the hall on the left.

Please follow me as we enter through this curtain area.

Welcome to the mainframe. Please feel free to tour all of our sectors at your leisure. The Mainframe staff is here to help you become acquainted with the community The Mixologist in sector C will be happy to pour you a robust libation.

Please refer to your passport for your spark number and seating information. Enjoy your tour!

APPENDIX I
 Production Program
 Time Tells Passport

<p>PRODUCTION TEAM: Director – Heather Falks Assistant Director – Joe Toscano Musical Director – Matt Treacy Stage Manager – Melissa Rayford Production Designer – McLean Jesse Lighting Designer – David White Visual Projection Designers – Annie Colpitts, Todd Raviotta, Bryan Unger Mask and Visual Art Designer – Michael Todd 'Dead of Night' Choreographer – Marisa Guida Board Operator – Theresa Mantiply</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;"> CREATE. COLLABORATE. CULTIVATE. theatrelabrva.com </p> </div>	<p>DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Welcome to the Mainframe! The Time Tells TheatreLAB ensemble is thrilled to invite you in to the world we have created especially with you in mind. It is highly encouraged to engage with the ensemble, explore the world and get involved in Mainframe activities. The Time Tells ensemble includes over fifteen artists; each offering their unique talents to the project. The Time Tells story has been in development since January of this year, the ensemble met weekly to discuss, plan, and craft the production you are here to experience this evening. We have all poured a lot of love and a little of ourselves into this story and we sincerely hope you enjoy Time Tells, a theatrical experience like no other!</p>	<p>SPARK #: _____ SEATING #: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WELCOME TO THE MAINFRAME</p> <p>We are pleased that you are joining us this evening for a limited engagement tour. Please feel free to explore your new environment and get acquainted with the Staff.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">STAFF: AMY PETER IRENE GREGORY MS.TIC</p>	MAINFRAME PASSPORT
--	---	---	--

<p>PRODUCTION TEAM: Director – Heather Falks Assistant Director – Joe Toscano Musical Director – Matt Treacy Stage Manager – Melissa Rayford Production Designer – McLean Jesse Lighting Designer – David White Visual Projection Designers – Annie Colpitts, Todd Raviotta, Bryan Unger Mask and Visual Art Designer – Michael Todd 'Dead of Night' Choreographer – Marisa Guida Board Operator – Theresa Mantiply</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;"> CREATE. COLLABORATE. CULTIVATE. theatrelabrva.com </p> </div>	<p>DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Welcome to the Mainframe! The Time Tells TheatreLAB ensemble is thrilled to invite you in to the world we have created especially with you in mind. It is highly encouraged to engage with the ensemble, explore the world and get involved in Mainframe activities. The Time Tells ensemble includes over fifteen artists; each offering their unique talents to the project. The Time Tells story has been in development since January of this year, the ensemble met weekly to discuss, plan, and craft the production you are here to experience this evening. We have all poured a lot of love and a little of ourselves into this story and we sincerely hope you enjoy Time Tells, a theatrical experience like no other!</p>	<p>SPARK #: _____ SEATING #: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WELCOME TO THE MAINFRAME</p> <p>We are pleased that you are joining us this evening for a limited engagement tour. Please feel free to explore your new environment and get acquainted with the Staff.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">STAFF: AMY PETER IRENE GREGORY MS.TIC</p>	MAINFRAME PASSPORT
--	---	---	--

APPENDIX J

The following is the script that was used in production.

TheatreLAB Presents

TIME TELLS: a devised piece

Director: Heather Falks,
Assistant Director: Joe Toscano
Musical Direction, Original Score and Sound Design: Matt Treacy
Conceived and created by the TheatreLAB ensemble
Scenic and Costume Design: McLean Jesse
Visual Projection Design: Annie Colpitts, Bryan Unger, Todd Raviotta
Stage Management: Melissa Rayford

Cast of Characters:

Sarah Burke as MS. TIC (personification of intuition)
Amber Davis as IRENE (personification of Reason/Logic/Conviction)
Chandler Hubbard as PETER (personification of Pleasure/Pain)
Chelsea Burke as AMY (personification of Love/Fear)
Caleb Wade as GREGORY (personification of Ambition/ Envy)
Maggie Bavalack as DEVIN (a muse that returns to the community after being locked away for her radical and dangerous ways)
Michael Todd as CORNELL (a new muse that reveals himself to the community and attempts to shake things up)

Director's Notes: Pre-show activity is primarily improvised by the performers. They are to interact with audience members as they enter the space and encourage the audience to explore the environment. Upon arrival, audience members are given a passport and instructed to visit the community stations to have their passport stamped. Stage hands could be a part of the performance, reacting appropriately to certain things, like the mention of Devin and the code warnings.

