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Development and Production of a One Act Play

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Departmental Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Department of Theatre

Examination date: 11/14/2016

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Antithesis

By Josiah Motok

Characters:

God, lord and master of the universe. Struggling with depression.

The Apprentice, God's intern and only friend. Training to attain the status of God.

Chorus (3 members), everyone else in the play appearing in both their own scenes and some of God's. In general, these actors are the main facilitators of the action of the play.

Setting:

Setting changes frequently, but the main area is Limbo, God's realm. There is a workshop table downstage left and a "prop box" upstage right. In the upstage center is a central unit, the one scenic element that remains in place throughout the entire show though its dressing changes throughout. This scenic element is how we establish unique locations in each scene while connecting these different areas visually.

Original Cast

God: Nick Sterling

The Apprentice: Jared Kane

Chorus Member #1: Allison Offutt

Chorus Member #2: Devin Laman

Chorus Member #3: Josiah Motok

Scene 1: Introductory monologue

CHORUS #3

Hello everyone! Welcome to the show, my Big Ole' Play, Antithesis. Thank you for coming out. Just to hit a couple of bullet points, please turn off your cell phones and note your exits on both sides of the theatre. Also please be aware that there is a scene that takes place in the dark, so if any of you are uncomfortable with that, please be aware of that. I also want to thank a few people before we start, starting with the UTC Theatre Department, which has so graciously allowed me to use their equipment and space and the University Honors College for pressuring them to do so. I also want to thank the people who have taught me how to do everything I had to to make this happen, namely Brian Barrett, my first drama mentor and role model, Gaye Jeffers, the woman who taught me how to direct in the first place, and Adam Micielica, who both trained my aesthetic eye and prepared me for how difficult this was going to be with his ridiculously challenging coursework. I couldn't be who I am today, right here, without you all. I also want to thank the cast and crew I have for this show. So many people, including people I never even asked help from, have worked incredibly hard to make this show a reality. And finally, a few words on this play. I wrote and directed it myself in the hopes of creating a modern take on Bertholt Brecht's Epic Theatre. My philosophy skews away from his at several points and very likely many of you aren't familiar with Brecht's work in theatre regardless, but the key you should take away from that is that this show is about an idea and communicating that idea. Brecht went out of his way to break the illusion of the theatre and jar the audience so that they had no choice but to assess the performance

as a performance, and that is what I hope I have been able to do myself. So if the play seems a little strange at points, it might be intentional. If you see tech work going on, it might be intentional. At the surface level, this play is about God.

God brings his seat out onto the stage.

But please understand that that's only a small part of it. It's also a show about being human, about being young and flawed.

CHORUS #2 brings his seat out onto the stage.

It's also about religion, and the universal significance it holds.

*CHORUS #1 brings a cross onstage and hangs it on
the central unit*

So please, don't be offended or confused. Any of you here that know me know that you shouldn't ever take anything I say seriously; it's never about what is said, but rather how it is said. This isn't about right or wrong, good vs. evil, or God vs. man. This show is just me. This is my experience.

Scene 2: God and Edmond

This is a musical, all-blocking scene telling the story of Edmond as he experiences his existential journey through life. While this story is being told, we are also be introduced to God as He watches Edmond's life unfold and has His own experiences and revelations. The purpose of this scene is to parallel the experience of humanity with the existence of God and engender the idea that being God and being Man aren't entirely different. This will be an ensemble cast scene and will be performed to music, something like George Winston's Cloudburst. At the end of this scene, God and the Apprentice meet.

Scene 3: It's a God's World

Limbo, God's realm. The Apprentice sits at a table with a big ledger book and an ink pen as he sends deceased people to their place in the afterlife.

CHORUS #3 stands in front of the workshop table.

APPRENTICE

In summation, you've lived a... colorful life. Thank God things aren't really that complicated up here, huh? So, you'll be annihilated, which sounds rough but plenty of people ask for it. Now please make your way offstage and don't touch anything.

CHORUS #3 walks off upstage left. The Apprentice folds his head into his hands as he sputters his lips, stands up, and walks around trying to regain his bearings during a long day of work.

APPRENTICE

Goddamn... There has to be a better way to do this.

Apprentice looks around himself, then stares off downstage right.

APPRENTICE

Next.

CHORUS #2 walks up to the table from downstage left.

APPRENTICE

Ok then, Terrence, right? You pretty much know what's happening, yes?

CHORUS #2

Of course, man, I've known this was coming for a fat minute.

APPRENTICE

Well, yes and no, it was... (looks through his ledger) Actually yeah, I guess all this probably looks about like something your belief could have resembled.

CHORUS #2

Well, I didn't quite expect the Lord of the Universe to work at a desk.

APPRENTICE

Don't let it validate any of your life decisions. The exit's back that way, just envision something you want and go for it.

CHORUS #2 begins walking offstage upstage left, but when he is halfway there the Apprentice calls after him.

APPRENTICE

Hey, I'm sorry. Good job, really. We really don't see that many people like you, so you should feel proud. I hope the rest of your life is better than it has been.

CHORUS #2 and the Apprentice look at each other for a moment. CHORUS #2 opens his mouth to speak, but Apprentice cuts him off.

APPRENTICE

Next!

CHORUS #1 walks up to the desk from downstage left. She bows, then extends her hand to the Apprentice.

CHORUS #1

It's an honor to finally meet you. You are God, right?

APPRENTICE

Umm I mean, sorta. This is His place.

CHORUS #1 grabs the center reserved chair and sets it up opposite the table.

CHORUS #1:

So, Jesus?

APPRENTICE

No, that's God too. That was God, I think it was the Bible that said that.

CHORUS #1

I'll take your word for it, I can't say I read it often.

APPRENTICE

No, but you were doing plenty else. You were quite the little activist.

CHORUS #1

I did what I could, unlike you.

The Apprentice looks up at her, surprised.

APPRENTICE

What?

CHORUS #1 collects herself for a moment.

CHORUS #1

Our entire world is collapsing. It's plagued by famine and genocide, and what are you doing? Children crying over their parent's corpses are being abducted while their governments are making sure the same is done somewhere else! I'm not pretending I ever believed in you or that you owe me anything, but aren't you the one with the power over all this? I'm begging you, I can't do anything else for them. But you can!

The activist has pushed forward right into the Apprentice's face, pleading. The Apprentice looks her over, looks at his ledger, and sighs.

APPRENTICE

... I wish I could.

CHORUS #1

But you're--!

APPRENTICE

Trust me, I wish I were, because I really can't predict how this is going to go. I'll try to help though, so consider this the divine intervention you've been hoping for.

The Apprentice rings a bell. The lights cut out and come up on God sitting by the mirror in the center, meditating. He spends some time looking down, then looks up at Himself, and looks down again. He repeats this, and then stands up, agitated. He looks

hard in the mirror, and then walks away. He walks from one side of the stage to the other, and then back again. He sighs, then sits down again with his back to the mirror.

GOD

I wonder what I'm gonna do today?

We hear the bell ring again. God, clearly agitated, makes a move to get up, but then thinks of whether or not it could have been a mistake and sits back down again. The Apprentice rings the bell again. God gets up angrily and crosses downstage as the lights come back up on the Apprentice and

CHORUS #1.

GOD

What!?

CHORUS #1 and the Apprentice look at God. God, realizing His audience, composes himself.

APPRENTICE

It's planet thirty-six (gestures towards ledger). I've glanced it over, and it looks rough there. This is an activist from there. I really think you should hear her out.

God has already started leafing through the ledger.

GOD

Let me look at it.

CHORUS #1

Planet thirty-six?

CHORUS #1 rises and begins going around the table on the center side. Apprentice rises to block her.

CHORUS #1

Planet thirty-six? You glanced over it? Do you even know what's going on?

God goes to the prop box and grabs some wood pieces.

APPRENTICE

We've got around 19,000 of these to keep up with. If you can just explain the situation to us, I'm sure we'd be more than happy to help.

God sets the wood on the table.

GOD

No need! Don't listen to him; I'm the master of the universe, he's just my Apprentice. I know exactly what's happening, I promise we'll take care of it.

God begins leading her over to the upstage right exit.

GOD

Meanwhile, you, my child, have done incredible works and have earned your place among the absolute best and brightest of my children. Thank you for all your service.

God kisses CHORUS #1 on the forehead and sends her off upstage right. He returns to the worktable and continues to wall off the globe while the Apprentice stares at Him. There is a long silence. Finally, God turns to the Apprentice.

APPRENTICE

So she was another “special one?”

GOD

Mm-hmm. Can you take care of this? I just need it covered up on this side.

APPRENTICE

Are you going to help them?

GOD

Well, technically speaking, no.

APPRENTICE

What?

GOD

What?

APPRENTICE

Why?

GOD

What?

APPRENTICE

People aren't just dying, they're suffering! You are their only way out of it.

GOD

You need to calm down.

The Apprentice angrily strides toward the mirror in the center.

GOD

Stop! Touch that and they all die!

The Apprentice stops, turns and faces God with an incredulous, shocked look. God smiles.

GOD

As in, they're gonna die anyway. I didn't lie to her. Her world is scheduled for its final destruction. It's done for.

God continues putting together the wall. The Apprentice moves to the globe table.

GOD

I understand how you feel, but I need you to trust me, ok? I always have a plan.

APPRENTICE

This is about our people, your people, not my trust. Do their lives really mean that little to you?

God stops building the wall. He gives a pained look to the audience, during which the Apprentice grabs a globe off the table. God then turns moves towards

the Apprentice at the globe table. The Apprentice counters him, moving to the worktable.

GOD

Ok, you need to talk. Let's talk. First, it isn't about how much they do or don't mean to me. Each and every one of them is a unique, wonderful individual, but fuck me if I have to be personally attached to every single one of them. That's impossible.

The APPRENTICE has swapped the globe on the table for the globe behind his back.

