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"I Can't Stop Thinking": The Process of Creating the Role of Mr. Zero

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“I CAN'T STOP THINKING”: THE PROCESS OF CREATING
THE ROLE OF MR. ZERO

“I CAN'T STOP THINKING”: THE PROCESS OF CREATING
THE ROLE OF MR. ZERO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Drama

By

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East Tennessee State University
Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, 2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contains an account of the characterization process of Mr. Zero from *The Adding Machine*, by Elmer Rice. The character and script analysis is revealed through journal entries and will be discussed as the analysis was put into use in the rehearsal process. The production of *The Adding Machine* opened Nov 11, 2011 and ran until Nov 20, 2011. The rehearsal process began on Sep 21, 2011. This thesis will document the struggles and success of creating the role of Mr. Zero.

This thesis is approved
for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DEDICATION

This master's thesis is dedicated to my wife, Bethany, and my daughter, Felicity. Without their never ending patience and love I would not have survived this semester.

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I. JOURNAL ENTRIES

Aug 24-31, 2011. Auditions and Callbacks

Before I begin an account of the audition process, one must understand the way I usually feel about auditions. They terrify me. Auditions are the most dreaded part of my profession. In about a minute, you must show how great you are to work with, how freely you live in the moment, your physical capabilities, your confidence, the ability to connect to your partner and most of all you must show the auditors a completely vulnerable part of your heart all with the greatest of ease. Thinking about all of this before an audition makes me lock up and give a forced and closed off performance. I have never felt good about any audition, and that is how I still felt about these auditions and callbacks.

Having said that, the callbacks for *The Adding Machine* were an unusual breath of fresh air. They were among callbacks for four other shows that I would be attending throughout the week. Compared to the other callbacks, I felt much more at ease in *The Adding Machine* auditions, mainly because of the environment that Esteban Arévalo Ibáñez, the director, creates. Also, having worked with Esteban on numerous occasions and being a close friend of his, the stress of the audition was considerably lower compared to the environment that other directors can create. I knew I had a good shot at getting the role of Zero. I was required to have a thesis role before I graduated, but nevertheless, I always assume the worst after most auditions.

To my surprise, I found that because of the nature of the show, I was able to have more fun and live in the moment more in this audition than any other this year. The style of the show lends itself to very big and “out there” choices that one can just have fun with. Keeping this in mind, I was able to get out of my head and enjoy the scenes with my partner without feeling like

I was manufacturing moments for the sake of the auditors.

I experimented with a cold reading technique that we learned from Amy Herzberg in our capstone class. It did not work very well for me. It's useful in that it allows you to stay on partner more. Mostly, it's just knowing the right moments to look down at your script, which will give the actor an opportunity to receive the action their partner is playing on them, and then quickly check their script and respond with their action. The term "action" is how describe what a character is doing to another character. How does one character want another character to feel? This technique requires the ability to read faster than I personally can. It's a useful but I didn't have enough experience with it yet. Eventually, I just abandoned it and stuck to what felt comfortable. I took Esteban's direction well and with humor. It's always easy to work with someone who you view as a peer.

The more I read for the part of Zero the more I felt comfortable living in this character's circumstances. However, after a long week of callbacks, it was hard to know if I was doing well at all. Even though I felt I was beginning to live the character, he began to seem stale, like he only reacts one way to all of his circumstances. My fear is that I am not playing him in an interesting way. If I am cast, that will probably be the most difficult challenge of this character.

Near the end of the callback process, I already assumed I had the role. I was the last person reading for Zero and I was being asked my opinion on the casting of other characters. As an actor, I enjoy being asked this. It breeds a strong feeling of collaboration between director and performer from the very beginning of the process. Once the casting was made official on Sep 12, I felt a wave of relief followed by wave of fear, relief for the end of the audition process and the acquisition of a thesis role, but also overwhelming fear. It suddenly dawned on me how tremendous an undertaking this would be. I had not considered how difficult this role would be.

Initial Thoughts, Fears and Excitements

We had roughly a week between the official casting and our first read-through. My initial view of this character portrays him as a man hopelessly stuck in the norms and expectations of society. He has no real identity, nothing to make him stand out from anybody else. He is stuck in a dead-end job that he desperately wants to leave, but for some reason, he is reluctant to ask for a raise or do anything that distinguishes him from anybody else. The only thing he is good at is not stepping out of line, being punctual to his job and adding “figures”. My first impression of him is that he is a boring character.

Zero does not pursue anything. He does not fight for anything. In many ways, you don't even care what happens to him. My fear is that he will turn out to be an inactive character when I play him. That will be the biggest challenge for me. How will I make a seemingly inactive character interesting and entertaining? How will I get the audience's empathy, or is this character even meant to get any empathy? How will I engage the audience?

Because this is an expressionistic play, I have been thinking about how that affects the performing aspect and the overall structure of the show. I believe it is written in a way that is geared toward epic theatre and Brecht's “alienation affect” where the audience is meant to be kept at an emotional distance, remaining objective so they can intellectually understand the meaning of the show. In *The Adding Machine*, the audience might not be meant to get lost in empathy. They might be meant to look at it objectively and consider the characters and meaning of the story. The play is a warning to modern society. The audience is not meant to like Zero. The audience is meant to be afraid of becoming him. They must relate to him, but be distanced from him in a way that allows them to see his flaws and learn from his mistakes.

These are only initial thoughts and are subject to change as I speak to the director and explore on my own. I am generally excited to work in expressionism and to see what the concept for the show is. At this moment, I do not know any of the plans or designs. Having worked some of these scenes in a viewpoints class, I know how many different concepts one can have for this show. So, I am very hesitant to make any concrete decisions until I see and hear the director's ideas.

Sep 21. First Read-Through

Today was our first read-through of the entire show with the whole cast. It surprised me how big this cast actually is and what an ensemble based show it is. My first impression is that the cast is very excited to work on the show. I don't know all of them, but of the ones I do know, they are all hard working collaborative theatre artists and very enjoyable to be around. However, I do feel a gnawing sense of over-expectation on me to perform well and lead, but I believe I feel that before I start any role.

The read-through went well. We were all testing ideas and just trying to make the dialogue our own without trying to force moments. We just wanted to keep it loose and get familiar with the story. One of the challenges that seem to be showing up is the urban dialect that the dialogue is written in. It is working class and feels like it should be a northeastern urban setting, but Esteban is hesitant about setting it anywhere specific at the moment. He wants the location to be ambiguous, which might be difficult because as hard I try not to; I'm falling into a New York/New Jersey accent.

After the read-through, Esteban gave us a few questions to discuss. There was one that stood out and still remains unanswered. Is this world deterministic? Or, does each character have

the free will to change his or her future? The answer will heavily determine my character's values and circumstances. If everything that happens to him is beyond his control, then it's possible that he is a victim and warrants sympathy. But, if he has free will, then he himself is the ultimate cause of everything that happens to him and only he can change his future. We went back and forth and considered the possibilities of both worlds without coming to a conclusion at that time.

Coming out of rehearsal, I had a number of questions to help guide me in the formation of Zero's values. What makes the opening scene so important? Why do I snap at the boss and not at my wife? Why do I not stay in the Elysian Fields? Why do I get winded so easily when I dance with Daisy in the afterlife? Do I like my job? Would I be content in my job if there wasn't the pressure from my wife to climb the business ladder?

Esteban has still yet to say how the expressionism will be manifested in the show, but he has made it clear that we will not fight against the expressionism. I'm still a little nervous about how this style of theatre will go over. My biggest fear is that I won't be able to live it truthfully due to the nonrealistic elements.

Sep 22. Table Work and Movie Night.