So Delish

Lights up on The Mainframe. Two eyes are seen, blinking, in the dark. In between them, a third eye flutters with activity, at turns flashing, ice, fire, distorted faces, and other haunting images across its lens. The Mainframe is staffed by a select few, they each inhabit a specific area. A robotic, inanimate voice is heard.

Voice Over Welcome to the Mainframe. Please feel free to use cameras, smart phones or other devices at your leisure...

Welcome to the Mainframe. Please feel free to speak to the Staff and visit each Sector to have your passport stamped.

Welcome to the Mainframe. Make sure to sample the robust libations of our in-house mixologist in Sector C.

Mixologist: Robust libations! Robust libations!

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We are under a Code Yellow alert. All members are encouraged to continue with their normal schedules.

Minutes pass as the staff interact with the tourists. An animalistic sound is heard from behind a large, armored door. Suddenly, something strikes the door that reverberates with the sound.

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We encourage the use of (*the recording skips several times*) cellular phones and cameras. Please feel-feel-feel...Code Orange. We are now under a Code Orange alert. Locate the sector color seating section on your passport and secure all belongings. Code Orange alert, please turn off all cellular phones and hand held devices. *The door shudders again, louder and more present.*

The door shudders again, louder and more present.

Voice Over: Code Red. We are now operating under a Code Red alert. We strongly encourage you to proceed to your personal seat in the Sea of Potential, or locate the nearest staff member for assistance. Code Red. Code Red. Prepare for impact. Welcome to the Mainframe... We encourage the use...welcome to...the...welcome...

The inanimate voice breaks down, then tapers off into silence. Momentarily, the Mainframe is completely silent. Then, a rumbling sound announces an unidentified shift in the environment. Impact. Blackout. MS. TIC chants the mantra alone in the blackness.

MS. TIC: Dum dum de dum... *Her movement is slow, but graceful, and as she hums she begins to work. In the dim light, she applies an herbal revival to each of her fallen comrades.*

As she makes her way around the Mainframe she examines the audience, locking eyes with CORNELL only briefly. This is the beginning of her plans set in motion. She returns to the Apothecary to reset the Mainframe, adding a bit of her herbal solution to her cauldron. A whirl is heard. AMY jolts upright from her spot, center on the floor. She moves frantically. This world unfamiliar, this place is unfamiliar. She rushes to find some kind of stability. Upon inspection of the Mainframe's structure she discovers some damage. She "flips the breakers" and the First Language generators turn on.

AMY: (*Amy tries to speak, it is difficult for her. She hums softly until she can form the words.*) Mmm...Mmm... Mmmmmsssss.Tic? Tic. Tic. Tic.

MS.TIC: Over here, dear.

AMY surveys the room and lets out a moan. It stirs the others.

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We are now at a code orange alert. Please be cauti-

AMY: Okay. Good. We're not *completely* offline...is everyone here? Is everyone alright?! Peter?

GREGORY: Yes, I'm here.

AMY: Gregory?

PETER: I'm ok...I'm ok...but, if I'm Gregory...then *he's* ok...

GREGORY: Wait what?!

AMY: *You're* Peter. And *you're* Gregory. Now come on! Irene? Are you okay?

IRENE: No

AMY: Here. Sit. (*AMY helps Irene to her desk chair*)

IRENE: What happened?

AMY: We have experienced some structural damage. I don't know how to fix it.

IRENE: That's fine. I'm sure there is something in here. (*indicates her files*) Have you seen Ms. Tic?

AMY: There. (*AMY points toward MS.TIC and rushes to her blankets to hide. IRENE busies herself with her files*)

IMPROV *PETER stands and steadies himself on the bar. Suddenly he realizes that he doesn't recall where his most treasured object is located. Peter goes on a rampage searching for it in the Apothecary. GREGORY notices PETER's absence from the bar and makes himself at home.*

Song: TIME TELLS

How do you find "it?"

When do you find "it?"

Where can you turn? Is it still me?

...trying to learn and listen

but isn't it art? Isn't it real.

Never apart: what you make, and how you feel.

GREGORY: Peter always has the best shit...(smells)...oh shit! (*He takes another huge swig.*)

IRENE: *(she calls to him from her seat at the desk)* Gregory, we cannot just sit idly by while the Mainframe is down.

GREGORY: Ok...what then?

IRENE: *(she approaches the bar)* First, we need to talk to each other. Peter? *(silence)* Amy?

AMY: *(from her blankets)* NO!

PETER *(joining the others at the bar.)* Where is it? Did you take it? Where is my sweet spot?

GREGORY: I don't have-

IRENE: Calm yourself, Peter. It's there.

PETER: *(retrieves the Sweet Spot from behind bar)* We'll be riding high in no time.

GREGORY: Lay it on me.