APPRENTICE

If it's impossible, why do you have so many planets? And if you're unattached to them, why can't you just kill the bad ones? You don't even punish any of them once they're dead.

God begins walking towards worktable, and the Apprentice counters Him again.

GOD

Ok, try this; imagine a gardener tending his crops. They each bear their own fruit and clean the air in their own wonderful way. The gardener may find them to be beautiful and enjoy every single one of them. But at the end of the year, they'll all die, and next spring entirely new plants will grow, essentially identical to the old.

The Apprentice has placed the globe back on the globe table and begins putting the globes away in the prop box.

APPRENTICE

Why are you telling me this?

GOD

Humans are very much the same. Getting attached to each one of them is impossible. Besides, what's your plan? You say we have too many planets to tend to, but you want me to save this one. That's two problems you can't tackle at once, you see? We don't have power over that.

APPRENTICE

That doesn't answer my question.

God stands up and returns to the worktable.

GOD

You'll understand one day, and on that day you'll make a wonderful God. For now, I need you to believe in me. Now then, let's watch this sucker burn!

*God hurriedly finishes His wall, and then grabs
Apprentice to hide behind the globe table.*

GOD

Get ready! 3, 2, 1... Boom!

*The lights dim as an explosion sound goes off, but
the globe on the table remains intact; rather, a flash
of light came from the prop box. God rushes over to
the worktable. The Apprentice checks the prop box,*

*then follows behind Him. God is angrily leafing
through his binder.*

APPRENTICE

What did you do?

GOD

I didn't do anything! It happened on it's own!

APPRENTICE

That was the wrong world!

GOD

Quiet!

APPRENTICE

What was happening on that world, I wonder!

GOD

Nothing! It was fine!

APPRENTICE

Well it's gone now! Was that part of the "plan!?"

GOD

It was scheduled for demolition, that's all.

APPRENTICE

And what about thirty-six? What happens there now? You told that woman you'd take
care of it!

GOD

And it'll be taken care of the same way everything else is! It's my own goddamn world!

APPRENTICE

So do it! Take care of it!

GOD

Don't you DARE tell me what to do!

God slams the table with His fists.

GOD

Perhaps you didn't listen to me earlier; I'm the lord and master of these worlds! I control and own everything worth spitting on! And if you dare to question me again, especially in front of one of my subjects, you'll be in a far worse place than all of those people you have to take care of now!

God storms off, leaving the Apprentice alone on stage. The Apprentice leafs through the mess on the floor and picks up the ledger. He puts it on the table, looks it over for a bit, and then closes it. He moves to pick up the globe on the floor as he addresses the audience.

APPRENTICE

No. I absolutely refuse to continue with this. This universe has lost its God, and it needs Him back. I absolutely will not allow this negligence to continue; for the good of these people, I'm going to take care of matters myself. In any way necessary.

The Apprentice takes the globe and exits

Scene 4: Brecht Street Scene

The lights come up on chorus members CHORUS #2 and CHORUS #3. CHORUS #2 stands atop a small box underneath a lamppost on a city street relating the story of a recent car crash.

CHORUS #2

No no no, you're not getting it. It was the BMW that went when he shouldn't have, that's what caused the pileup.

CHORUS #3

But the lights are both flashing.

CHORUS #2

Yeah, but there's a difference between flashing yellow lights and flashing red ones. The red ones mean stop.

CHORUS #3

Yeah, so the Toyota was supposed to stop.

CHORUS #2

No, no, you've got it backwards. (steps off his box) The Toyota was coming up Manning St., right here. This street has flashing yellow lights, so that means to proceed with caution, right? The BMW was crossing Peyton, with the red ones, and that means stop, THEN proceed with caution. So he had the stop, the Toyota had the go ahead. The BMW just went though, and that's why the other guy had to slam on his breaks and that's why there was a pileup.

CHORUS #3

That sucks. These lights are confusing.

CHORUS #2 gets back on his box

CHORUS #2

That's not the point though, that's not why I'm telling you this. The big thing about it was how the BMW drove away.

CHORUS #3

Maybe he didn't see it?

CHORUS #2

No dude, he stopped and looked right at the whole thing before he drove off.

CHORUS #1 walks out, visibly angry. She separates the two and pushes CHORUS #2 off his bench.

CHORUS #1

What are you doing out here? You're drawing customers away from my store with all this racket!

CHORUS #2

No I'm not, I'm just trying to explain something.

CHORUS #3

No, you are, I was about to go inside.

CHORUS #1

Well come inside, let's get you something.

CHORUS #3

But now I'm engrossed.

CHORUS #1

By what, this guy?

CHORUS #3

He's a good storyteller. He acts everything out.

CHORUS #2

And this is all really important, if someone would let me finish!

CHORUS #1

What is so important exactly?

CHORUS #3

He's talking about the pileup that happened at Manning Street and Peyton.

CHORUS #2

Yeah, but that's not what I'm talking about!

Gets back on his box

CHORUS #2

What I'm trying to talk about is all these boojie kids that feel like they don't need to take responsibility just because this is the ghetto side of town.

CHORUS #1

What do you mean? It was just a wreck.

CHORUS #2

No dude, it was more than that. The guy who caused it was some kid driving a BMW, and he just drove off after it happened!

CHORUS #1

Maybe he didn't see it.

CHORUS #3

I already said that, he said the guy saw it.

CHORUS #1

Ok, wait, what happened exactly?

As he retells the story verbatim he also uses the exact same motions and gestures. He once again steps off his box.

CHORUS #2

Ok, so... (resets the road) the Toyota was coming up Manning St., right here. This street has flashing yellow lights, so that means to proceed with caution, right? The BMW was crossing Manning, with the red lights, and that means stop, THEN proceed with caution. So he had the stop, the Toyota had the go ahead. The BMW just went though, and that's why the other guy had to slam on his breaks and that's why there was a pileup.

CHORUS #1

That sucks. These lights are confusing.

CHORUS #3

I said that too!

CHORUS #2 gets back on the box

CHORUS #2

But that's not the point, the big thing is... Umm... The point is...

CHORUS #2 looks stressed. He looks between the two chorus actors for a moment. He then looks specifically at CHORUS #3.

CHORUS #2

(whispers) what's my line?

CHORUS #3 looks around and back at audience, embarrassed

CHORUS #1

(circling her hand, goading him on) The real issue is...

CHORUS #2

Oh! Right. (takes a moment to get back into character, notices CHORUS #1 and CHORUS #3's disapproving faces) Don't worry about it, if they know what this scene is supposed to be about they'll think that was part of it anyway.

CHORUS #1

(nervously) So what's the real issue?

CHORUS #2

The real issue is the sense of entitlement the kid had. He didn't feel like he needed to stop just to help some poor commoner out because that's what he's been taught his whole life! It's an endemic issue our whole society is facing, and if we don't take a stand for ourselves against the bourgeoisie then we'll stay down here forever!

CHORUS #1

What if he was just scared?

CHORUS #2

You see, here's more of it! Some upper middle class shop owner trying to push me down, tell me that my opinions aren't valid. Typical class warfare tactics right here!

CHORUS #1

You can't call this class warfare just because I disagree with you and run a bakery.

CHORUS #3

Hey, don't tell him what he can and can't call things.

CHORUS #1

What?

CHORUS #2

Actually, I'll be leaving. The last thing I want to come from this protest is to attract customers to some boojie's business.

CHORUS #3

I'm with this guy.

CHORUS #1

But you didn't attract anyone, you actually distracted and pulled away one of my customers.

CHORUS #2

I'm done here!

CHORUS #1

God!

Scene 5: Apprentice's World

Limbo. God and Apprentice are squaring off, staring each other down. God is enraged, the Apprentice staunch, holding his globe protectively but very visibly. It is the same world that the activist from the previous scene came from.

GOD

How could you even think that you would get away with this!?

APPRENTICE

Because it's a better world now. I did your job for you.

GOD

Better how? Says who?

APPRENTICE

Because the people are far happier, and more of them believe in you now than ever before.

GOD

You have no idea what you're talking about. And you've betrayed me, you've directly disobeyed me.

APPRENTICE

Can't you see past your own ego long enough to see how much better this is for them?

GOD

Leave, now. Leave that abomination here, and don't ever come back.

APPRENTICE

If this is wrong somehow then teach me, show me where I've made a mistake.

Destroying what I've created won't make anything any better.

GOD

You wouldn't understand.

APPRENTICE

If you don't explain yourself to me, then that's your fault, not mine.

GOD

Fine. Take a seat.

APPRENTICE

We aren't talking here. I built this to show to you, and I won't let you avoid it now.

GOD

Fine. It'll be easier to explain your folly from the inside.

God and the Apprentice take the number thirty-six globe and walk to the central unit, circling it. As they do so, the scene changes. They are no longer in limbo; they are inside of a church. The chorus kneel at the altar as the pastor prays for the congregation.

CHORUS #1

Dear Lord, we stand before you humbly, and we pray only that you bless our people as they service the poor and needy, as you have called us to do. Lord, -- (volume fades slowly)

APPRENTICE

Three fun facts; one, the needy are actually outnumbered by benefactors for the first time in this world's history. Second, these charitable movements are being run almost entirely by religious organizations because faith in you has skyrocketed. Thirdly, this time two years ago, this church was a prison camp. Don't tell them, but there are still children's bones buried underneath the southern wall.

GOD

I see. So you consider these achievements.

APPRENTICE

Humanitarian efforts sparked by those following your teachings on the grounds of an old death camp? Yes, I'd say remarkable work has been done here.

GOD

I'm sure it was very challenging. May I request the next location?

APPRENTICE

Certainly. Where would you like to see?

GOD

I want to see a big city. Show me your best and brightest working together to make these great changes.

APPRENTICE

Certainly, I'd be delighted.