To understand the expressionistic style, Esteban showed us the movie *Metropolis*. This was for the purpose of observing the extreme physicality and choices the actors made as well as illustrating what the expressionistic movement was all about. According to Esteban, expressionism, for the purposes of our production, is a reaction to the dehumanization of the modern man due to industrialization and man's reliance on machines.

Watching this film gave me an understanding of the genre in which *The Adding Machine*

was written. It has also helped me to understand the major themes and metaphors of the play. The title, for example, does not refer to the adding machine that replaces Zero, but to Zero himself. Just like in *Metropolis*, *The Adding Machine's* central theme is that our identities are now tied to the machines we work with. Zero's identity is defined by his job, which is to add numbers. He is the adding machine. The play urges people to re-discover their human identities, become self-aware again, and break away from their dependence on technology. There is a wonderful line from *Metropolis* that sums up the entire film: "You can't live without the machine. If you kill it, it kill's you." The point is that society's identity is now linked with the machine, just like Zero. The plot of this play deals with how Zero copes with life once he is separated from the machine. He is given several chances to rediscover his identity, but he ultimately chooses to go back to the machine.

To answer Esteban's question from last night, I believe this play shows free will. It shows Zero being given the chance to change his destiny. The cards are heavily stacked against him, but, ultimately, he is still making all of his own decisions.

Sep 23. "Fun Read-Through" and Design Presentation.

Tonight we had the design presentations; our Set Designer is Ashley Harmon, Diana Kaiser is our lighting designer, Kelly Henry is our costume designer, Ashleigh Burns is our props master, and Paul Thomas Smith Jr. is our sound designer. The designs are amazing and so full of intriguing theatricality. They give the idea of very sterile, rigid, cold and soulless world. The ensemble's costumes consist of black and white formal dress that is all slightly different but also all the same. Zero, Daisy, Charles, and Shrdlu are the only characters that break with this uniform. However, their costumes are nothing special. They give the sense of depressed and

joyless lives. I love them.

The set is wonderfully abstract. The playing space will be framed by a series of tall flats that shrink in size as they move upstage creating a forced perspective. The flats will be painted with black and white boxes all over them. It makes the environment feel sterile and cold, like a hospital or morgue. The purpose is to give the feeling of a location that has no identity and no features that give it life. Esteban wants the audience to bring their own idea about where this play takes place. He wants their imagination to fill in the gaps.

After the presentation, we had a “fun read-through.” This is the first time I had ever done one of these, but I hope it won't be the last. Usually, a cast will have one or two read-throughs just sitting around the table and then discuss what discoveries you made. In this read-through, Esteban wanted us to get up on our feet, use the space, which was our studio space in Kimpel 404, and just have fun. Don't think about character or emotion. Just explore the scenes and relate to your partner. We did not have any prepared staging or ground plan work with. We just created movement as we went along using the bleacher seating and dry-erase boards as set pieces. I wish every rehearsal process would start with one of these “fun-throughs”. We made so many interesting discoveries because there was no pressure to get it right. There was no “right.” Also, it kept us from starting scene work on this show using a dark, melodramatic mood. We were able to find the light and comedic moments that make this show endearing. After tonight, I was ecstatic to dive into scene work!

9/25. Worked Scene 1

The goal of this rehearsal was to do table work on scene 1 and begin to build the relationship between Zero and Mrs. Zero, played by Rebecca Rivas. The main question I had

about this scene was what makes it so important? Also, what is the initial event in relationship to this scene? We made the decision that what makes this night different than any other night has to do with Judy, the sexually promiscuous woman who lives across the airshaft. We decided that Judy, played by Sarah Jane Robinson, was sentenced to jail that day. That circumstance is something that both characters are living with and have deep personal connection to. At this point in his life, Zero is a man stuck in a lifeless marriage and no longer loves or even likes his wife. The only reason he stays with her is because it would be taboo to get divorced. So, the only pleasure he gets comes from spying on his neighbor, Judy, across the airshaft. She walks around her apartment with hardly any clothes on. His wife catches him one day and forces him to call the cops on her. She was sentenced to six months in jail and we made the decision to have our characters find out about her sentence the same day of scene 1. This is what makes scene 1 so important. Losing Judy is a big deal for Zero and this event propels him to a place of anguish that eventually allows him to murder the Boss in the next scene. We will begin by trying this event as the initial circumstance. It happens before the play begins and most characters are affected by it.

We also discussed our relationship and history. One thing we talked about was the absence of children in our relationship and even though it's not really in the text we made the assumption that Zero was impotent. It doesn't really affect the immediate circumstances but it was a useful layer for Mrs. Zero. Here are some other circumstances we agreed upon.

- Mrs. Zero wouldn't marry Zero until he was employed and had a future in business.
- Zero does have a natural gift with numbers.
- As a couple we expected to have the American dream and move up in life.
- We did love each other in the beginning of our marriage, but because I got stuck in

my job and didn't have the courage to pursue a higher position, she began to feel betrayed by what was promised to her.

- Now, our relationship is based on habit and the desire to stick it out until the other one dies or gives up first. We stay together out of spite.

We read through the scene a few times, which was easy for me because I have no actual dialogue in this scene. This will ultimately prove a challenge, figuring out how I am going to sustain an active inner life. Esteban did not want to block it until we got more comfortable with the relationship and circumstances.

Sep 26. Worked Scene 2

In this rehearsal we worked scene 2, the scene in the office between Zero and Daisy, played by Brandi Hoofnagle. The scene is balanced between actual dialogue and inner monologue which is being voiced between the spurts of real dialogue. This rehearsal ran very similar to the last one. We did table work to clarify circumstances and relationships. We began discussing what the characters wanted from each other in the long run and what they wanted at that precise moment in the play. These are two very different things because Zero's current circumstances cause him to react with hostility toward Daisy even though in the long run he may actually love her. We still need to figure out if it's really love or just lust. We continued to discuss relationship and circumstance for most of the rehearsal.

One of the most important “drop ins” I'm going to need to work on is the feeling of working at the same job for 25 years. Esteban and I want the audience to be able to connect with the repetitive and monotonous feeling of the work. We want them to relate to how that kind of work sucks the soul out of a person. We want to appear as machines with no creative thinking

involved, just reflex. Exploring how the work has affected my character will be a big challenge and will influence him throughout the show.

From the discussions, I was able to start making some decisions on what my character is living with at the beginning of this scene and how it eventually drives him to the murder of his boss. I call these “pinches.” They are the things that are pinching at my character's heart that need to be alleviated. The major pinches are the anniversary of working in the same place for 25 years, the expectation of a raise, the expectation of talking to the Boss, the loss of the sexual release Judy gives him, the small pleasure of having Daisy next to him, and the fear of being stuck in this same job the rest of his life. Another thing that drives his inner-life today is his fear of returning home if he doesn't get the raise. This made me wonder if he really does care about the raise or is he just afraid of being attacked by his wife if he doesn't get one. After tonight I was able to give some loose answers that will later be narrowed down as to what my super objective is. A character's super objective is what he desperately wants throughout the entire show. Overall, I think he just wants normality and peace with himself. Maybe he wants happiness but he doesn't know what is going to make him happy. How can I use Zero's refusal to examine his life as an active actor choice. How can I manifest it?

Overall, I love this form of rehearsal. We barely even worked through the scene, but we spent so much time talking about it that we made a very specific foundation for the progression of our characters. It also puts us all on the same page and makes us collaborators in the process, not just actors trying to appease the director's vision.

Sep 27. Worked Scene 3.