IRENE: *(she observes the others sinking further into despair)* Enough! I need you all to listen to me. This is not our end.

AMY *(from blankets)* No?

IRENE: I have a few theories that could work. But I am in no state to test the sparks alone. Let's get to work!

MS.TIC: *(pops her head out from Apothecary)* Hop hop! We must reignite the flame. Mustn't we?

IMPROV *Reluctantly GREGORY and PETER leave the bar and begin to search the Mainframe for sparks to ignite the flame of creativity.*

PETER: Remember this one, Gregory? *(laughs)*

GREGORY: I...the... I...details are a little fuzzy.

Peter opens a moonshine jar and a lively diddy begins to play.

Song: Down By The Squeedle

Peter takes a big swig and closes the jar. Amy leaps from her blankets and runs to the Squeedle.

AMY: Please? Oh, please! It will make me feel so much better!

Peter reluctantly reopens the jar...Squeedle...Peter closes the lid.

Amy happily skips to the Apothecary to search for a spark. Moments later she calls out.

AMY: I've got it! This is it. *(she runs to the Library)*

GREGORY: Isn't that--?

AMY: It was so perfect. I just have to find the...*(she searches through files)*

"Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass" (TS Elliot)

AMY *(nothing happens.)* Never mind.

GREGORY: *(after some time GREGORY emerges from the Library with the Original Spark file)* What about this one?

AMY: Yes! That's the Original Spark! *The Third Eye opens and an out of focus image of a child's hands immersed in paint on paper appears. The memory has a hard time fully engaging, as if the Vessel's ignition won't fire. The images on screen are faint and slowly fade away.*

MS. TIC: You found our First Thrill. Oh, that's a good one. I remember it well. Yes, quite lovely, but it won't work, of course.

PETER: How do you know it won't? *(MS. TIC peers at him very closely and he backs away and retreats to the bar)*

GREGORY *(following Peter)* This is a total waste of time!

MS. TIC: Now, now, it's almost ready. If you would just get me the following ingredients:
Improv *She directs the others in gathering materials for the brew. She purposefully mixes the various liquids that smoke and steam inside her cauldron. The others look on with fascination.*

MS. TIC: Tick tock tick tock...tickety tockety, tickety tockety...a complex compound comprised and completely concocted to copiously encourage craft, creativity and cognitive conversation. It is perfect...except for one missing ingredient. Peter. I believe you have the one thing I need. Something a bit sensational?

PETER:...no.

ALL: Yes!
(MS.TIC advances on Peter.)

PETER: I have what you want, but you'll have to give me something in return.

MS. TIC: Pleasure never lasts, Peter.
IMPROV MS. TIC exits into the restricted area/Sector 6 and returns with a small box. PETER retrieves his treasured item from his pocket. They meet and request to examine the other's

contents. PETER opens the box and a waltz begins, he closes it, and the waltz stops. MS. TIC gestures for the compound and PETER willingly gives it to her. The waltz begins once more and the staff share a slow, romantic dance

Song: The Dead of Night

In the midst of the steamy waltz, Cornell, a new muse to the community, emerges from the Sea of Potential and leaps into Amy's arms. He approaches each member of the community and requests a dance. They are quite surprised by his entrance.

New Guy

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We are now at a code yellow alert. A breach has been detected in sector 6. Please remain patient while we work to bring our systems fully online. This has been a code yellow a- *The voice dies again.*

IRENE: You're new. (*summons others*) Come take a look at this one.

GREGORY: What of him?

AMY: I found him!

PETER: Who is he?

IRENE: If I had that information, would I waste time toddling with you?

PETER: Someone's testy.

GREGORY: He's not so bold now. Almost timid.

CORNELL: No, that's not it, I wasn't fin-

PETER: Boring.

AMY: He is not.

IRENE: What do you know of him?

AMY: Well... nothing... only-

PETER: Only he's helpless and AMY's got a hankering for a new baby to smother. You pick this one off the street, Ames? Was he hungry?

AMY: Leave him alone.

IRENE: Not now. There are other matters at hand. How did you get here?

CORNELL: Me?

GREGORY: (*points to audience member*) No him. Yes, you!

IRENE: Where are you from?

CORNELL: Here.

IRENE: *Not here.*

CORNELL: I am.

GREGORY: If you're from here, where have you been all this time?

CORNELL: I... waited... when I saw the door to-

GREGORY: "Waited," he says. Taking his time to decide to be of use to us.

PETER: Who says he's of use to us?

AMY: He is.

GREGORY: Send him back where he came from.

IRENE: We can't send him away.

PETER: Why not?

IRENE: What purpose would that fulfill?

AMY: He's exactly what we've been looking for.

IRENE: He proves an interesting anomaly, and we must establish his worth.