*They walk around the unit again as the set changes
to a city street.*

APPRENTICE

While we're there, I'd love to show you some of the schools we have. They're all of
outstanding quality, and --

GOD

Oh no, let's just stand here for a moment.

*God and the Apprentice stand on the sidewalk as
people walk past. Some read the newspaper, others
are on walks, while some simply take a seat and
enjoy the sun.*

GOD

Alright, I'm done here. Let me see a countryside village. I want to see life in the slow
lane.

APPRENTICE

Certainly.

*They circle the unit again as the set changes to
represent a small village.*

GOD

Yes, this looks right. Let's stay here for a moment.

APPRENTICE

What are we looking for exactly?

God doesn't answer. They simply watch the people from the sidewalk; Some read the newspaper, others are on walks, while some simply take a seat and enjoy the sun. The chorus is blocked identically to before.

GOD

Alright, I'd say that covers that. So what's on the other side of the world?

APPRENTICE

Alright, I'm no fool. I see what you're implying, and --

God walks back around the central unit, and the Apprentice follows behind Him quickly. The set changes again to a street in the harsh winter; again, the people walk through in the same pattern as before.

APPRENTICE

What is your point?

GOD

My point? Your people are all the same, so where's the variety, the intrigue? You said the schools were outstanding; What do you teach them there?

APPRENTICE

The same as any respectable school; science, maths, linguistics, philosophy. I've only really changed one thing on this planet; when people pray, I respond.

God turns and faces him with steely eyes.

GOD

You have them pray to you?

APPRENTICE

Not to me, to you. I just answer them. I picked this one world and decided that, yes, if someone sincerely wanted to talk to a divine being, they should be able to.

GOD

You... That's..!

APPRENTICE

It's no different from pretending I'm God when they die. I realized that the one change these people needed was to not be left alone in the universe. Maybe they're similar, but only in one way; they're not lonely anymore.

God stares down the Apprentice for a long time.

Suddenly He storms off towards the central unit and circles it, the Apprentice running close behind. The set returns to limbo as God prepares to destroy the world.

APPRENTICE

No! Those are good people!

GOD

Unlike the ones you killed to craft that disaster?

APPRENTICE

Yes, exactly! I did what was best for the whole.

GOD

You utterly removed the mystery from their lives. You destroyed their chance for individual growth, for innovation, for freedom!

APPRENTICE

My people are free to do whatever they pleased. Just because they aren't murdering each other or raping each other's children doesn't mean they're missing some major part of life.

GOD

Tell me, what do you think that that knowledge does to people?

APPRENTICE

What knowledge?

GOD

Knowledge of us. If they know we exist, then they stop searching for the answer to their isolation.

APPRENTICE

And how is this a bad thing? There are millions of people who live lives of misery and end themselves because of it, and you're telling me that's something to be preserved?

GOD

Yes! If that isn't clear to you, then you really are the same as them. And if that's the case, then you can never rule alongside me.

APPRENTICE

I would never, ever rule alongside someone who intentionally confuses and lies to his subjects when he has the power to help them.

GOD

You're useless to me if you can't understand me.

APPRENTICE

And you're useless to them if you can't understand me.

This comment strikes God deeply. He and the Apprentice stare at each other for a bit. Suddenly, God utterly destroys the globe. The Apprentice says nothing, but his face sets coldly. After a moment more, God turns to leave in a rush.

APPRENTICE

Where are you going?

God has exited. End scene.

Scene 6: Dark Room

The room is completely dark. In the background we hear a hollow sound of wind breezing over the ocean. There is a long, uncomfortable silence.

CHORUS #2

... Umm... Hello?

CHORUS #1

Please be quiet.

CHORUS #2

How long can you stand just sitting here? Or standing, or whatever you're doing.

CHORUS #1

Standing? Can you move?

CHORUS #2

Not really. I feel like I'm moving. It's hard to tell though. Can you see anything?

CHORUS #1

Of course not. There's no light here. There's nothing here. It's just you and me and an endless expanse of nothing.

CHORUS #2

... What's your name?

CHORUS #1

... Alex.

CHORUS #2

Nice to meet you, Alex. I'm Miles.

CHORUS #1

Nice to meet you.

Another long silence.

CHORUS #2

So, Alex... You really think we're dead?

CHORUS #1

I know we're dead, I saw it all happen. And we're definitely not on earth anymore. What do you think is happening?

CHORUS #2

I don't know, I just fell asleep. I could still be asleep.

CHORUS #1

You aren't.

CHORUS #2

So... Is this the afterlife?

CHORUS #1

Of course not, you idiot. Does this look like any reasonable kind of afterlife? We won't be here long, relax.

CHORUS #2

Where do you think we'll go then?

CHORUS #1

I'm going to be in heaven.

CHORUS #2

Heaven? Are you a Christian?

CHORUS #1

... In a way.

CHORUS #2

Do you think this is purgatory?

CHORUS #1

Purgatory doesn't exist.

CHORUS #2

Then what's this?

CHORUS #1

It's nothing! It's nothing at all. And that's why I know we can't stay here, things don't exist inside nothing.

CHORUS #2

Do you think we exist right now?

CHORUS #1

What?

CHORUS #2

I mean, we can't be inside nothing if we're both here, right? It would be one thing if we had literally nothing, but we're both here, so here must be somewhere, right?

CHORUS #1

I suppose so?

CHORUS #2

That's good. I'm glad we're here together. Otherwise, I might have agreed that we're nowhere.

Another long silence as CHORUS #1 tries to ignore him.

CHORUS #2

So, how did you die?

CHORUS #1

Please, I'm trying to sleep.

CHORUS #2

How can you sleep at a time like this?

CHORUS #1

At a time like what? There's nothing here, there's absolutely nothing to do. I'm trying to kill time until we wind up somewhere else.

CHORUS #2

I don't know. Sleeping is how I got here. I'm a little worried about doing it again.

CHORUS #1

I'm not.

CHORUS #2

... I lost a lot last time I went to sleep. What if I wake up again and there really is just... nothing. And no one.

A short silence.

CHORUS #1

Fine, I'll stay awake. I don't really feel tired anyway.

CHORUS #2

So you really think you'll go to heaven? Because it's not looking like that's the deal right now.

CHORUS #1

Nothing looks like anything right now. But I believe in God. And we're still here, right? We didn't just disappear when we died.

CHORUS #2

I mean, we sort of did.

CHORUS #1

I thought we agreed that here was somewhere.

CHORUS #2

We did, but that doesn't mean much. Here could be anywhere, and we could be here for any reason. Or no reason.

CHORUS #1 remains silent.

CHORUS #2

... I never really believed in God. I don't really see how this should be changing my mind.

CHORUS #1

Well, we're talking to each other, aren't we? So isn't that proof that there's something more to ourselves than our physical forms? There has to be more to us than our bodies, right?

CHORUS #2

I guess so? I don't really know. Why?

CHORUS #1

Wouldn't you agree that that means some sort of spirit must exist inside of us?

CHORUS #2

Maybe? Probably.

CHORUS #1

And that means there must have been more at work in our lives than we were aware of.

Given how intricate it all was, and then all of this, both of us being here now... don't you think it's reasonable to say there's something in control of it all? That's God. That's why I know we won't stay here. Do you see what I'm saying?

CHORUS #2 is silent for a moment, thinking.

CHORUS #2

Not really. First off, I still have a body, I think.

CHORUS #2 claps his hands together.

CHORUS #2

Ok, that's one mystery solved. And besides, none of that really proves anything.

CHORUS #1

But think about the world we just came from. Didn't it all seem too extraordinary, too incredibly complex to have come from nothing? Intelligent design made so much more sense than random evolution that it's laughable, and now we both know that there is an existence after death of some kind.

CHORUS #2

Yeah, except I don't even know that we're dead. You're the only one telling me that, and you're just a disembodied voice. I don't even know you really exist. It's like solipsism, you know?

CHORUS #1

Solipsism?

CHORUS #2

The idea that you're the only thing that exists and you've made everything and everyone else up. It was always hard thinking I could be that imaginative, but now all that's here is your voice, and you're saying a bunch of things I've heard before anyway. This seems like something I could think up pretty easily.

CHORUS #1

You mean you don't even believe I exist?

CHORUS #2

It's a little hard to believe in someone as hard to interact with as you and your imaginary friend.

A short silence.

CHORUS #2

I'm sorry.

CHORUS #1

... I was murdered.

CHORUS #2

What?

CHORUS #1

By my boyfriend. We'd been going out for almost a year.

CHORUS #2

I --

CHORUS #1

He was so kind, and he always believed in me. He helped me believe when I was losing faith. I thought things were going well. I think he let me think a lot of things. A year, Miles.

CHORUS #2 is speechless.

CHORUS #2

So, you --

CHORUS #1

But it was all a lie. I saw it all happen. And this was, what, two hours ago? So I'm sorry if I haven't said much. But I do exist. I promise you that.

CHORUS #2

I'm sorry.

CHORUS #1

And it isn't just me. God exists too, and He's going to come get us. Or at least me. You might still have a chance, that may be why He put us together, so I could help you save yourself!

CHORUS #2

But... you can't honestly believe that, can you?

CHORUS #1

Of course I do!

CHORUS #2

How can you still believe in God after all that!? Ignore all of the scientific evidence that supports evolutionary theory, the hundreds of alternative ideas and faiths that explain the creation and natural laws of the world, and all this bullshit right now, and you're still left with the question of why He would allow that to happen to you!

CHORUS #1

You can't say you don't believe in God just because you don't agree with the way the world works!

CHORUS #2

I think I can, from a morally logical standpoint. And also from right here, where is He?

CHORUS #1

From right here you have to accept that something exists outside of your...

CHORUS #1's voice trails off into the distance.

CHORUS #2

Outside of my what? Hello? Alex?

A short pause as we shift back to CHORUS #1.