Today we worked and discussed the opening moments of scene three where Zero returns

home after killing his boss and is verbally attacked by his wife for not getting a raise. My goal for the day was to explore what kind of inner life Zero has with these circumstances. Also, how does he feel about being verbally attacked by his wife and how does he feel about getting “canned,” as Zero puts it? How does he feel about telling his wife these things? We discussed it and loosely walked through some blocking but I did not make many discoveries. I actually ran into a wall that I could not break through that night. Why do I come home at all? I come home late. So where have I been the few hours between leaving the office and coming home. What does Zero want from his wife? How does Zero want this scene to end? Just like in scene one, I have an extended period of silence, but this one is very hard to justify. Later on in the script, Zero says he was trying to figure out how to tell the wife he had just been canned, but as an actor that didn't work for me. All of my movements and inner life felt forced and unmotivated. At this moment, I have no answers for these problems.

Sep 28. Individual Character Discussion and Worked Scenes 1 and 2.

Over the last few rehearsals, Esteban has been doing a lot of table work with me, Mrs. Zero and Daisy. Due to my own introverted character, I have remained relatively silent in these discussions, just writing down my own ideas and questions that come to mind. But, today Esteban scheduled a private one on one character discussion for the purpose of getting me to speak out. This helped immensely in that it brought up a lot of elements I had not yet considered about this character, especially elements that Esteban wanted to be more prevalent in my performance.

We began by going over some questions that he originally posed to the whole cast. Is the world of the play a deterministic world or a world with free will? Is Zero a hero in this story?

What kind of protagonist is he? How does he feel about society? How should Society feel about him?

One particular thing we discussed at great length was Zero's own prejudices. They come up throughout the entire story and ultimately lead to him choosing an afterlife that does not make him happy but gives him security. We decided the reason he hangs on to these prejudices is because it allows him to feel superior. He is already a pretty low class citizen and he needs to latch on to something that will make him feel good about himself. We believe the one thing that does make him feel good is telling himself, "well at least I'm not as bad as those other people; compared to them I am a great person." He acts on his ignorance all the time. As an actor, I can't really play ignorance. I have to find what he wrongly believes in those scenarios and act on those beliefs as if they were my own.

Another aspect of his character we discussed was his lack of tact. He has a number of moments where he may have good intentions, but he lacks the empathy to go about them in the right way. He does this with Daisy all the time. The things he says comes across as insulting and maliciously spawned from a cold heart, but he really is being sincere in those moments. This lack of empathy for other human beings is certainly one of his downfalls.

Spurring from a fear of not being accepted or being acknowledged as a failure, comes a selfish, egotistical feeling of superiority to everyone around him. He sees what he is doing as the good "American" thing to do: work hard and you will be rewarded eventually. There is honor in being employed and the worst thing you can be is a drunken, unemployed bum who only thinks about finding pleasure in life. As one can see, what drives him in his actions throughout the play is how the rest of society perceives him. He will not do anything that goes against what society has programmed him to think is right. He has a fear of following what he wants in life because it

often goes against what society wants him to do. What keeps him going in this way is his honest belief that he will make it big. He will achieve the American dream of wealth and power and happiness. He believes this because society and capitalism has told him this will happen if sticks to it and works hard.

For the rest of this private session, we went over the relationships and circumstances that occur before he kills the Boss and before he is ultimately executed. Esteban would like the sense of a man who is very cocky in his head, but when it comes to real life and dealing with people who he sees as having a higher status than him, he is a coward. He is a coward with Daisy in that he is afraid to tell her how he feels, mostly because if he does, he will appear as a failure in his marriage. In the first act, Esteban would like Zero to appear as a victim of society, and that there is no way to save him. Then in the second act, he would like the audience to see what happens to Zero when there are no expectations on him, no social norms to follow.

I talked with Esteban about my trouble with scene three and the silence that Zero is trapped in throughout the scene. He suggested playing with Zero's pride. Maybe Zero does not want to give his wife the satisfaction of calling him a failure. In the complete opposite direction, he also suggested trying a set of values that makes Zero too ashamed to tell his wife because it will hurt her too much. Either way, these are good places to start exploring.

Later on in rehearsal he did some more exploratory work in scene 1 and scene 2. After working scene two, I realized that in order to perform this scene, I needed to make a very specific stream of consciousness for him, just for my sake as an actor to learn the lines. The scene is a giant inner monologue interrupted by someone else's inner monologue and they have to be choreographed together.

After this rehearsal I began to make a timeline for all the backstory of the character that I

didn't know and isn't specifically in the text:

- I, Zero, was born in Southern Illinois 45 years ago. It would have been in the 1880's or before.
- I was raised in a typical Midwestern style. I grew up with promises of big things and success.
- The picture that the guide from scene 5 refers to was taken when I was six years old in front of my “quaint vine-covered home”.
- There is no mention of schooling, but I know I was hired when I was 20, so I am assuming I went to high school, worked a little after that then got a job without going to college.
- I met Mrs. Zero when I was 19. She would marry me only if I was able to get a better job, which I did. So we got married when I was 20. I promised her I would move up in the company, but I got stuck in my current position.
- Daisy comes into the office when I am 28. We begin with a good workplace relationship but it turns sour as I become bitter towards my wife and my life.
- At 32, I throw the bottle on the field at the baseball game.(referred to in scene 4)
- At 35, I have the fight with the black man on the subway.(referred to in scene 4)
- Then it is 10 years of the exact same thing every day and the only escape I have is my numbers, movies, and thinking about women.
- At 38, I receive the last raise I will ever get.
- At 39, Daisy and I go to the picnic without my wife. This is where we almost talk about our true feelings.(discussed in scene 7)
- At 40, my wife gets pneumonia and almost dies.

- At 44, Judy moves into the apartment complex next to us and I can see her undress through the window. This is the only thing I look forward to at this point of my life.
- At 45, my wife catches me watching her and makes me call the police on her. She is sentenced and then the plot begins.
- The day after Judy is sentenced is the 25th anniversary of my employment. I am fired that day. I kill the Boss in a moment of rage.
- I am arrested later that night at a party my wife is throwing for all the couple we know.
- A few months later, I go to trial and I am convicted and sentenced to death.
- Another few months and my sentence is carried out. I am electrocuted.
- I awake in the afterlife and meet Shrdlu. I remain in the “graveyard waiting area,” which we have deemed as a purgatory state for a few months
- We have decided that it has been about 10 months between my death and arriving in the Elysian Fields. I confess my love to Daisy and then decide not to stay after I realize what kind of people are in “heaven.”
- Some months later, I find a room with an adding machine and begin adding. I stay there for 25 years, and then Charles comes and sends me back to earth to be reincarnated.

Sep 29. Worked Scenes 2 and 3

We worked scene 2 and 3 again today. I began exploring the kind of actions I would have for both scenes while using the inner life I had discussed with Esteban. In scene 2, we

successfully used actions that were the opposite of what our inner monologues suggested. This worked fine. The contrast tells a lot about what these characters really want but are too afraid to pursue. I need to work the moment in which Zero has an imaginary conversation with his Boss. The way I interact with him in my mind needs to be the opposite of how it will actually happen at the end of the scene.

When we worked scene 3, I wanted to use the inner life that Esteban suggested. Still, nothing felt right. Every action and objective I played had me wanting to interact with her too much. So I tried a state of shock for most of the scene and that opened up a lot of new possibilities. By picturing only the murder in my head while I, Zero, was sitting down at dinner, it allowed me to attempt interaction with my wife but then fail. I was being a bad actor and not being on partner, that is to say I wasn't playing any actions on my partner or trying to affect their emotional state, but this circumstance filled me with inner life. It made sense that I was still in shock. Then as the scene continues, I make the decision to just let the police come and she'll find out then. So at this rehearsal I was able to find an inner struggle that sustained me through this scene.