GREGORY: Always the pragmatist. I suppose we ought to give him a chance.

PETER: I suppose we ought to have a drink.

IRENE: How did you get here?

AMY: He came to me. *beat.*

IRENE: He came to you. How did he come to you?

AMY: I don't know. I was alone, and then all of a sudden I wasn't. He was there, and he was beautiful.

GREGORY: That's impossible.

IRENE: It's *improbable*.

AMY: He came to us. They don't ever- we choose them- but he did. He is special. I think he's just what we need to get back online.

IRENE: Based on what?

AMY: Isn't his "improbable" arrival proof enough?

IRENE: We have no idea who he is or what he brings with him.

GREGORY: What does he do?

IRENE: He's right here. I'm sure you can ask him yourself.

PETER: Can you do anything, kid?

IRENE: Not you, Peter.

PETER: Why not me?

IRENE: You have no intention of asking anything of pertinence.

PETER: Fun killer.

GREGORY: What can you do?

CORNELL: So much more than you have seen before.

GREGORY: Are we supposed to trust your word?

MS. TIC beckons CORNELL to the library. She encourages him to show the community what he is capable of. He rustles through a few files and finds examples of the Artist's work.

CORNELL: *I can* do stuff like this.

One by one, with the sweep of his hand, the images are thrown on the Third Eye. PETER scoffs, looks at AMY, and mimics the sound of a bubble being burst. AMY, thoroughly disappointed, goes to sit by PETER, who offers her a drink.

CORNELL: And this!

GREGORY: Brilliant...

GREGORY, too, goes to join PETER. AMY offers him the bottle.

CORNELL: And things like this.

There is a general sigh of disappointment.

IRENE: Thank you for the demonstration; however we are seeking something innovative to reignite the flame.

...beat...

CORNELL: Have you ever seen this before?

CORNELL demonstrates his abilities through a dramatic gesture, which causes the images to shatter. He manipulates the images on the Third Eye with the wave of his hand, causing the shapes to drift around and mix together. At this point, he approaches AMY, pulls at her, and then makes a throwing motion. Yellow explodes but quickly fades, leaving a few yellow shapes added. He repeats this with PETER (red) and GREGORY (green). He attempts to approach IRENE, but she doesn't allow this.

IRENE: No.

GREGORY: He's amazing.

AMY: I told you!

IRENE: I will admit he shows potential.

CORNELL: Potential?

GREGORY: Don't mind her. Irene likes very few things.

IRENE: I don't like anything.

GREGORY: I stand corrected.

Song: *Time Tells (verse 2)*

When have you "made it?"

When do you know that you've "made it?"

Honor is dead. Where is my heart? What's in my head.

Be a creator, not a repeater...easier said...

AMY: *(she takes CORNELL's hand)* That's good, sweetie. Thank you. *(turning to the others)* So? You can't deny that he's something extraordinary.

PETER: Meh.

AMY: I know it. I feel it. Can't you feel it?

IRENE: I can think of few others to move you so much as this.

PETER: None of the others lasted long, either.

GREGORY: I think this one can.

PETER: What makes you sure?

AMY: He can work. We just need to make a few adjustments.

CORNELL: Adjustments?

AMY: Just trust me. A little help?

Perfection

AMY and GREGORY begin to adjust CORNELL, adding some things and taking away others. PETER joins in reluctantly. IRENE watches them, observing CORNELL'S reaction. CORNELL goes from pleased, to a little uncomfortable, to very upset; the colors grow darker and drown out the images. At the end of this sequence, CORNELL yells out and moves away from them. DEVIN jumps out of her hiding place and yells out to the others.

IMPROV

CORNELL **DEVIN**
Stop! Stop!

Connection

Devin and Cornell lock eyes. They are drawn together. A wailing song is heard as DEVIN emerges. They begin to examine one another, discovering their similarities and connecting. The staff members are rendered still and quiet by the overwhelming energy the muses give off, it's as if they are in a dense fog and have to fight their way out.

DEVIN: You're real.

CORNELL: I am?

DEVIN: Yeah. *beat. She looks up at his work*) This... is marvelous. Is this yours?

CORNELL: It's not finished.

DEVIN: I love it.

CORNELL: Can you do that?

DEVIN: Not exactly.

CORNELL: What can you do?

DEVIN: It's complex.

CORNELL: Show me. *The others break free from the hold the muses had over them and cry out. CORNELL is confused by the commotion. Show me. (They rush toward the muses)*

DEVIN turns toward the restricted sector and the action breaks the muses' connection. AMY rushes in to protect CORNELL from DEVIN, whom she believes to be a threat. While PETER excitedly embraces DEVIN, thrilled to see his friend, a muse from many years ago, has returned to the Mainframe.

AMY: What are you doing here?