CHORUS #2

Hello? Alex?

CHORUS #1

Miles? Miles? Miles! Hey!

CHORUS #2

Goddamn it, Alex! Don't leave me alone here!

The stage is dark and everything goes silent for a moment. After a few seconds, two spotlights come up on opposite sides of the stage, displaying CHORUS #2 and CHORUS #1 separately.

CHORUS #2

Dear God... This has to be a joke.

CHORUS #1

He's gone. I lost him. I couldn't even convince him of...

CHORUS #2

Damn it! Alex! Alex!

CHORUS #1

... He's gone.

2 seconds silence.

CHORUS #1

What purpose did I serve there?

CHORUS #2

Why were we together? There has to be some sort of reason.

CHORUS #1

I couldn't change his mind. I failed again.

CHORUS #2

Where did she go? Did God actually come and get her?

CHORUS #1

There was no reason for that. No reason at all.

CHORUS #2

Was she really my one chance to get out of this hell?

CHORUS #1

There's no reason for any of this!

*CHORUS #1 drops to her knees. After a couple
seconds, CHORUS #2 does the same.*

CHORUS #2

... God, are you there?

CHORUS #1

I can't believe this!

CHORUS #2

I'm sorry if I was wrong, don't punish me for this!

CHORUS #1

Where have you been all this time? Where are you right now? I've believed in you my whole life, so where are you now!?

CHORUS #2

I only believed what I thought was right, you have to give me another chance!

CHORUS #1

Please!

CHORUS #2

Please!

2 second silence.

CHORUS #1 AND CHORUS #2

What the fuck, God!?

After a brief silence, the Apprentice turns a flashlight on in the room. He looks around shining the light, nonchalantly investigating the area.

APPRENTICE

Where the hell are they?

He turns off the flashlight. End scene.

Scene 7: Microverse, Apprentice's Plan

God sits alone in the microverse meditating and staring at the basic building block of all existence.

The Apprentice slowly walks onstage, regarding Him from afar. God notices him, but says nothing in reaction to his presence.

APPRENTICE

I like the ambience.

GOD

Why are you here?

APPRENTICE

I came to bring you back. Three days is a long time for the universe to be missing its God.

GOD

I'll come back when I feel like it.

APPRENTICE

I came because I need your help.

More silence.

APPRENTICE

You still haven't taught me where to send the people you marked as special. I went through all of thirty-six's normals, but I need you to tell me what to do now.

GOD

Why do you need me to tell you what to do?

APPRENTICE

I'm sorry?

God turns and looks at Apprentice, almost crying.

GOD

I asked you why you need me.

APPRENTICE

Because you're God.

GOD

I haven't been God for three days. I don't know what's going on up there, but things seem to be totally fine without me.

APPRENTICE

Don't say that. You know how the universe would be without you. A trillion big bangs a minute leading nowhere. Scattered bands of people tearing each other's throats out in the name of a beef dinner. Without you, there's no order in the universe.

GOD

That's how things were, but not anymore. Everything is in order. Now I have nothing left to do.

APPRENTICE

Except for maintaining everything you've built.

GOD

There's something you need to understand about me; I haven't done anything in years. Hundreds of years. Why do you think I have so many planets? More than I can keep up with, you said? I don't. There's no reason to. Literally all there is left to do is to move the dead to their next lives.

APPRENTICE

(stunned) You do... Nothing? All those hours locked away by yourself then, doing what, just... Brooding?

GOD

No, more than that.

APPRENTICE: Then what? What in the world are you doing?

GOD

Learning.

APPRENTICE

(Exasperated) Learning what? You create and destroy worlds, generate conscious life on a whim! What could you possibly be learning that's more important than taking care of your people?

GOD

Where do you think you are right now?

The Apprentice looks around.

APPRENTICE

I don't know --

GOD

Take a guess.

The Apprentice is silent.

GOD

This is a very special place to me. I call it the microverse. The entire universe is made up of this (gesturing to the sphere).

APPRENTICE

And what's that?

GOD

This is the absolute tiniest, most minute piece of existence that we can see. Notice anything weird about it?

APPRENTICE

I don't know. They're spheres.

GOD

Exactly. But here's my question; can you make something smaller than this?

GOD throws the sphere to the APPRENTICE.

APPRENTICE

I guess not. Your point? (tosses the sphere to GOD)

GOD

Careful, don't break it!

APPRENTICE

You can break it?

GOD

(picks up the sphere) Can you? (throws sphere to the APPRENTICE)

APPRENTICE

(smirking) Can *you*?

GOD

Of course I can.

APPRENTICE

Mm-hmm. Well, I think I'll leave it as it is. The butterfly effect scares me down here.

(puts the sphere down).

*God looks at the Apprentice suspiciously, but opts
to move on.*

GOD

There's a reason I like to come here. What do you think that reason is?

APPRENTICE

I get it, the universe has limits, you can stop being so dramatic about it.

GOD

No, I absolutely can't, not until you understand. After enough time here you eventually realize that there are things I can't do. We're defined by these limitations, just like humans are.

APPRENTICE

Why does that matter?

GOD

You're not thinking about the big picture. What I'm telling you is there are things we don't know, things we maybe can't know. Given that to be true, how can you assert your opinion as absolutely right?

APPRENTICE

You still haven't explained what you're learning, or how.

GOD

... I'm learning how to live.

APPRENTICE

And that takes precedence over your people's happiness.

GOD

People's happiness isn't the goal! Even they understand that their happiness is second to my plan.

APPRENTICE

And what exactly is your plan?

GOD

To be happy myself.

The Apprentice is stone faced, unmoved.

APPRENTICE

And how exactly does leaving your people to suffer tie into that?

GOD

We can learn from how they handle suffering.

APPRENTICE

Good to see where your priorities lie.

GOD

What do you think it means when I say humans are made in my image? Just watch them, what are they always doing? They're escaping themselves by creating, by building, by writing and telling stories.

APPRENTICE

But that's why you can't be so distant, why you can't just abandon them! If they're so desperate to escape, how can you just leave them to themselves?

GOD

Because if I make their decisions for them, I won't learn anything.

The Apprentice steps away and recomposes himself.

APPRENTICE

So that's why you recycle people?

God takes a step back.

GOD

What?

APPRENTICE

Recycle people. Reuse them. The special ones. I know what you do with them, I'm not a fool. I just needed you to admit all of this to me before I could bring it up.

GOD

You knew all this? For how long?

APPRENTICE

So tell me, because this is important. How do you justify a system in which you take the most loving, most deserving people and subject them to the difficulties of life over, and over, and over again without helping them?

GOD

(angrily) How long?

APPRENTICE

I was almost willing to let you move forward with it as long as you remembered that in the end it is you who decides what right and wrong is, but now you've told me you don't believe in that either.

GOD

I do decide what is right and wrong.

APPRENTICE

Within boundaries you don't have power over. So, reason this out for me. Explain the morality of what you do to these people.

GOD

... Fine. You're right. It's cruelty, simple as that. Is that what you want to hear?

APPRENTICE

No, it's what you need to hear. Because I let them go. All of them.

God says nothing. He simply continues staring down.

APPRENTICE

... All of them. Your philosophers, your philanthropists. I freed them from the torment you'd subjected them to.

God still says nothing.

APPRENTICE

Don't you have anything to say? Maybe thank me for doing your job, maybe argue with me about my motives or morality?

GOD

Of course not. You did the right thing.

APPRENTICE

So you're ok with it?

GOD

No. I was doing what I was doing for a reason. I might start doing it again.

APPRENTICE

How can you say that? How can you admit I'm right in one breath and tell me you're going to reverse it in another? Do you have any sense of responsibility at all?

God turns towards Apprentice quickly, angrily.

GOD

What do you think I owe you? Or anyone else? At least they were made with a purpose. I kept them for a reason. They were the best and brightest! I told you humans were like plants; those people were my gardeners. So no, I can't justify what I've done. I punished the ones most deserving of reward. But the universe isn't a simple place, I had to make a decision. So I decided I'd keep this one thing. Don't I deserve that?

APPRENTICE

You are the most powerful being in the universe and you're allowing the entirety of creation to fall apart, all for this "one thing." I'm sorry, but no, you don't deserve this.

GOD

... Then that's that. I'm done. You're God now. This is what you wanted, right? Well, now you have it. You're right, and I'm wrong.

APPRENTICE

Are you serious?

GOD

Yes. I belong elsewhere.

APPRENTICE

I can't take your place! That's not why I'm here!

GOD

What--

APPRENTICE

(interrupting) --Well that's it. I'm out of ideas. You're on your own.

The Apprentice runs off, circling the unit. God quickly follows and we return to Limbo, but the Apprentice isn't there. God frantically searches around.

GOD

Where are you going? Come back!

The Apprentice has exited. God looks about desperately for the Apprentice, growing more agitated until he eventually flips the worktable. Suddenly, He is interrupted by the Apprentice's voice.

APPRENTICE

Wow, I had no idea you'd become this fragile.

God turns and looks at the Apprentice, who has appeared back up at the unit. End scene.

Scene 8: Tribal Dance Scene

This scene will be a dance scene inspired by pure entertainment value. The goal here is to create a moment that shocks the audience back into focus and exhibits the pure entertainment value of theatre, of man's ability to fascinate and engender awe in an audience. The dance is set to tribal drums and lasts about one minute and fifteen seconds. This will be an ensemble scene and we will be working with a co-director in preparation for it. It will express themes of conflict and betrayal that thematically prepare us for the final scene between God and the Apprentice.

Scene 9: God and Apprentice Finale

Apprentice and God are on opposite sides of the stage staring each other down. We've returned to Limbo, but all of the props aside from the central set piece have been removed.

GOD

What did you say?

APPRENTICE

Fragile. I leave for literally a minute and you trash the place.

GOD

Because you have to stay.

APPRENTICE

You'd miss me that much?