Sep 30. Worked Scenes 4 and 5

Today was a day I had been dreading. Scene 4 is an eight page monologue, with many random transitions and stylized moments of desperation. We began by discussing some possible circumstances that he could be living with and the progression of his inner life through the scene. Esteban wants the jurors to be the same characters from the couple's party. This means I will be playing actions on people that I know, giving me much higher and more complex stakes. It adds a lot of new and interesting actions. We made up a little backstory for the moment before he

takes the stand. He will decide to tell the truth. After all, he is a good man who just had a moment of insanity. Why wouldn't the jury acquit him? His main tactic will be to relate to the jury and get them to like him.

As far as conflicts go, talking in court is something that he has no experience with. He has no experience with public speaking at all. That is one of the most important immediate conflicts that he is dealing with and I believe that is what allows his fear to take over and causes him to ramble about everything.

We worked this scene by doing a number of different exercises. In one exercise, the jury would either come closer or further away depending on how well I was affecting them with my tactics. At the time, it helped me to begin establishing relationships with jurors but other than that it didn't allow me to fully live in the moments. If we had done this when I knew the monologue, it would have been more helpful. Right then, I felt too trapped in my script and unable to be on partner at all. I think Esteban felt this and allowed me to work on my own for a while. Until I memorize this scene and don't have to worry about finding my place in the script, I will not be able to seriously work it.

We finished rehearsal with table work on scene 5 between Mrs. Zero and myself. We discussed what has changed in our relationship since being put in jail. Becky and I are eager to explore what we want from each other in our last moments together as husband and wife. We read through it a few times and see that the challenge will be figuring out why they are trying to patch things up in the end like this. But overall, this is a very fun scene to perform and has many comedic and tragic moments.

Oct 2. Worked Scenes 2, 4 and 5.

Today, before rehearsal, I went through scene 4, the jury scene, and specified all the beats in the monologue. I made subtext for each moment I have. The thing I am having difficulty with is building circumstances that drive each transition of thought. Without knowing those, my monologue just feels like a bunch of ideas that are completely unconnected. In this rehearsal, we worked the monologue without using an actual jury because we thought it would still be more beneficial to work building the beats together before I begin to try and make connections with the jury. I realized that to build my stakes, I must have an expectation that I will be found not guilty. He must have the expectation that what he has to say to the jury will, without a doubt, save his life. However, once he reaches the stand, his nerves betray him. Hopefully when the jury is there, I can feed off their hatred for me to create inner conflict as well.

This portion of the rehearsal was fairly productive. We didn't get all the way through the monologue but we set in some nice foundation to build on. We also decided on a way to play the moments where he begins to add numbers together out of nowhere. I will try it as if I think I am actually making sense. So when I begin adding numbers out loud, in my own mind, I'm making an articulated interesting argument. I must use these numbers the same way I would use regular text, with action and connection to partner. We intend to try this for a few weeks. The reason he does this is because the numbers are his security blanket. They are his drug. He is going through a kind of withdrawal because he no longer spends hours every day adding numbers.

We also worked scene 2 today. After going through it a few times I added some things to my list of circumstances I need to drop in: The Boss fantasy still needs to be more specific, so that when the actual boss comes there is a clear contrast to how Zero saw this scene going in his head and how it actually pans out. I need to specify the "killing the wife fantasy". I am still

playing with lots of different actions for my daydream moments, but overall, the scene is heading in the right direction.

Lastly we worked scene 1 again. For the last couple of rehearsals we have been doing very realistic staging where Zero interacts fully with Mrs. Zero. Esteban says the actual blocking will have very little movement or interaction on my part, but right now we are doing this just to build a connection between the characters, and to help Becky find interesting moments in her speech. During this run, I experimented with trying to interrupt her all throughout her rant. It helped her to find reasons to continue her speech and to play stronger actions on me. We also tried this with movement. I would avoid interacting with her in the scene and try to go to sleep, but she would keep getting in my face to get a response from my character. In the final staging of this scene, I will remain mostly still, but this experimentation is more for Becky's sake than mine. Later on, I will have different circumstances that allow me to stay still and avoid interaction with her.

At the end of this rehearsal, I made some an interesting observation in my notebook. My character cannot appreciate art or truth or anything completely honest. He does not see the significance of it nor does he understand it. For him, every form of art is only escapism. The search for truth and beauty in art is too painful because it requires a moment of reflection into oneself, which he naturally avoids. Deep down in the back of his mind, he is in denial about who and what he really is. He has convinced himself that he is already the most deserving and competent person and does not need to change or self-improve at all. Whether or not this is because society has made him this way is still up for debate at this point in the process.

Oct 3. Worked Scenes 3 and 5.

Today we added ensemble to scenes 3 and 5. This was a very fun rehearsal because I finally got to see the shape that the ensemble adds. In these scenes, the expressionistic style is heavily prevalent and it is largely due to the ensemble. Their stylized and choreographed movement adds to the idea of people being cogs in a machine with no real individuality or souls. They just go through the motions. I realized, because of Zero's actions, he has the chance to escape this machine. In fact, I believe that is the question of the play. Will he find his individuality in modern society? If that is central question, then the central event of the play is when he chooses to go back to earth, not because of the opportunity of a second chance, but because of a woman, because of the escapism the woman will offer. That answers the central question. He will not change his ways and will remain a cog in the machine.

Oct 4. Worked Scenes 6 and 7.

Between rehearsals, I did some research on other productions of *The Adding Machine* and a term came up from a review by Richard Wattenberg that really struck me: "Homo Boobian." It was coined by HL Mencken about the current state of the human race in western society due to capitalism and consumerism, more specifically the American Society. Wattenberg said Zero was the personification of the "de-evolution" of man and that the new industrial order is "stripping modern society of their humanity." He calls this new race of men unimaginative. Zero is a "Homo Boobian." He is a product of escapism and the undervaluing of the American workforce. The article allowed me to get a fuller picture of Zero's circumstance.

Tonight's rehearsal was the first step into Act 2, the afterlife. We did table work on both

scenes with Asa Tims who plays Shrdlu, then loosely worked through them stopping and talking as much as possible. Before we began, I made a list of things I wanted to discuss. I did this because I probably wouldn't have said anything at all in the discussions if I hadn't written it down. I wanted to talk about the change of relationship between Shrdlu and Zero from scene 6 to scene 7. How much time has gone by? When and why did they part ways? Also, what do I want or need now that I'm dead? How does being dead change my worldview? I have never played a part where I was a newly dead soul. It is a circumstance that one does not usually think of and is well out of the realm of realism. There aren't many events I can substitute from my own past or many "as if" situations that I can think of that will make this circumstance easy to understand. Do I have a new super objective now that I'm dead? What is my most immediate objective? Many of the questions could only be answered by working the scenes. But, right now I am going to play with the idea that I have two super-objectives, one while I'm alive and one while I'm dead. I have not made a decision on the "alive" one yet, but I'm going to test one tonight for the dead one. I want to find an answer to life and happiness.

Esteban has an interesting concept for the afterlife. This "graveyard" is really a morgue setting. It is like a waiting room before making a choice about where a soul wants to go in the afterlife, but the soul has the ability to go anywhere it wants. I start the scene in a little "morgue-like holding cell/storage unit." When I break out of my holding unit, my first objective is to see if the voice I heard was Judy, the woman who I used to spy on while she was naked. Because I am still so stiff with rigor mortis throughout this scene, we have decided that I have only been in the morgue for a little less than a day. Esteban is also adding many dead souls onstage all-waiting in this purgatory area between worlds. This will give us some interesting moments as Zero reacts to them when he first comes out of the "grave."