DEVIN: I-

IRENE: How did you get out?

CORNELL: It's okay!

AMY: You stay away from her.

CORNELL: But she was going to--

AMY: She is not your concern.

PETER: Amy, calm down.

DEVIN: I-

AMY: She's going back.

DEVIN: I am not going anywhere.

AMY: You don't belong here anymore!

GREGORY: Amy-

AMY: Let go of me! She will destroy everything. She has to go.

DEVIN: No!

CORNELL: Just show me

DEVIN: I can't--

AMY: Come on!

DEVIN: I finally- I can finally breathe. No! They'll make me go back.

CORNELL: Do it!

DEVIN: Escaping the mainframe... free the Brain Flame. We are being pursued for fun, but son it's done shift-shaping. Gaping at sunrise: eyes, deprived of light. Its sight relies on cover of

night. Another rite-uncovered-plight thickening ... listening as the gas seeps deep within, “sleep children,” a voice: sickening, croons away that bade you stay. You sway. You swoon. The room spins when you move.

Tumbling, tunneling, running, stumbling, falling, calling, yelling, yelping for help but the caverns are crumbling. Underneath you’re trapped. Shout. Get out. Rumbling thunder, fumbling darkness ... Something sparks. Startled, you start!

Here come the drums he’s released the hounds the grounds alive with hundreds of thousands of paws lip-licking jaws East-bound you cover the sound’s a shower of cowardice you’ve got to move So wake! Up! Shields up! the chase is on

Under attack the man becomes animal. Will he succumb? Thunderous acts of tyrannical tactics mask his fear. The pack is nearly here(ar) the drums; conceivable, flack; unbelievable. Blackness through the catacombs. Tombs line the halls. His spine it crawls, consigned to flames of wall, slogs through wine vaults with lame dogs and fog so thick... This game is sick it licks like flaming logs.

The staff members are entranced by the energy radiating off of DEVIN. They are hypnotized by her strength and confidence. One by one they join in and get caught up in the excitement.

Tug of War

As her poem ends DEVIN approaches CORNELL, she attempts to reconnect but he pushes her away.

CORNELL: Liar!

DEVIN: What?

CORNELL: What was that? You are nothing like me.

DEVIN: You asked me to show you what I can do.

CORNELL: You turned us inside out! You were intrusive!

DEVIN: It isn’t like that. Please don’t misunderstand what I am trying to do.
PETER and AMY both step in and separate the muses.

AMY: You see now why she has to go.

PETER: What have you been drinking, Amy, because clearly I've been getting the wrong stuff.

AMY: She's dangerous.

GREGORY: She’s exhilarating.

PETER: Yes! She's incredible. I can hear my heart throbbing in my ears. The last time I felt this good I had to steal a bottle of carmine from the apothecary.

MS TIC: I knew it!

PETER: I'll pay you back later.

MS TIC: You can't go about taking my bottles without asking, Peter.

AMY: Just like Devin can't invade us-.

DEVIN: I didn't! Cornell, I--

CORNELL: No. Don't come near me.

PETER: See? He's a baby. Can't stand to be in the presence of a true leader..
takes her aside) Don't mind them, D.
They don't understand progress.

AMY: *(to CORNELL)* I am so glad you're here. I won't let anything happen to you.
(turning to the others) He makes me excited to go back to work for the first time in...
a long time.

GREGORY: What if we let them both stay? Let's see what they can do if they work together.

AMY: Are you kidding? Irene!

IRENE: No, no. That is the first mildly intelligent thing anyone has said all day.

GREGORY: You're making jokes now?

IRENE: Just because something is intelligent does not make it valid.

AMY: Devin had her chance

GREGORY: I know-

PETER **AMY**
Gregory. Gregory.

IRENE: Stop. Amy. *(AMY releases her hold)* Peter. *(PETER does the same)*

AMY: *(to IRENE)* Fine. Which one should be implemented?

IRENE: My decision cannot be determined without further analysis.

PETER:*(to MS.TIC)* Do you have an opinion?

MS.TIC: *(she squeals with delight)* It's a paradoxical scenario in which it both matters and doesn't simultaneously.

AMY **PETER**
You have to choose! You have to choose!

Song: *Time Tells* (verse 3)

I've given so much. And they'll just ask for more. I'm not sure I can give again.

Stay inside...

Time...

IRENE holds a hand out. GREGORY grabs it. MS.TIC helps to steady him.

GREGORY: So, I guess they can't both stay.

IRENE: It would not appear effective, no.

GREGORY: So--

IRENE: It would seem so

GREGORY: I can't make this decision.

AMY: Gregory...*Irene snaps her head towards Amy and Amy retreats.*

GREGORY: We'll have to call council. What other options do we have?

(There is an overall growl of distaste from AMY and PETER)

IRENE: Then it must be.