GOD

I can't have another God running around, especially one as unpredictable as you.

APPRENTICE

You're calling me unpredictable? I love the hypocrisy. So what are you going to do? Kill me?

God and Apprentice circle each other around the stage.

APPRENTICE

(laughs) We both know you won't.

GOD

... What are you?

APPRENTICE

Aha! Now we're being honest with ourselves. That's right, you really have no idea, do you?

GOD

You have all of my powers. You never explained where you came from.

APPRENTICE

You never asked. You were too busy feigning omniscience. It's hard to learn with an attitude like that.

GOD

You came to me --

APPRENTICE

When you prayed. Yeah, I know.

God is clearly embarrassed.

GOD

I never -- I'm the lord of --!

APPRENTICE

Yeah, and you prayed for someone to come ease your loneliness. (Apprentice smirks at him).

GOD

Then... (God drops to His knees) What are you!? Please, I need to know.

APPRENTICE

No, no. Get up. I'm not what you think I am. Really, I'm not.

GOD

Then what? What?

APPRENTICE

Damn, you know, I hate that I'm having to do this at all. I've tried helping you, reasoning with you, calling you out on your bullshit, and yet here you still are, on your knees. It would be hilarious if it weren't so frustrating.

God stands up, angered.

GOD

Tell me what you are!

APPRENTICE

Hey, there we go! There may be some hope for you yet.

GOD

(turning away). Enough. I won't be played with by a madman.

APPRENTICE

Hey hey, don't discredit me like that. Is that how you solve your disputes? I'll tell you, I'm just letting the dramatic tension build. But before I do, I have to ask you one question; why did you tell me I should be God?

GOD

... Because you'd be better at it.

APPRENTICE

Ah. Fascinating! Why?

GOD

I'm tired.

APPRENTICE

No no, this isn't about you, it's about me. Tell me why.

GOD

Because I'm tired! But you, you aren't. You work hard. You believe in yourself.

APPRENTICE

Ah, I believe in myself? Do tell.

GOD

What are you talking about? What is this!?

APPRENTICE

Oh no, don't stop now! You told me I'd be a better God than you! You tried to revoke what you were born to do, and now your successor is commanding you, so answer the damn questions!

GOD

Watch your tone.

APPRENTICE

You said I should be God because I believe in myself. Explain that.

GOD

What do you want me to tell you? You believe in the role of Godhood. You're like I used to be.

APPRENTICE

(satisfied) There's a reason for that. Alright, you answered my question, and now I'll answer yours. You say I'm like you once were. Well, I'm exactly that. I am you.

GOD

What? But --

APPRENTICE

Don't even bother trying to reason it out, I'm gonna tell you. I'm the old you, and a manifestation of the universal need to believe in you. To believe in God.

God slowly walks over to him.

GOD

And so, you're here to...

APPRENTICE

To help you believe in yourself. I live inside everyone, but the me inside you is... well, you. It's funny, in most people's minds I'm some sort of higher power or divine force, but in your mind I'm basically an intern. Anyway, let me ask you something; why do you think I exist?

GOD

Because belief is an integral part of life?

APPRENTICE

Because you have to believe in yourself. Look, I get it. Numbers are down. People talk about you as more of a vague idea representing omnipotence more than a real person, and I get that it makes it hard. But without you, the universe has no substance, it has no glue.

I'm the last line of defense against that. I assume I manifested like this because it's what you wanted to see most. It is, isn't it? Your own God?

GOD

... I'd like to know if there is one. I don't know everything.

APPRENTICE

Come on, if you can't be honest with yourself then you're really just crazy, so admit it.

You wanted a friend. That's fine, everyone wants one of those. So, that's why I'm here.

But I also represent all your old beliefs. You know, all the ones that made you good at your job.

GOD

Why should I believe you?

APPRENTICE

That's a hilarious question, given the circumstances. But I'm going to be gone soon. This is all or nothing. I need you to promise me that you'll be able to pick everything back up when I'm gone. I'm here because you're not confident in yourself, but you believe in me, don't you?

*The Apprentice leads God over to the mirror,
placing his hands on God's shoulders and making
him look at himself.*

APPRENTICE

(emphatically) So believe in me. Become me again.

*The Apprentice backs away, leaving God to
contemplate himself.*

APPRENTICE

(backing away) Please. The universe needs this.

God remains silent for a tense moment.

GOD

So, you're the old version of me.

APPRENTICE

Yes.

GOD

So I think it's fair to say that I've seen more, experienced more than you have.

APPRENTICE

... I guess you could say that.

God turns and faces the Apprentice.

GOD

I told you you think like a human, but that's only half true. What I meant is that you think like someone who hasn't experienced a million lifetimes, someone who still holds hope for the future. You have to understand, my friend; I've been doing this job for far, far too long.

APPRENTICE

And so you just tried to pass it off? If that's all you wanted, why did you wait so long?

GOD

Because you weren't ready yet! Yes, a God should do more than I have, but far less than you would. Allow me to explain something about humans; the more you control them, the more they'll fight back, and their violence won't be directed at you. Without free will, they'll go mad.

APPRENTICE

I don't fully understand.

GOD

Of course you wouldn't. But this is why I destroyed your world. Your people had too much knowledge to be free. The more you know, the fewer options you have. I know... everything. If I want to, if I bother to look. So every decision I made, it just became... Mechanical. Meaningless. I felt like a slave to my own logic, stagnating in my perfection. And that's when I realized humans were struggling in the exact same ways. And if I didn't interfere with that, they'd come up with some truly astonishing solutions.

APPRENTICE

Like credit card companies and human trafficking.

GOD

I meditated. I created new worlds. Some of them I threw away, others I kept. But it didn't work. Not even a little bit, because I was alone. With no one to talk to there was no reason for any of it. So that... That's why I prayed. And then you showed up.

APPRENTICE

What are you saying?

GOD

I understand what you're saying, and what you're trying to do. But, unfortunately, you're wrong. Humans don't need me. They barely want me.

APPRENTICE

But you still have so many who believe in you!

GOD

I haven't given them a reason to believe in me in two thousand years.

APPRENTICE

And yet, somehow, they still do. And they're right.

GOD

Don't read too deeply into that. After all, it's impossible to go through life without some relationship with me.

APPRENTICE

... So what are you gonna do now?

GOD

After this? I don't know. I'll have to keep looking.

APPRENTICE

Well, I hope you'll consider what I said. If you believe in me, I know you can believe in yourself.

GOD

Yes, and... Thank you for that.

APPRENTICE

Good luck.

*The Apprentice slowly turns and begins to exit, but
God calls after Him.*

GOD

Actually, can you... stay just a moment longer?

APPRENTICE

Why?

*CHORUS #2 walks out and sets his chair where it
was in scene 2. Throughout God's next line, he sets
up his chair the same way.*

GOD

The last time I prayed, you appeared from inside me. I thought I'd found God, but it turned out to just be me. And if I do it again after you're gone, I'll be afraid whatever happens is just me again, so... I want you to pray with me.

*God and CHORUS #2 are now kneeling on their
chairs. CHORUS #3 Brings out the cross and
mounts it on the central unit.*

APPRENTICE

(laughs) After all this, you're gonna try that again? Do you really think anything will come of it?

GOD

No. But who knows? I don't.

APPRENTICE

Me neither, I guess.

The lights go down except for on the two chairs.

The Apprentice stands above God. After a moment,

God stands up, and the two of them walk off

together. After this, CHORUS #2 stands up, walks

over to the cross, and leans against it. End scene.

Scene 10: Closing Monologue

CHORUS #3

And that's it, I hope you liked it. I certainly did. I've had a wonderful time with this show, but coming to the end of it, I think there's still one question that needs to be answered; what was it about? It's scary really, how a piece of art can get away from you. In the end, that's what this show became about to me; art, and a lack of power. Not the performance, not what you just saw, but what I experienced was an exploration into what it is to create art and deliver it to people. It's nearly impossible, however, to truly communicate an experience to someone without making things incredibly blatant, and I realized working on this show exactly why I used this medium. To me, art is about entertaining and communicating, and for those things there really isn't an art form that compares to theatre. Paintings, for example can both entertain and communicate, but it does other things far better, things I'm not as interested in. But what seems to have happened in all art today is that people's interpretations have run wild and the view of the artist is no longer held sacred, often not even valid. I'm not saying people shouldn't interpret, but at least some pieces of art should be interpreted through the vision of the creator. That's why I'm not done until you understand the decisions I've made. So what was this show about? What was I trying to communicate? It took me a long time to figure it out, but to me, this show was about communicating myself. As I said in the beginning, this show is me. My experience. It really is incredible how little power I had over it, I've realized. I realize now this is the only way it could have possibly been because of the state of mind I was in while I was writing it. I've always had a moderate to severe

problem with depression, and it stems from a difficulty I have with relating to people. I feel alone for so long that the numbness subsides into legitimate madness, to desperation. I feel like the only being in the universe. I've prayed before for that loneliness to be eased, but the answers I got seemed to come only from within my own mind. And as an outside observer of nearly everything, I've become far too good at predicting and controlling my world around me, and that so often prevents me from being able to become surprised or excited. And just before I began writing this show and up until really even now, I developed a significant problem of disregarding my capabilities, of abandoning responsibilities and requirements just because I wanted to be surprised, to not know what was coming. So while I felt alone, overpowered, unexcited, and like all my answers came from me alone, I created the character of God. The master of the universe who's bored, lonely, rejected his obligations, and has created his own imaginary friend to escape it. And so, in a way, this show became my salvation, it became my chance to break out of everything you've seen portrayed tonight. This show was about communication, and I'm incredibly thankful to each and every one of you who came out to listen to it. I'm not here to teach you anything; I, like God, can't tell you what to do. I only hope I was able to communicate a little bit about what it's like to be me, which I could only do through a show, a shattered, disjointed show with random dance scenes and way too much drama because that is how I experience life. Often enough I look around and I really just feel like I'm in a movie, and I want you to see that, to see me. That's what I believe art is about, and I really do believe that it's the key that so many of us are missing. Because in spite of who I am and how I experience life, as I look around this

room I see an incredible number of people who I wouldn't give up in my life for absolutely anything. In the end, we're all the same, and we need each other to keep going. I know I need all of you. So thank you for listening to what I've had to say. Remember that God loves you, and so do I. Thank you all for coming.