During this table work session, something very interesting came up about these two characters. They are used by the playwright to be a point of contrast and comparison by which the audience sees two major themes from American society, capitalism and religion. Zero represents the capitalist society and Shrdlu represents the Religious society. I, Zero, have based my whole life on the capitalist mindset. I am worthless unless I make a lot of money and become successful in business. Happiness to me is only material things. For Shrdlu, he has grown up in an ultra-religious way, denying himself material things and bodily pleasures. He is a failure if he gives in to any societal temptation like wealth or materialism. Happiness for him is obedience to God and his religious authorities. The audience is also supposed to note how these two characters deal with the guilt of their murder or whether or not they even feel any guilt. The playwright is saying that the point of existence is not to tie one's identity to either of these two mindsets but to create one's own identity. That is the only way to find satisfaction in life.

We also discussed how Zero felt about his new identity as a murderer. We decided that he had embraced it, that he had begun to enjoy the title and accepted the fact that he was a sinner with no hope of forgiveness. He uses it to comically threaten Shrdlu to give a "don't mess with me, I'm dangerous" vibe, but then he backs off immediately once he learns Shrdlu is also a murderer. Shrdlu is the kid with the even bigger stick. As for how he feels about killing his boss, there is no real remorse. Any remorse comes only from what people will think of him now. I, Zero, value being considered a good moral person by society's laws.

Oct 5. Worked Scenes 8, 1 and 2

Today we worked scene 8 for the first time so we started with some table discussion and then jumped right into it. Most of the discussion was for the development of Charles' character,

played by Justin Walker. Esteban presented the idea that this is a pagan afterlife with the pagan gods sprinkled throughout it performing their mundane jobs just as humans do on earth. Charles is one of these gods. His actual status does not affect me very much because I just recognize him as an authority figure. The only thing I will concern myself with is becoming lost in my numbers. That is where I feel safe and secure. Like a drug addict, it's where I go to escape the harsh reality of life. My objective for the scene will be to find a way to remain attached to the adding machine.

The main problem we came across with this scene is the fact that Charles takes his time and tells him how everything works. Why? Why does he not just force him out? Does he have pity for him? Is it his job to explain or to give the souls chances to change their lives? Or does he see something in Zero that is new and hopeful compared to all the other souls he deals with? Esteban did not want us to find a definitive answer yet, but to just begin thinking about the stakes of this scene and what moves Zero from the things that Charles says.

When we began to work the scene we came to the part of the play where we believe Zero is most vulnerable, where he is completely honest and is honestly asking for help in his situation, we see the culmination of all his problems and fears. "I can't stop thinking." This isn't the climax of the show but it is where we see the author's main commentary on the human race. As my mentor Amy Herzberg would say, "All characters get one spot in a play where they can completely remove their shell and let the audience see everything they are living with, where they are not playing action. They are just wearing their heart on their sleeve." I believe this is Zero's moment. Zero has been told that he will return to earth as a baby and start all over again, another complete life. Looking back, Zero hated his life on earth. The only time he enjoyed was the time when he was lost in his numbers and daydreaming about the life he wanted to live.

Charles reveals everything that will happen to him and strips all the pretenses of life away. He gives him the cold hard facts of how life is and how terrible it will actually be. This defuses Zero and makes him want to stay, but then, Charles describes the job he will have with the new “super adding machine”, and Zero becomes overjoyed at the possibility of going back. We now see that it is not life that the human race looks forward to, but the escapism that we use to get away from life. The adding machine is Zero's escape. The line "I can't stop thinking" reveals everything that Zero is trying to avoid and is afraid of: his self-awareness, his individuality, self-improvement and human interaction. We will also play with the idea that any kind of self-realization physically hurts me and frightens me. All of this begets the question: why am I like this, or what has made me like this? This goes back to the idea of free will vs. determinism. Did the gods make me like this as a predetermined system or do I have the ability to self-correct.

All of these discussions brought about some new possible super objectives for Zero. I want to find my true self. I want to believe I'm a good person. I want to be satisfied with my purpose in life. All of these things are noble, but because of what Zero believes a good person is, they are all unrealistic and false hopes. Society has given me, Zero, an unrealistic sense of happiness and belonging. So, as much as I try to find my true self, I am looking in all of the wrong places and I refuse to acknowledge who I really am.

After we worked scene 8, we went back and worked scene 1 and 2. Scene 1 was more of the same work for Becky, so she could build moments into her speech. In scene 2, we began creating a stylistic way of doing our job. Esteban wanted the movement to be very repetitive, mechanical and rigid. He wanted the personification of a well-oiled machine. We also worked the Boss; played by Clay Kibler, into the ending of the scene and looked at possible ways Zero could get to a place where he would have enough rage to kill the Boss. There are multiple ways

to play this scene and we are probably going to try every single one of them until we find the one we like. The audience will not actually see the killing. There will be a monstrous mix of sounds that represent the conflict and insanity that is building in Zero's mind and then the lights will blackout at the crescendo of the sounds. It was a great rehearsal and left me with a lot of new ideas and new values to drop into Zero's character.

Oct 6. Worked Scenes 3, 6, and 7

The main thing I wanted to work today was Zero's sensation of being dead in scene 6, the graveyard. We began by nailing down some general blocking, and I started playing with physicality. I began to experiment and incorporate the stiffness of rigor mortis into everything I did. I took it as far as I could and found a lot of physically comedic moments. I basically did not let the stiffness leave until the very end of the scene. Zero was struggling with it all through his interaction with Shrdlu. This experimentation allowed me to invest heavily in the physical stakes of the scene and made my struggle with "death" very visual.

We also loosely began blocking scene 7, the Elysian Fields, but I did not make many discoveries. However, we came up with a good "as if" situation to relate this scene to. We talked about the image of Zero sneaking into someone else's beautiful garden and making sure he doesn't get caught, having the feeling that he's an intruder in some way. This gave me some high stakes to start using as a catalyst for this scene.

Lastly we worked scene 3, the dinner party. Scene 3 is always very hectic and tiresome just because of the sheer amount of people onstage who need to be directed and coordinated at the same time. I actually do very little in the scene, but my inner life should be off the charts. But, these types of rehearsals do not allow me to work on inner life and living in the moment.

They are mostly about blocking and timing. Of course, this is completely necessary, but I do not make any strides in character development.

Oct 7. Worked Scenes 8, 6 and 7

Working scene 8, the afterlife, today became about the physicality of Zero after 25 years of working at this desk and never deviating from his range of motion. We also specified the physical action of Joe, played by Whitney Masters, working on Zero. Joe is there to "repair" Zero. I specified the movement for operating the adding machine and played with the idea that the machine and I have grown together. So I am literally attached to it. Joe will have to pry my hands off of it. My body has become stiff again to the point that Joe has to oil me up like the Tin Man or tighten my bolts with a wrench so that I can move freely. I love how nonrealistic this scene is becoming. It makes me feel like a kid playing pretend.

Later on in the scene we made a discovery, which was taken from the text. Zero becomes incredibly excited at the fact that he will run the most advanced adding machine known to man. Charles describes it to him in a very theatrical way. We made the choice to allow Charles to use a "divine planetarium" that will show the evolution of the universe right in front of Zero. I will literally be awe-struck. The image I have in my mind is the scene from *Men in Black* where the camera zooms in on the galaxy the size of a marble and we see the women's reaction of how gorgeous it is. I multiply that by a hundred and that is what I'm looking at during Charles's explanation of the universe. Coming away from that scene, I know I need to drop in the image more and build up the excitement for the new "super adding machine."

We also revisited scene 6 to add the rest of the ensemble to it. The added circumstance of the ensemble in this scene will hopefully raise my stakes of being frightened and confused about

this new world that I am in. We worked the ending where Shrdlu annoys everyone so much that they slump offstage very zombie-like. Esteban gave me this to think about for the next time we worked the scene. He told me to try wanting the approval of the other dead people, and being afraid of aggravating them. So when Shrdlu begins to annoy and offend them, I have something to work against.