CORNELL: What does that mean?

DEVIN: Nothing good.

IRENE: I will give you the appropriate time to prepare your positions and your counterparts.

Ritual

Each member of the community places a vial of sand in a box and MS.TIC seals the deal with a Third Eye Kiss. The Council begins in a solemn understanding, IRENE GREGORY and MS.TIC sit center at a table, with AMY and PETER prepped on opposing sides.

Trial

MS. TIC: I ignite this flame in honor of our collective acceptance and adherence to the rules of this council... by which we shall determine the fate of our community.

IRENE: Shall we begin?

DEVIN: Please! I have changed! *(gavel)*

CORNELL: What are we even fighting about?

AMY: It's not a fight.

PETER: It's totally a fight.

IRENE: It is a structured debate designed to provide a final and unbiased decision.

MS TIC: It's really quite entertaining. It goes in and out and back and forth and up and down...

IRENE: Any other questions? Amy, as you are defending the newest member of the community, I extend to you the offer of proceeding first.

AMY: Peter?

PETER: By all means, ladies first.

AMY: Age before beauty.

PETER: That would still make you first.

AMY: Respected members of our council: I stand before you today to represent Cornell- a fresh and exciting new addition to our community. I cannot express to you the potential for beauty and fulfillment that I see in this lovable face. As you know, we have a reputation amongst the greater community that we must uphold. The work we've been doing is loved and appreciated. To abandon all of that work would be to abandon our commitment to them. We have experienced all Devin has to offer us. She is, once again, trying to recklessly lead us down a dark and destructive path. We still see the ramifications of her actions today. My hope is to show the greatness of the path that Cornell illuminates before us. A new path! A new adventure! Thank you.

IRENE: Peter?

PETER: Really, Amy? Out of all us, we are to believe that you are the one so eager to venture down an unknown path? No, I think Amy wants play it safe with something she can control, but her idea of safety will eat us alive from the inside. Her idea of safety will make us numb, and what she offers you is a flashy version of the same thing we've been seeing for eons. (*He marches over to Cornell and kisses him square on the mouth. Everyone is shocked. The community watches for Peter's reaction*) Nothing. I felt nothing. If you guys really have no respect for my contribution to this community, then by all means.... pick this worthless, boring, unoriginal copycat to lead us. But if you want me to take things up a notch and make you tingle all over... then allow me and Devin to continue to play together. Devin was made for us She *says* all the right things. She knows what pleases us. All of us, not just me... Even Amy can't deny Devin's powerful effect.

AMY: (*her body tenses and she cries out*) Powerful, Peter? It's uncontrollable. You know it's not safe... It can lead to severe structural damage.

PETER: If you can't handle yourself, then maybe you should be the one locked away!

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We are now under a code orange alert. Please remain seated. This has been a code orange alert.

AMY: See?

GREGORY: Amy? Focus.

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We are now under a Code Yellow alert.

IRENE: Proceed.

AMY: How can any of you deny the exhilaration you felt when Cornell displayed his abilities? You saw the spark in him just like I did.

PETER: A flicker, at best.

AMY: I also feel it is important to note that although Cornell is new here, his familiarity with our history allows him to improve our practices, enhance our interactions. He is well-versed in our history. He knew what to look for.

PETER: Well... he knew who to listen to, anyway.

CORNELL: I was following my instincts

PETER: Is that what you call it?

AMY: What is that supposed to mean?

PETER: You talk a big game: how great he is, how much he can do. It's convenient that you forget how quickly you tried to fit him into a mold, make him just like all the others we've seen.

CORNELL: *(overlapping)* He's right. I'm not like all the rest, I am here to- *(he is cut off by the banging of the gavel)*

AMY: *(overlapping)* I object! I was simply- *(she stops to take in what CORNELL is saying.)*

GREGORY: He has a point.

AMY: We all did what we thought was best for all of us. A protective measure that, I will remind the council, was put in place because of Devin.

CORNELL **DEVIN**
What? What?

AMY: Don't act innocent.

IRENE: Amy.

AMY: No. It's important that the council be reminded of her failure. It seems enough time has passed for everyone to forget what she's done to us.

GREGORY: No one has forgotten Amy.

AMY: If everyone remembers so damned well, why are we even here.

IRENE: Because Devin's past is not in question. Her future is.

CORNELL: What did she do? (*looking directly at her*) What did you do?

DEVIN: Please don't.

CORNELL: What happened?

DEVIN: I didn't mean to.

CORNELL: (*whirls around to look at AMY*) What is going on here? (*jumps from his seat and approaches DEVIN*) Who are you? Why did you do that earlier?

DEVIN: What?

CORNELL: Why did you consume us? What is the purpose?

DEVIN: It's not a bad thing.