Curtain

Josiah Motok

A Reflection on the Production of *Antithesis*:

A One Act Play as a Department of Theatre Honors Thesis

Project Director: Steve Ray

Introduction and Early Project Phase

As my departmental honors thesis for UTC's theatre department I wrote, produced, directed, stage managed, and performed in a one act play that I named *Antithesis*. I also designed the lights and did the carpentry work for the set. The play was performed on August 21st, 2016, the Sunday night before the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester. The show had five roles, one of which I performed (the smallest one; I really didn't want to act in the show, but circumstances demanded it).

My early motivations for this project were simple enough; I wanted to challenge myself to create a show from beginning to end. When I was first considering what to propose to the DHON proposal committee, that was the only thing on my mind. I didn't have a specific play in mind; I just knew that whatever it was going to be, I had to write it myself and also produce it. I realized that I wouldn't be able to produce it during any time other than the summer because of potential conflicts with UTC Theatre's normal season, so I proposed early and did the majority of my DHON work prior to my senior year of college.

I set this goal because I wanted to use my DHON to figure out what I wanted to do with my major. I had dabbled in many different areas of theatre already; I had written, produced, directed, acted, had done a little bit of lighting design and had done a lot of technical work, but I still hadn't decided what I wanted to do with theatre, so a project that made me run the entire gamut seemed appropriate.

During the early process of designing my proposal and discussing the project with Gaye Jeffers, I began to grow incredibly excited. I realized that this project was going to be my first grand artistic statement, and I needed to make it more than good; it had to be *meaningful* in some

way. I had spent all of my prior education producing other artist's shows as practice, and along the way I had been forming my own opinions on what kind of theatre I wanted to work on. I realized that this practice had never been for any other reason than for me to be able to create my own shows one day, and this was my chance. It was finally my opportunity to show people how far I'd truly come, and it was incredibly exciting.

I wasn't exactly sure, however, what I wanted to say about myself or my field. I did know, however, that I wanted to do something that I had never seen before. I also felt that many of the plays that are done today were written too long ago for audiences to easily connect with. This makes it the job of the director to almost rewrite the play into something relatable to the audience. In my opinion, this put something of a wall between the theatre professional and their audience; after all, the audience always knows when things aren't as they were designed to be. Therefore, I also wanted my play to be something that could be very easily related to. Again, I didn't know exactly how to do this, but it was one of my goals starting out. Finally, I wanted my play to teach something meaningful. All the relatability in the world means nothing if the audience walks out of the room thinking the same thoughts they were as they walked in. A single night of emotional affectation alone has never changed the world, and being the young idealist that I am, I most definitely planned to try to change the world with my show.

All of these goals, I'll admit, were incredibly lofty and somewhat condescending. I, a junior in college with only two years of theatrical training, set out to create a show that would try to go as far as to comment on the state of modern theatre itself. Given the arrogance of this goal, I would like to assert two disclaimers here; for one thing, I knew exactly how arrogant this was, and I also fully knew that I would not succeed at my skill level. Secondly, a commentary on

theatre wasn't the sole purpose of the show. That was tied to my intentions, but I was primarily focused on developing my craft and designing a show that could have significant educational and entertainment value.

Background Research, Preparation

The first major concept that I latched onto was for my show to focus on modern perceptions of God in western culture. This was a subject I had been interested in for a long time. I had done some historical research on the development of religion in the U.S. and had particularly noted how atheism and agnosticism has been on the rise since the 1960s. Much of our society seems to have shifted towards more secular and scientific thinking, but religion is still an incredibly powerful force in our society scientifically, politically, and philosophically. It fascinates me to see how religion orients our discussions on matters of science and policy in a society that seems to have generally come to self identify as "secularized." It seems to me that we now think in secular ways, but our collective thought process is still heavily informed by a belief in a god of some kind.

To start, I admit that this is perhaps a gross misunderstanding of our society on my part. Odds are that I'm allowing religion less sway in this model than it actually holds in real life, for one thing. I could also easily see this being a mistake made through my own bias; I personally feel that my own relationship to the world is very similar to this model. As an agnostic who was raised in a highly religious environment, I find myself considering questions through secular eyes that are tinted with an oddly mystical way of thinking, and this likely has influenced the relationship I see between the west and the divine.

Because of this, I realized at a certain point that my model of society was based too heavily on my own anecdotal experience for me to move forward speaking from a place of intellectual authority. I was able to adapt, however. At the core of the project was this idea of creating a set of given circumstances and a specific personality to go behind the otherwise vague and impersonal sense of “god” that we get from reading religious texts such as the Christian Bible. In my original proposal I had outlined plans to research other religious texts such as the Quran and the Talmud (and many other texts used by a major religion prevalent in western societies) and create the character of God in a theatre piece as an amalgamation of all this research. I wanted to have different scenes in which God was more representative of one religious mindset over the others and explore how everything that has been said of Him could be simultaneously true.

As I said, however, I realized that I simply wasn’t enough of an authority to comment on the western perception of God. Furthermore, the deeper I dug into it, the more I realized that the topic may be too big for any individual performance. It would be almost impossible to objectively represent a topic like that, and it would only be disrespectful to color a subject like that with my own bias. Simply put, there is no way to generalize the western idea of God; it’s too multifaceted for that, and there would be far too many rules to follow or artistically break if it were done as I was envisioning it. For these reasons I pivoted away from that line of thought and began focusing on the core of the project again, namely creating a believable representation, complete with given circumstances, of the Christian God specifically. In doing that, I was able to retain the crux of the project, but I was able to let go of several things that inhibited my artistic

possibilities and would have almost certainly resulted in a massive misrepresentation of several religions.

As far as the research that went into the form of my play, I largely focused on Bertolt Brecht. I considered the works of Euripides for a time because of his sometimes ironic portrayures of the Greek gods (something very similar to what I was planning on), but Brecht became my primary interest because I was trying to distance my play from any statement of fact or any assertion of intellectual dominance for reasons given above. Brecht grabbed my attention because his works were highly heady and philosophical, but at the same time his genre of epic theatre prevented his works from emotionally manipulating his audience into believing anything specific or making any statements that would be left unquestioned. During the first semester of working on the show, I spent a lot of time studying his play *Mother Courage and her Children*, and was constantly impressed by how he could make such bold statements as he does and still allow his audience to utterly disagree with him. The dissociation between the play and reality that his techniques induced fascinated me, and I knew almost immediately that I needed to incorporate that philosophy into my work.

Beyond that, my research took the form of reading about the afterlife and the moral implications of different kinds of afterlife systems on the God that implemented them. These readings helped me to logically break down and analyze the character of God based on policies, which granted me huge insights into what kind of character I wanted to create (remember, I didn't have an agenda as to what God should be like; I simply wanted to show what I felt it would be easy to argue was there). I also read selections from Robert McKee's *Story* and Ronald Tobias's *20 Master Plots and how to Build Them* to improve my understanding of plot structures.

The Christian Bible obviously remained a major source of research for me, and I spent a lot of time reading through it and analyses of its old testament. The old testament seemed much more important to me than the new because it's less known and the reconciliation between God's differing types of decisions in the old and new testaments were absolutely critical in devising my character.

In the end, my research phase was fairly short and somewhat informal. The focus of my research was just to enrich myself academically and philosophically before approaching my writing, and it worked out quite well after I let go of the loftier, unrealistic academic goals I started out with. The process stayed very creative, and by the end I had a very large collection of different ideas and concepts that I could pull from. That was more than enough for me during the writing phase, but I found out that that was where the real challenge lay in wait for me.

Writing

The writing phase of this project was by far the longest phase. Starting out, I also thought that it would probably be the easiest. I had written before and had no concerns that I wasn't more than capable of producing an interesting, high quality piece of work. This confidence was egged on by how excited I was by my concept; though I didn't know what I actually wanted to happen in the show, I knew that what I had conceptually could turn into a piece that was both entertaining and deeply impactful. While I would argue that that is in fact what I wound up with, I had absolutely no idea how difficult that was going to be to achieve.

During my first meeting with my DHON director, Steve Ray, I proposed to him what I thought was a solid plan; I wanted a full draft of the play written by the halfway point of the

semester, which at the time was within seven weeks. I wanted to write two scenes a week and essentially assemble a library of work that I could pull from. Given that I wanted to write the play with an episodic, disconnected structure, this seemed very reasonable to me. Structurally, all I wanted was for the play to be a collage of different moments that I pieced together thematically, and my approach would have given me a lot to pull from and also given me a lot of practice in my writing.

That plan went absolutely nowhere, however. Steve quickly dialed me back and began to walk me through a more standardized and reliable writing process. He also cautioned me against using a purely episodic structure for my play, reminding me that it's a far less experimental structure than I was assuming and also has a tendency to alienate western audiences. He had me write a personal credo and summaries of my artistic intentions, read Robert McKee's book *Story* and excerpts from *20 Master Plots and how to Use Them*, and write simple and complex scenarios detailing the specifics of the play (such as the world it inhabits and who the characters in it are). The most important thing he taught me was that before I wrote my play I had to create the world that it lives inside. This wound up taking an absolutely unprecedented amount of time to wrap my head around and delayed my getting around to writing actual scenes by almost four or five months. This seemed absolutely destructive to my process given my timeline, but those months and that process turned out to absolutely critical.