Lastly, tonight we did table work on the Daisy portion of scene 7, the Elysian Fields. Brandi had been sick for a few days so we hadn't gotten to this part of the scene yet. We discussed things like the passage of time from Daisy's suicide to where she meets me in the fields. We decided she had been following me for weeks in the afterlife and that she committed suicide very shortly after I died. We did not stage it yet because Esteban wants to work the scene in an actual park so we can feel the beauty of the surroundings.

Oct 9. Worked Scenes 8 and 7

At the beginning of this rehearsal we revisited scene 8 and cleaned up some blocking as far as Joe the cleaner was concerned. We then started specifying the actions that Zero and Charles play on one another. We decided to say that Zero's primary tactic in the opening interaction with Charles is to defy him and try to put himself in a place of equal standing.

Charles will allow this for a few moments, but he knows that by revealing any information about Zero's true purpose, he will re-establish status over Zero. Then the actions start flying everywhere as Zero becomes more desperate and begins to realize who he really is and how he has wasted his life. He'll try actions like gaining sympathy, annoying him with sorrow, pleasing him, making him feel superior and powerful and praised, and finally showing Charles how afraid

and sorry he is, succumbing to his own despair. This is the direction we will try the next couple of times we work the scene.

We then left the rehearsal space in KIMP 404 and went to Wilson Park. We were going to rehearse scene 7, the Elysian Fields, in a serene location outdoors. We wanted grass and wind and an actual tree! The purpose was to get a very specific sense of location and beauty. This was one of the most helpful rehearsals I have ever been a part of. Not only did we get lost in the tranquility of the park, but also we were able to expand upon that feeling into an awestruck ethereal state that Esteban wanted while being in the "heaven" part of the afterlife. We also found so many new interesting relationship ideas and actions that I know we would not have found if we were stuck in a disgusting rehearsal hall trying to imagine trees and grass. We found playfulness in our relationship, fearfulness, shyness, almost as if we were discovering each other for the first time.

Here are some of the major circumstances that we were able to pin down. Daisy had been running after me for days. Brandi, who plays Daisy, was able to get a better sense of that by actually running after me in the park. Zero is still enwrapped in the notion that he doesn't belong here and that eventually someone will ask him to leave, but he will try to enjoy it as long as possible. Therefore, with Daisy in the picture, and Zero's warped moral sense still present, he is terrified of being seen with her. He is still a married man. Because his social worldview revolves around appearance, he is more concerned about how other people see him than he is about the kind of trouble he'll get into. So, in Wilson Park, I was able to capture that sense easily because we were surrounded by families, couples, and children all playing and being respectable people of society. I, the actor, became embarrassed because of the scene work. But, I gave that embarrassment to the character and he was able to use it to create an inner life fueled by anxiety

and paranoia. It was very successful.

We also explored Zero's value for Daisy. What kind of love is it? He cares about her and values her happiness to some degree, but not to the same degree that he values his security. We explored the major beat changes in the scene and I already see how much fun I'm going to have. This is the most playful and joyful we get to see Zero, as well as the most cruel and cowardly. Just from an actor's viewpoint, this scene has it all. Now that we have a sense of what is at stake and the environment we are in, we can progress into more specific staging and actions. This will come later when we begin to work in the actual theatre space.

Oct 10. Worked Scenes 1, 2, and 3

Today, we finally got to move rehearsals to the University Theatre. No more cramped studio space. Up to this point, we had been doing a lot of table work and relationship building without fully blocking scenes. Esteban wanted to be in the actual space for the major blocking. I actually like this process much more than having a week or two of just blocking at the beginning of rehearsals. It allows staging to come from inner life and relationship rather than trying to work inner life into the already existing blocking. It frees up the actor to live in the moment.

We are now starting to slowly move toward the finalized version of scene 1 where there will be little or no movement from Zero. I will have to change my original circumstances for the scene to fit the new staging. From my own personal experience, this does not seem hard to justify. I will often come home exhausted around 11pm and just lie in bed awake listening to my wife talk about her day without really interacting with her. I will be perfectly still and quiet because I honestly lack the energy. For me, I feel there is nothing malicious about this. There may be some frustration but no ill will. For Zero, however, there may be an objective to purposefully ignore her. If that is the case, how can I manifest that, or do I even need to? For

this rehearsal I began to play with the idea of catching only segments of what she says letting that spur some movement. It would be an action of making her feel ignored or put down. We tried this earlier with me using improvised text and got some good results, but now it feels forced and doesn't quite fit the existing text. We still have a ways to go with finding the essence of this scene.

In scene 3, I am still not sure what Zero wants at the top of this scene. Why does he go back to his wife and not the police station if he intends to turn himself in anyway? I am beginning to feel he honestly wants his wife's help, but he is unable to ask her for it. Why? I don't know. In all fairness, her hostility does not provide a good opening. As far as staging goes, it is pretty simple and it has been the same most of the time. We are just playing with different times of looking at each other and different actions from Mrs. Zero. There is a stage direction that says Zero moves with "abstracted physicality". The way I interpreted this was that he begins lots of motions but gets lost in thought, unable to shake his state of shock. Therefore, he does not fully commit to his physicality and gestures. There is one new moment we discovered that adds some depth to this relationship and humanizes both of these characters. In this moment, Mrs. Zero removes all hostility and almost pleadingly asks Zero if he got his raise. Zero is struck by how sincere she is, and is unable to break her heart by telling her the truth. So he remains silent. We worked this moment quite a bit. It shows the possibility of hope and love still in the relationship, but because of the other circumstances and broken expectations they cannot truly experience it anymore.

Lastly, we worked and blocked scene 2. We added the office workers for the first time in this scene, so it was a trial blocking rehearsal. We had already concocted a very stylized physical movement for the moments where we would be working and not voicing our inner dialogue. The

movement resembled pistons going up and down. Whenever one person is in motion, the other is supposed to be voicing their inner monologue. Then, when the other person begins voicing their inner monologue, the first person would go into their "piston" movement. The purpose of this was to make it very clear that the spurts of inner monologue the audience sees occur while the characters are physically working. As the scene progressed, we decided to drop the working movement when it was well established and allow the characters to get up and explore the space as their imagination runs away with them. All of this was very difficult to stage and coordinate. There were new problems with the new chairs and the new desks. We did not fully sync everything together that night, but we began to feel out where our problems would be and what needed to be worked.

Oct 11. Worked Scenes 3, 4, and 2

Today we began with the second part of scene 3. We were to incorporate the staging from our rehearsal space onto the UT stage. Going through the blocking, I found I was struggling with my physical involvement with the other couples. Does he want to be involved with them? If he hadn't just murdered his boss, how would he normally act around them? I need to drop in my need of their approval and my sense of paranoia around them. Esteban also wants to see if Zero's has gained any individuality because of his crime and how that affects his view of the couples around him. Ultimately, I think Esteban wants the audience to see the couples through Zero's eyes, Zero's new reality. This new sense of life scares him. It is an adrenaline rush. It is too real, and these couples are not real enough, but he cannot shake the need of their approval. Right now, I am attempting to join in the group and mirror some of their physical actions but not necessarily keep up with their movement. I am playing with the objective of finding security in

their acceptance with the conflict of seeing how truly superficial they are.