AMY: The hell it's not. Stay away from her! She is capable of so much more damage.

CORNELL: What did she do?

AMY: Never you mind.

CORNELL: Stop treating me like a child. What did-

MS. TIC: Amy, my dear. We all know how badly you have been traumatized by what happened. (*she approaches Amy gently*)

CORNELL: Will someone tell me what happened?

AMY: (*overlapping*) You want to know so badly? Fine. Here. (*AMY pushes away from MS.TIC, takes her gloves off and reveals her scars*)

SOUNDSCAPE OF FIRE

PETER: It was an accident.

DEVIN: I apologized, I did my time. It won't happen again..

AMY: Damn straight it won't.

CORNELL: Is that *why* you repressed me? Because I'm like her? Dangerous?

IRENE: (*gavel*) That is enough. (*the trio discuss*) Amy, though the council disapproves of your outburst, your point is valid.

PETER: What?

GREGORY: We can't deny the effect she's had on our community.

MS TIC: To do so would only give our past more power over future.

GREGORY: Amy, if I may, when do we forgive her for her mistakes?

AMY: Forgiveness changes nothing. It still happened.

GREGORY: Holding onto the past does nothing but squander progress, inhibit our ability to improve. No one is saying you have to forget... but it's time you let go and live in the present.

AMY: Gregory, that is exactly what I am doing. Cornell is our opportunity to excel. We've seen all Devin can do. She's had her chance.

PETER: You took that chance from her, Amy.

AMY: I did what needed to be done.

PETER: Who are you to decide what's needed?

AMY: You like to pretend that I do these things all on my own, don't you? What I proposed was agreed upon by everyone. Including you, Peter.

PETER: Maybe locking her away was what was best for us then, but look at her, now! She's matured. She's eliciting an even stronger and more stable reaction than before. Cornell is a infant.

AMY: Cornell knows better than to start fires.

PETER: I think we could use a little more heat around here...

AMY: Cornell has plenty of heat. (*they face off*)

IRENE: (*gavel*) Order! As we have exhausted all efforts to debate the issue, I would like to propose to the council that we conduct an experiment.

GREGORY: The clock is ticking.

IRENE: An experiment could prove to be illuminating.

MS. TIC: This is important.

GREGORY: Agreed, perhaps we should indulge the suggestion.

IRENE: Note that we will conduct spark reactivity reading 201 for the council.

REACTIVITY READING

PETER: I would like to take a moment to consider the emotional stability of the community. When is the last time we've worked on bettering ourselves? Everything is about satisfying others. What does that mean for us? Nothing. I don't mean that it doesn't make us happy. I mean that we don't know what happy for us is anymore.

AMY: How can you say that?

PETER: How can you not see it? Our routine, our lives, even those we choose to represent our community, they haven't changed.

AMY: Why change what is working?

PETER: It isn't working. That is why we're in this mess.

AMY: I will not risk any chance we have of stability on her.

DEVIN: I did what I thought was best.

AMY: Your actions were careless and we suffered the consequences.

PETER: - (*gestures toward DEVIN*) I object to the badgering of my-

IRENE: (*a shared look between the trio*) We'll allow it. (*MS.TIC gently approaches AMY and guides her toward DEVIN*)

AMY: We trusted you, we gave you access to everything- even history we aren't allowed access to anymore.

DEVIN: Burying things like that in the dark will only hurt you.

AMY: Your reckless demonstration nearly destroyed our life's work. The only reason we survived your explosive tantrum was my quick action. And I would do it all again, get burned 1,000 times to protect my family- just not at Devin's hand. Never. Again.

PETER: Amy, despite all that has happened you know deep down that her work is made for us, to help us discover ourselves. Isn't that why you originally were drawn to her?

AMY: I don't remember.

PETER: No? You picked her, after all.

AMY: First of all, how dare you? I-

CORNELL: (*overlapping*) You picked her?

AMY: It was a long time ago. I've learned from my mistakes.

DEVIN: I wasn't a mistake.

AMY: You were the biggest-

DEVIN: Amy, you left me in there, with all --

AMY: You belonged in there.

DEVIN: I faced it! I survived it! And this community can survive, too.

AMY: You are not to be trusted. You're probably why we went into code red in the first place.

PETER: You can't blame her for that. You have no proof.

AMY: Her history of destruction leaves little to the imagination.

GREGORY: We're spinning our wheels here, going nowhere. None of that is important.

MS TIC: It's all important.

IRENE: It's all relative.

m

GREGORY: Can we continue?

IRENE: Amy, your closing statements.

AMY: Peter talks a lot about what we want and what we need. We are not in this to please ourselves. We always talk about sharing ourselves with others. Cornell can help us move forward safely.

IRENE: Does anyone have anything else they'd like to add before the council deliberates?