The scenarios Steve had me write before I could begin with the scenes were extremely difficult for me. This was primarily because I simply couldn't generate a plot that I was interested in. I had a good idea of how I wanted my world to look and feel, but Steve had begun pressuring me to write a traditional narrative structure style plot, which I was far from ready for.

As little as I wanted to do that, I couldn't help but agree that I had to know the rules before I could break them, so I tried my hand at writing a traditional plot. I definitely learned something about myself from this process; I am absolutely terrible at designing plots.

It was interesting, really. I'm not bad at analyzing or understanding plot, but there was some sort of block in my mind that kept me from being able to create one that I was interested in. Each potential action my characters could take seemed utterly insufficient next to the myriad of alternative possibilities. Because of this, I didn't wind up finishing my scenario until well into the summer because I realized that I really didn't know what kind of show I wanted to write. I decided that I did want to stick to a traditional structure, however, because I wanted to take my DHON as a learning experience and I had realized that I wouldn't understand writing until I could overcome this weakness.

As I mentioned earlier, Steve had me read Robert McKee's book *Story* to learn more about writing. Reading this book was a hugely important part of my development; in short, *Story* taught me to write honestly. I had to learn to write what I truly believed in. It went far deeper than content; my honesty had to be manifest in the form of the play itself. In *Story*, there is a section where McKee breaks down the differences between archplots, miniplots, and antiplots. He explains that many young writers try to write miniplots and antiplots because they are trying to draw attention to the writing and their own skill, and that that is a massive compromise on your story itself. This hit me hard at first because I felt it may well be why I was writing the way I was, but at the end of the chapter he discussed the reasons for writing with any of these forms more. He explained that at the core of these styles of writing is the philosophy of the work itself; those written with archplots implicitly indicate that things happen for a reason, that A causes B

which causes C. Miniplots and antiplots, meanwhile, break this idea down and imply that the universe is a more random place than that. As much as McKee argued that one should generally use a traditional plot structure, he also ended his chapter by saying that the writer must write in the way that he truly believes the world works. Of all the numerous lessons I received from *Story*, this was by far the most important.

All that said, in the end I did try to keep a semblance of a plot to structure the play around. I wanted to keep the episodic nature of the show intact, but I also had a specific story in mind that I wanted to root my audience in. The effect I was hoping for this to create was something of a dichotomy between the real and the unreal. I wanted people to be constantly reminded of the absurdity of the reality they were experiencing while also being drawn into it, and I hoped that that would cause the audience to reflect on the nature of their own realities as well. It was partly a play at developing more of an epic theatre style of dissociation within the work, and it was also a commentary on the nature of the world of the play itself; the plot could be followed, but there were many deviations and rabbit holes that the play went down, which I think is representative of the kind of world God himself lived in in this show.

Having decided what form I wanted my play to take and gotten rid of most of my fears that I was writing something out of mere self-indulgence, I was finally ready to create the world of my play. At this point, it was almost a month into summer, and I had to put off the first rehearsals in order to make time to finish the play to my satisfaction. With my DHON director primarily in Alabama during this time, I was left mostly alone with the project. Even though I had made progress, this was probably the most stressful time of the entire process for me. Deadlines were fast approaching and passing, and I still couldn't bring myself to actually write

any dialogue because I was caught up on designing the flow and rhythm of the play. I spent a lot of time in this phase planning different scenes, outlining them with tarot cards and other writing tricks, and creating outlines of the play to see how the different scenes looked next to each other. I was also grappling with the question of what exactly I wanted God and the Apprentice to discuss in their scenes. Because of the semi-episodic nature of what I was writing, the themes and concepts behind the show became much more important than either the plot or the dialogue, and so I paid a perhaps undue amount of attention to it.

In the end, I felt that I was only barely ready to begin writing anything, but I had hit the point where I simply had to begin because the rehearsals were set to begin in a week. My cast was already decided, the schedules laid out, and I had begun doing director's prep work, but not a single word of the actual script had been written. So I began writing furiously, desperately trying to actualize everything that I had worked so hard to form in my mind. I'm not proud of how this process worked out, but at the same time, I am still happy that I spent as much time building the world and the outline as I did because once I did start writing, there was nothing to do other than put words into a play that already existed.

My script came out somewhat less refined than it could have been, but writing that quickly forced me to call on what I knew about my characters and their opinions in my head. This gave the entire play a very organic feeling, I believe. The individual lines the characters had weren't fully fleshed out thoughts; often they were simply the best I could express myself in the given moment, and that carried over very well into the exchange between God and the Apprentice. Given that I wanted the dialogue throughout the show to be naturalistic in an attempt

to connect the audience with the characters more immediately, this may have actually wound up working to my advantage.

Within three days, I had the script almost fully written and had passed on what I had to a trusted editor who assessed the script as I finished it up. We spent the last four days of the process editing very intensively, removing clunky lines, writing in new interactions to flesh scenes out, and trying above all to maintain the rhythm and character of the show. This week was extremely intense; the script represents probably about 50-60 man hours of writing that occurred during this week alone.

Looking back, I obviously wish I could have been more efficient with my time, but I'm extremely proud of what I wound up creating. Again, I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into when I started writing, and so I'm not surprised that things were as close as they were. But in spite of how little time was actually spent writing dialogue, the script I wound up with was far, far better than I ever believed I would actually be able to produce, and I feel this way because I really do think I wrote honestly and knew my world before I began writing. It created the exact right balance of dissociation and connection with the audience that I wanted it to. Though the script was written quickly, the dialogue flowed naturally because I was so in tune with my characters, and their development through the discussions they had was actually accessible and understandable in spite of being what I would consider very deep and difficult. I also felt very strongly about its pacing. The pseudo-episodic structure was pieced together as I wanted it. The miniplot between God and the Apprentice also went fantastically; the four scene structure of their development began moving in a clear direction with evident conflict, but halfway through the plot essentially broke down and spiraled in an unsolvable direction. From the perspective of

someone looking for a tight plot this seems weak, but I felt that this was the best example in the entire show of form reinforcing content because at the core of this play was the idea that things move in a clear direction, but then a sudden mistake and the right character flaw can overwhelm everything. Scenes seven and nine particularly spun in completely different directions as God finally broke down, and every tactic from the Apprentice had to completely change to accommodate it.

In the end, I was very happy with the script. It was finished exactly two weeks before the night of the show, but it was clear and concise and communicated what I wanted it to well enough that it was simple for the actors and I to turn it into what it was meant to be. I firmly believe that if I hadn't gone through the whole process that I did, my show would have been the worse for it. It would have been better rehearsed, but we simply wouldn't have hit that balance or found that sense of complexity. The experience we crafted was only possible because of the amount of time that went into it during the writing phase, which makes me want to write much, much more.

Production Phase

The production process for *Antithesis* was a strange time for me. It's difficult to look back and discuss it because, in a way, I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. I knew *how* to do everything I had committed to (directing, acting, stage managing, designing, and building), but combining all of these things together into an eighteen day time frame while attempting to maintain an appearance of competence to my actors was an extraordinarily difficult task. Essentially not a moment passed during these eighteen days in which I wasn't working out the logistics on exactly what needed to happen when and how.

One thing that I knew, however, was that my first and greatest priority was getting the actors to understand their roles and the play itself. I could see that early readings had piqued their interests, which was fantastic because it led to them throwing themselves into the characters one hundred percent, but that interest alone wouldn't have been enough. One thing about the script was absolutely certain; it was dense and it was complicated. The plot was abnormal and each scene was oriented as much around developing the philosophy of the show as it was about developing the characters. The first things that I needed the actors to understand was their own place inside that dynamic.

Therefore, at first I focused on having intimate rehearsals with the chorus and the God/Apprentice duos separately, and I concentrated very heavily on blocking the scenes in ways that would help the actors understand their intentions. This showed in the final product in both good and bad ways; much of the blocking in God and the Apprentice's scenes (particularly seven and nine) became fairly symbolic and organic, which helped the actors and audience both understand the play better. What I lost from this was certain compositions I would have liked to incorporate, particularly focused around the mirrors.

What I gained from it, however, was far more important. Within about four days, the actors completely understood their characters and what the purpose of each scene was, what philosophy each moment was driving, and *why* that scene required that thought behind it. Once that baseline was established, I was able to ease my focus off blocking and reorient myself towards doing the technical work.

I began to invite my sound and set people to rehearsals and began focusing on how the lighting should work, all in between correcting line readings and taking feedback from my actors

and designers. I also had my set designer focus on how the actors moved through the space and which moments cut people off from the audience so that I could keep better track of compositions while working on lighting. After the first week, my interaction with my actors became significantly less hands on; I became more of an orbiting force that occasionally interjected into their practice than anything else.

There was definitely a concern at this stage that I would lose a degree of respect and connection from my actors as they saw me scramble about to put together so many different elements of the show, but fortunately this never became the case. I made it a point to sit down with some of the actors individually to discuss how the process had to work and what they felt they needed from me. I had particularly fruitful discussions with Jared Kane, the actor who played the Apprentice, and Allison Offutt, who played Chorus Member 1. These two actors very quickly came to an understanding of the play and their characters and through that became, in a sense, my assistant directors. With their understanding of the play and their scenes, I was confident that even if I had to focus elsewhere, the play would be moving in the right direction.

Once this rapport was developed between us all it became clear that the actors understood that they were as critical to the production as I was, but they never raised any issue about me making changes to their work or having the final say in matters of blocking and character motivation. This dynamic was something of a dream come true for me, not only because of the practical necessity for it but also because it made the black box space a truly open, equal, and collaborative space between me and my actors. Each one of us was as much of an artist as the next, which is something that I value very highly. I could not have possibly asked for a better cast to work with.