During rehearsal, Esteban made a comment about an article from the 1920's that was directly related to what Elmer Rice was writing about. The article talked about how in modern society people do not think anymore of daily routines or have to make moment-to-moment decisions. They just move through their lives without a realization of the moment. The article states that this will be the downfall of mankind, becoming a mindless machine. This state of existence is where Zero is at the beginning of the play. When he kills his boss, he breaks that automated routine and is forced to evaluate himself and think about life in a way he hadn't done in years. Because he hasn't had to think for himself in so long he becomes lost. These are some of the things that I like to think about for scene 3 and the jury scene. How does he function with this new hyperawareness of life?

Next, we worked scene 4, the jury scene. I played with how nervous I could make Zero, which is very clear in the text. I focused on how desperate I could make Zero with his actions. Lastly, we worked the end of scene 2, the murder of the boss. Before, we had worked it and staged it with actions that reflected a Zero that was comically trying to impress the boss. Today, we tried a Zero that could not interact with him because of how terrified he was. Like a teenage girl meeting a famous boy band. At first, Zero is shocked and awkward, second-guessing everything he does, and then he becomes overjoyed when he thinks he is getting a promotion. Hopefully this will make it an even bigger blow when he realizes he's being fired. I think the adjustment was relatively successful. I felt more of a shock when I was fired. I believe it could eventually get me to a place that will motivate Zero to actually kill the Boss.

Oct 12. Worked Scene 5

This rehearsal was devoted to blocking scene 5, the jail scene. We began with the sightseer's portion, then moved to the Mrs. Zero and Mr. Zero scene, and ended with the fixer executing Zero. We had already talked about this scene in previous weeks but today we began to nail down specific objectives, relationships and blocking. The sightseer portion is a commentary on the way we view criminals in western society. We dehumanize them and make them into animals in a zoo. In this scene, a group of tourists visit Zero while he is on death row. They enter while he is eating his last meal. I had the image of Zero as an actual animal, allowing me to play physically with the way I ate. The rest of the scene I decided to toy with the sightseers. I have been here for a number of months and I am beginning to embrace this stereotype of me being a heartless murderer. It makes Zero feel like a rock star. So my objective towards them is to enjoy their attention. Also, Zero will be killed that day at noon. I don't know yet how this will affect my character. In the text he doesn't seem very remorseful about it yet. For now, I am going to let him enjoy the moment and not comprehend the actual situation. Once the sightseers leave, Mrs. Zero comes in for her last visit. The text states I didn't expect this, so we are playing with a sense of not wanting her there at first, but also not wanting to end things badly on my last day alive. Our actions are cordial and polite, like we are trying to ignore the fact that we had such a horrible marriage. I'm not sure what I want from her. I don't start the scene wanting any physical intimacy or affection even though some affection does manifest. Right now, because I am unclear about my objective, I will just play the relationship and circumstances.

Once my wife leaves, the Fixer, played by Missy Maramara, appears. The Fixer is another representation of the Greek and Roman gods, specifically Mercury. In the description, the Fixer is wearing sandals with little wings coming out of her ankles. To make sense of her

entrance, we have decided on adding a brief moment of "prayer" for Zero. He will have a moment of realization of his impending doom and then pray for divine help. That is when the Fixer will be "summoned" to my cell. My objective with her is to convince her to have me spared. I will get her to sympathize with my cause. I will beg for forgiveness. I will promise to get another job and not waste my life anymore. Basically, I will have an Ebenezer Scrooge moment, but unlike him I will still be killed. I tried all of these actions and they seem to work for the scene. Now, I only need to commit and live in the moment more.

Oct 13. Worked Scenes 6 and 8.

Today, we blocked scene 6 for the UT stage and made sure all of our physicality was still working. I kept my overall stiffness and played with some more moments. Esteban informed me that my physicality may need change later after the costume design team sees what I am doing, but we will work that when we know for sure. We then re-visited scene 8 and nailed down that blocking for the new space.

At this point in the rehearsal process, the character of Zero still felt very unmotivated to me. It felt like he was just rolling with the tides and not fighting for anything. True, he had lots of inner life and actions on people, but there doesn't feel like there was any connection between these episodes of his life. I have not found his through-line or his major character arc yet; therefore I can't connect to him fully. I'm still "playing" the character of Zero instead of living it. So that is the biggest element I need at the moment. I do feel that I am headed in the right direction.

Oct 14. Worked Scenes 7 and First Run-through!

Today, we loosely blocked scene 7 because it was the first time we actually ran it in a theatre space. We tried to incorporate a lot of the moments we discovered in the park, but not everything translates to the stage. We had to abandon some moments because they were only successful with a strong physical environment. For me, the moment that needed to be worked the most was walking into the fields for the first time. It wasn't so much a character problem but a theatrical problem. I would walk in looking around and it would look like I was examining the flats onstage. At this moment in the world of the play, there are no walls onstage, only wide open fields. I need to make my environment clearer. The audience needs get a feel for where the scene is from observing my interaction with it. Esteban also wants higher stakes for Zero when he mistakes Daisy for his wife. He wants a bigger reaction.

After we worked scene 7, we had our first run-through! It was very rough. I realized that what I desperately needed for this to succeed was a strong through-line for the character and a super objective that could carry me through the whole show and not change between acts like I was originally trying to do. The run felt very disjointed, which is how the play is written, but there was no flow from one scene to the next. I need to heavily drop in the specifics of what I am living with before each scene and make sure I can get to where I need to get emotionally before the scene begins. The challenge is that there are many transitions that jump a couple of months and then years with no real time for adjustment from the actor. I know this is a very stylized show that way, but I am personally having trouble connecting to the moments because of its episodic nature. I know it is something that will come as we do more runs and as I connect the dots, but at the moment it feels terrifying.

Oct 19. Run-through. OFF BOOK

Today was our first day back from a desperately needed Fall Break. It was also a full run-through off book. There is not much to tell from this rehearsal. The first off book run is really just to work on lines and get a feeling for the pace of the show. There were many new moments that I don't think will ever happen again. Most new experiences during the off book night happen only because the actors are primarily trying to remember their lines and blocking. I had most of my lines down. The only scene that will remain a problem is scene 4, the jury scene, just because of the sheer length of the monologue. But, now that we have gotten over this hump in the rehearsal process, I can focus on moment to moment living and bringing this character to life.

Oct 20. Worked scene 7 and Run-through.

Today we revisited scene 7 before the run through. We were having trouble with staging the dancing portion of this scene. It is an interesting and vital moment to the show. It shows Zero on the brink of becoming truly happy, but his soul is unable to handle that much feeling so it "overheats" and Zero collapses. We needed to find the right kind of dancing movement and the right level of joy. The actual physical feeling of the "collapse" needs to be dropped in as well.

Next, we had a full run of the show and then notes afterward. Esteban wants even more specific moments of movement in the opening bedroom scene. This means I will have to time all of my movement into her speech in a way that does not interrupt her too much but also is sharp enough that it looks like I am reacting to what she says. We are still having lots of trouble coordinating the lines with the movement in scene 2, which is the office scene. We have met

outside of rehearsal to try to choreograph it better, but we are still very far from nailing down the movement. The problem is that our dialogue does not rely on the other person's dialogue. It is essentially two monologues interspersed that do not really sync together. The problem is coming from our own hesitation in the lines which subsequently screws up the synchronization of the movement. I need to drop in even more importance for the Boss, and how important this day is. In scene 4, I need to make a clear decision on how to begin my confession. I believe we have abandoned the idea that I am eager to take the stand. We are now leaning towards the sheer fear that he feels about being in that court room. My actions still need more specificity. I need more clarification for Zero's thought process. Basically, I still need more understanding of the moments. For the Mrs. Zero portion of scene 5, Esteban says we have lost a bit of specificity in our actions. I also need to make a concrete decision about what I want from her. I personally don't think I want to try to attempt any personal connection with her, but that's what she wants, and that is where the awkward conflict of the scene comes from. At the end of the 5th scene, I need to make a more specific relationship with the Fixer or at least go further in the one I have already established. At the moment, it feels like the stakes are too low. The dialogue feels too conversational. I will adjust that. In the graveyard scene, I want to try playing with a Zero who thinks he is a "cool murderer," attempting to hide his fear. I'm also still playing with how Zero feels about Shrdlu in the opening moments of this scene. There are clear moments where Zero is afraid of him, but also moments when he is pressing him for information and desperately wants his companionship. Scene 7 is on its way, we just need to get out of our heads and live in the moment more. Scene 8 still feels strong. I really enjoy living the last moments of this play.