CORNELL

I need to say something.

DEVIN

I need to say something.

DEVIN: Amy, I'm so sorry that I hurt you. That was never my intention. I only ever wanted to be exciting, helpful... I wanted to indulge you all in every way, enjoying and utilizing every wonderful inch of this place... I think I know it better than anyone. I promise I can teach you more about yourselves... and bring light to dark places. (*she gives the floor to CORNELL*)

CORNELL: I've been here, waiting for my moment to thrive in this community. I want the opportunity to explore and take those discoveries out there. I want to use who we are at the core to inspire communities outside of our own. I am great at what I do, and I deserve the chance to show that to you.

IRENE: Thank you. I think everyone should have more than enough data.

Beat

MS TIC: Ah, the golden hum of silence.

IRENE: Temporary, I fear. Gregory?

GREGORY: Now we must refer to the community. The decision made in this moment will be final and unalterable. Choosing the path Devin illuminates will mean having Cornell put away.

IRENE: Having him removed.

GREGORY: Will mean having Cornell removed. To choose Cornell's path means that Devin will need to be put away.

IRENE: Removed. (*Gregory glares at Irene*) Terms are important.

GREGORY: Time is of the essence. I will need to record the decision of every member present.

Deliberations

Song: *Time Tells* (verses 4 & 5)

*What, then, a writer?
Choosing your diction
Keeping the tone,
or hearing a cadence
Musical verbs
Music in the words...
color in melody...*

*What, then, a painter?
Writing with brushes
Playing with shadow,
darker, then fainter*

canvas of people and sky

Less like them all...more like the fauvists and more like Chagall.

Know your mind...

Time...

I will never be an actor!

Take your time...

Time...

What's a musician?

Painting with sound...

Time...

Verdict

IRENE: A decision has been reached. The community has decided to move forward with (insert name here).

IMPROV: The muse that is selected by the Council, to be removed, is dragged toward the restricted sector by the representative of the chosen muse. Irene stops them and questions their actions. She clarifies that the muse that is to be removed must be eliminated from the community entirely. The community members respond with outcries and charge at Irene.

Musion

The muses come together with MS.TIC and exclaim "Stop". Ms.Tic unveils and reveals that she was, and is the first muse. She helps the chosen muse move toward implementation. The muse sentenced to removal transfers their influence (by giving away their most prized object) to the other muse. This influence will inspire and enrich the chosen muse. MS.TIC leads the muse sentenced to removal toward the flame and they unite with it.

Unification

The muses come together with MS.TIC. She reveals that she was, and is the first muse. She helps the chosen muse move toward implementation. The muse sentenced to removal transfers their influence (by giving away their most prized object) to the other muse. This influence will inspire and enrich the chosen muse. MS.TIC leads the muse sentenced to removal toward the flame and they unite with it.

MS.TIC

Back to work!

MUSE

Back to work!

Voice Over: Welcome to the Mainframe. We have now reached a comfortable level of stabilization. We hope you have enjoyed your tour. We look forward to seeing you again.

APPENDIX K

Production Press

Copy and paste the link below to view the WTVR morning show interview with Director Heather Falks and Designer McLean Jesse

<http://wtvr.com/2014/08/18/live-inside-the-interactive-world-of-theatrelabs-time-tells/>

Copy and paste the link below to read the Gay RVA preproduction press on *Time Tells*

<http://www.gayrva.com/arts-culture/time-tells-brings-modern-story-telling-to-rva-event-space-via-theater-lab/>

Copy and paste the links below to view TheatreLAB's sneak peek at *Time Tells*

<http://youtu.be/IDKqJ49WO4g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDAzqn4Ivfw>

Copy and paste the link below to read the Gay RVA review *Time Tells*

<http://www.gayrva.com/arts-culture/theatre-review-time-tells/>

VITA

Heather Nicole Falks was born in San Antonio, Texas on May 16, 1979 and resided there throughout her childhood and adolescence. Out of high school she attended Lamar University and studied theatre arts; she transferred to Texas State University and graduated with a BFA in Theatre, Pre-Professional Directing in 2007. She earned her MFA in Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2015. Heather is an adjunct professor at VCU, a faculty member with SPARC the School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community, and a Teaching Artist with Cadence Theatre Company. Her contributions to the Richmond theatre community include her volunteer service as Co-Production Manager for The Shop. Additionally, she has worked as a teaching artist, actor and director with organizations such as: TheatreLAB, Cadence Theatre Company, Richmond Triangle Players, Firehouse Theatre Project and Chamberlayne Actors Theatre, VCU and SPARC. Heather is a civic minded artist and educator who thrives on collaborative creation. She plans to continue to create new work and educational programming with TheatreLAB in her new role as Director of Community Outreach.