As far as technical work was concerned, the most complicated matter by far was designing the set. I wrote the play to challenge the set designer and myself as a director, and I certainly didn't let myself down. The constantly changing environments, particularly in scene five, were incredibly hard to work through, especially on such a limited budget (in the end, I spent a total of only about \$70 on making this show). What made this even more difficult was conflict between me and my set designer. The two of us had very, very different ideas of how we wanted the show to work aesthetically. I wanted the look and conventions used to change the environment both to be very simple. I was hoping to bring out the dichotomous nature of the play and to undercut the complexity of thought with a sense of simplicity. My designer, however, was fascinated by the complexity of the world and wanted to bring that forward, particularly with the central set piece that the entire play was built around. We went back and forth many times on how we wanted it to function; several of his ideas involved multiple hinged pieces that hung off different sides, whereas I didn't want anything more complicated than a post with different types of dressings that could be quickly taken on and off. Transition speed was an obvious challenge we dealt with, alongside what the central piece would conceptually represent.

My set designer also wanted to incorporate a lot of color into the world, which I was adamantly against. These conflicts between us were stressful and led to a lot of tension, but in the end, I think that this conflict wound up serving the play. I am extremely proud of the compromise we eventually came up with for the central set piece; it was a perfect blend of the simplicity I was looking for and the complexity he wanted to use to differentiate transitions. One of the best things about it in my mind was that more often than not God and the Apprentice had to move it themselves, and it was heavy and difficult to move. It being a tool that they actually

had to exert effort on using made me really happy because I wanted my audience to notice the actual efforts and labors that God and His Apprentice had to undertake to accomplish their goals.

The costumes were a collaboration between me, my artistic advisor Paige Warner, and the cast. I had Paige read the script in the first week and discussed with her what would work to individuate the chorus members and also God and the Apprentice, and then during the second week there was a costume call for all the actors to bring in costume pieces based off of what Paige and I agreed we were looking for. The most important decision was how we were going to contrast God and the Apprentice. What we eventually landed on was a “business casual” look for God alongside a very clean cut look for the Apprentice. We also went for grays with God’s costume more than just black and white, and for the Apprentice we actually incorporated just a touch of the gaudiness my set designer was looking for by adding a multi-colored tie into the mix.

The lights were without question my favorite thing to work on in the entire show. Given how mood-oriented the show was, I saw the lighting as absolutely critical to get right, and differentiating the tones of the scenes with it was also great fun. For the general wash in Limbo (God’s realm), I wound up using just two light fixtures, one to wash the downstage and one the upstage. I had one shine from stage left and the other stage right so that no matter where God and the Apprentice were one half of them would be in shadow and the other lit up. This in turn gave me a lot more to work with as far as blocking was concerned, and it also made the actors and each set piece cast very distinct shadows. I kept the fixtures bright in order to continue playing with the light/dark dichotomy. This kind of wash established a very tense mood which I feel juxtaposed very well with the brightness and red and yellow flashes of the Brechtian street scene

(whose entire purpose was to juxtapose with the whole play) and the utter darkness of the dark room scene.

The dark room scene made for a very fun use of lighting, both in the dark part of it and when the two spotlights came up to divide them. The entire scene had established their distance from each other in the darkness, and when the lights came up the effect was actually to make them seem even further apart. Those two spotlights were also two of the same ones used in the opening scene where I divided the stage up into four quadrants with four spotlights and also the very final scene where spotlights were cast on God and Chorus Member 2 as they prayed one final time. Thus, I was able to use the lights to visually tie together the beginning, the end, and also the scene that took place in the exact middle of the play.

In the end, I was very proud of my lighting work, but again, putting all of these elements together alone in an eighteen day time frame stretched me extremely thin, and there were many things I had to sacrifice in order to complete the project. Proper prioritization was key; certain rehearsals had to be delayed by hours so that I could design the lights for the street scene, for example, or build the central set piece, but every rehearsal was absolutely necessary, so this couldn't happen often. The cross that was used throughout the play wasn't built until the night before the show, and the paint didn't dry until an hour before the show opened. We had also lost the person who was originally going to run our tech, so the person running the sound and light boards had only had three rehearsals to learn the equipment. We had all put incredible work in, but on show night the final test was staring us right in the face and none of us were sure if we were ready. Fortunately, however, we turned out to be absolutely ready. The show run went extraordinarily.

The night of August 21st was a cathartic experience for me. The last eight months of my life had been spent in preparation for this one night, and the possibility that something might fail that would entirely destroy the rhythm of the show loomed over me. That didn't happen, however, and it was in part due to something I had no control over; namely, the amazing audience that came out to see the show. From the very beginning, the energy in the room simply poured towards each and every one of us from our audience, and that is truly what made the experience of that production so incredibly electric. At the end of the day, no matter how well produced that script was, a show as heavy, unorthodox, and frankly condescending as that one could easily be rejected by a pessimistic audience. The constantly shifting rhythms between the main plot scenes and the vignettes in between are something that any audience member has the perfect right to simply reject. This crowd didn't. They embraced it wholeheartedly; they allowed it to affect them and allowed us to know how much it did so. The actors felt it, I felt it, even our lighting technician felt it. The performance was twice as good as any run we'd had because of that energy. The actors handled this exactly as they should; they took it as positive reinforcement and locked into their characters in a way that elevated everything beyond the expected.

Next Steps/What I've Learned

With the completion of the production, the main body of my thesis is completed. Finishing this essay and assembling a few things here and there are all I have to do to fulfill the credit that I need, but that doesn't mean that my work on this production is done. At this point, I have a very complex and evolved relationship with *Antithesis*. As of now, I still plan to edit together all the footage we got of the show and have a digital movie of it I can show. I have also

gone through my script and incorporated my blocking notes and line cuts that I collected throughout the rehearsal process. But my plans go much farther than that.

There are many, many changes to the script that I plan to incorporate. As many wonderful things as I think I was able to communicate with my show, many philosophical points wound up falling to the wayside. For example, I feel that more could be done to discuss the historical change in the Christian God's character from old testament to new testament to present day, which was one of the goals of the show. Another goal that wound up being entirely abandoned was to assess the modern concept of God in an interreligious context. I wound up zeroing in on christianity because it is the belief system that I know best, but the original intention of the play was to assess who God has become in the eyes of modern western society, and that analysis simply cannot take place without incorporating at least the six major religions of the world equally. The purpose of this thematically would be to connect the concept of god inextricably to humanity by showing how much the concept of god is defined by humanity. I believe that theme is present in the work I produced, but in many ways it failed to rise to the forefront.

I also want to clean up some of the script's pacing. I've talked a lot about the fragmented rhythm I was going for in this show, and while I still stand behind that decision and believe it always needs to be a part of this show, I know now that many of the experiments I conducted to attempt that wound up being imperfect. The Brechtian street scene didn't achieve what I wanted it to; rather than truly setting itself apart from the show, I feel that it simply broadened the horizon of what the show might throw at the audience, in their perspective. The dance scene also did not seem to resonate well. In a way, it was exactly what I wanted it to be, but looking back I

realize I was wrong about the effect it would have on the show overall. I wanted people to be pleasantly confused, and while they were certainly confused, I wasn't able to convince them that confusion was a part of the experience of the show. Perhaps I placed it too late, and perhaps it looked too much like something to be taken seriously. Either way, in the future I will likely not include that scene in the script, or I will at least adjust it heavily.

While there were many things I feel that I failed at in this production, there is absolutely no way I can look back on it with any kind of regret. I learned an absolutely incredible amount from producing this show, more than I think I can even reasonably touch on here. I learned so much about writing and plot structure that now my relationship with literally every piece of written art has changed. I learned the importance of creating a world from the ground up, from first thought to final product. I learned how better to work with designers and actors both. I learned that honesty is possibly the single most important element of serious art, and from that I learned how to truly connect with an audience. I learned that I set horribly unrealistic goals, and I learned that I'm not bad at achieving them. I learned that your connection with your fellow artists is one of the director's absolute greatest tools. More than any of that, however, I learned more about what kind of artist I am and what kind of art I want to bring to the world.

I've realized from this that I'm never going to be able to stop pushing for a more truthful experience. My play was a raw, honest representation of my life experience to date. Exposing that to a whole room was something new to me, and I believe it was new to many in the audience as well. Beyond that, it was the key to the production's overwhelming success. My final goal became to open as large of a window to my soul as I possibly could in the hopes that my audience would do the same, and I think that I was successful in that. The purity of that

experience was of a type that I believe everyone is searching for, and my being able to create that experience for an audience of near a hundred people is something I will never, ever cease to be proud of. I'm sure it didn't have the same effect on everyone, but I think that for some people I really was able to reach inside them and stir up some of their most honest, deepest emotions. And now, that being done, I want to move onto something bigger.

To me, being alive is about changing. One of the greatest threats to our individual humanity, I believe, is the human urge to resist change, to fight against it. We live our lives in a constant effort to avoid change, to develop ourselves to a point where we can stop changing. That's one of my greatest inner challenges; that constant fear of change mixed with a knowledge that I absolutely cannot succumb to it. In a lot of ways, I think this was an evident theme in my play. The God I created had allowed himself to stagnate because he could no longer find variety in his life, but that choice to stagnate was the true end to his dynamic existence. That fear and motivation will never stop feeding into my art, never stop driving me on to create something more real, more powerful. Change is evolution, and we must not hinder our own evolution given the limited time that we have. I am exceedingly proud of my production, but at the same time I am harshly dissatisfied, as I know I should be. I'm glad that I overcame the trials and hurdles that I did because now I can set my bar even higher, higher than I could have possibly hoped to set it. Now, however, seeing how quickly I shifted back into wanting to do something even greater has shown me something about myself that I never would have understood before. I am extremely grateful to UTC Theatre and the UTC Honors College for allowing me to do this work that has facilitated this understanding of myself. Everything I do from here on out, no matter what it is, is

partially a result of this project and the change it caused in me. The next show will be better for it.