Oct 21. Worked Scenes 5 and 7.

Today, we began with scene 7, the Elysian Fields, and worked it like crazy. We made the decision to make my entrance onstage one of fear of being caught mixed with some awe of the surrounding beauty. This makes my reunion with Shrdlu somewhat comical because I originally believe he is some kind of local entity that will throw me out. My objective in this scene is to find a companion and get a bit of security, which I do with Shrdlu. But, my objective changes when Daisy enters. The new objective is to get her to be with me. Then my objective changes again with the revelation that *anyone* can remain in the fields. The new objective is to get the hell out of that place of sin. We worked the scene and made moments more clear and staging more specific. I really felt like I was beginning to live the scene without trying to navigate the moments.

We then worked the end of scene 5 with the policeman and the Fixer. This was more for the purpose of clarifying the role of the Fixer and her relationship with Zero. We also cleaned up the moment where the policeman literally picks up Zero and hauls him offstage.

Oct 23. Worked Scenes 2

Ever since we began working scene 2, the office scene, Esteban has wanted an expressionistic physical motion for the work we are doing. However, the more we work on it, the more clear it is that it will be too difficult and confusing with the current motions we have chosen. But, Esteban still wants to try and make it happen. We are literally pistons in a machine. Bending at the waist, I lean all the way down until my nose is almost touching the table and then write the number that Daisy has just given me. When I voice my inner monologue, I immediately stop this action and look out into the audience, not addressing them, but just gazing

toward them. Then, when I am through with that segment of my inner monologue, I immediately pick up the rhythm of the piston machine we have created. At the moment, the problem with this idea is that we are having a too much trouble getting back into the rhythm of the piston between lines. The lines come too quickly and the piston motions just slow down the progression of stakes in the scene. Today, we are going to try to work the scene even more until we have the motion down perfectly and the combine them with some heightened stakes and actions.

As far as the machine motion goes, we worked it quite a bit and made some progress getting it into our bones, but it is still far from where it needs to be. To raise the stakes, we added the urgency of time. How long have we been working? How afraid am I of the day ending? If it ends without me meeting with the boss, what does that mean for my circumstances? Esteban also gave me the note of having more urgency and tempo in my real time dialogue with Daisy. I translated this into my fear of looking incompetent in front of my co-workers. I don't want to seem stupid or incapable of the work. Esteban also gave us a specific rhythm to play within. If we ever get off tempo in our motions we would just find this rhythm and get back to work. Overall, working the new stakes was very helpful and gave a completely new heightened sense to the scene. It all clicked as far as need and objective and stakes. However, the physical motion still needs more work. It is the only thing holding this scene back.

Finally, we worked on the portion of the scene where the Boss fires me. This scene has been easy to work; we have just been experimenting with what kind of relationship we want to portray. Today, I played with how timid I could be with the Boss so it would be in direct contrast to how I pictured the conversation going in my head. Esteban asked me to also try being very confident until the Boss looks at me for the first time and then losing that confidence. I played

with it a few times, and found a couple of new moments. It always ended with Zero getting tongue tied and losing his composure which works great for the scene. It raises Zero's need for the Boss' approval. This is the direction I will continue until Esteban says he doesn't like it, but right now it works for me.

Oct 24. Worked Scenes 1 and 3

Today we worked scene one and made the final decisions on the blocking. I will be completely still for most of the scene, never interacting with Mrs. Zero at all. I will just let her rant with the knowledge that she will eventually run out steam. I will be lost in my own little world. We have picked a handful of moments where I will make very crisp and easy movements that are not in reaction to Mrs. Zero but timed with some of the major beats in her monologue. These movements come out of exhaustion and the need to sleep. My conflict is that I cannot sleep while my wife blabbers on. So I, Zero, will just zone out and daydream. My objective for this scene is to go to sleep and escape my current situation. My obstacle is my wife talking. My objective changes when my wife reminds me it is 25 years tomorrow that I have been working at my job and should be in line for a raise. Now my objective is that of revealing some of my scared anxiety over that fact. That is why I go to the window to try and picture Judy there, but my wife catches me. I like this simpler staging. It goes better with the script and we are not trying to add anything that isn't there. We have embraced the expressionistic nature of the scene and it really works.

We also ran scene 3 for the sake of the ensemble working their physicality. When we worked this scene before, I was trying to discover my relationship with the other couples. Did I, Zero, want I wanted to be a part of their world or not. At this point, it has evolved into another

moment of being lost inside my own mind. I'm still in a place of shock and indecision. I am pretty much guided around the room by Mrs. Zero and the other guests. Everything puts me in a state of awe because after the murder the world looks different. I feel more alive than I ever have. I don't know how to express myself or what to do. Once again, I am just following the text and embracing the expressionism. Instead of creating inner life and then looking for a way to manifest it in an expressionistic manner, I am starting with the expressionistic movement in the script and allowing that to fill me with inner life. To my surprise, it is working wonders.

Oct 25. Worked Scenes 2 and 4

Today, we finally made the decision to change the physicality in scene 2, the office scene. The new physicality is similar but without as much full body movement. We kept a loose rhythm and made it so we are able to pick up this new rhythm wherever. One person's physicality is no longer dependent on the other person's physicality, which is how it was before. Today, we primarily used our time to work this new physicality into the pre-existing staging. It took us out of the moment, but I think it will work better in the long run. I also heightened my desire to prove to the other workers that I wasn't a failure and I heightened my resentment toward them. This gave me more freedom in the final moments of my daydream sequence.

Next, we worked scene 4. Since the beginning of the rehearsal process, this scene is the one I had been afraid of the most. The transitions from one thought to another were hard to follow and hard to memorize. Learning the lines and the character's thought process was too difficult to do by just studying the text. So, for the last week or so, I had started to use the Whelan Technique with this scene. For me, the Whelan technique takes me completely out of my head and allows me to live 100 percent in the moment. In this technique, I record all of my lines. Once I've done

that, I listen to it while acting out the scene. By doing this, I am internalizing the moments by just living them. I re-record the scene as I feel out new moments and continue to act them out. As a happy coincidence I learn my lines this way much faster. I exercised this method during my afternoon jogs. I would listen to the text and act it out as I ran. If anyone saw me while I was running, they would have seen a crazy person jogging while having a desperate conversation with nobody without using any words. It really keeps me from over-intellectualizing the moments.

In this rehearsal, I finally began to feel the moments and had specific actions based on circumstance and relationship that I could actually play. From these new moments, Esteban began to see something very interesting evolving and gave me a new direction to take the scene. He wanted me to find moments where I was literally arguing with my own conscience. Not really in a "crazy person" kind of way, but in a way that shows my inner conflict and how I am fighting against my own realization of the crime. To make this playable as an actor, I made the choice to argue with the people around me as if they were making the statements that my conscious would make and I am reacting to them. It became moments where I would make a statement, but in my mind I would already know the answer that would refute that statement. So I go ahead and say that statement out loud, and I continue to argue against that statement with another idea. This method allowed me to make these large jumps in thought that Zero has in the scene and still have the sense of a partner and a goal to fight for. But, with this new direction, I need to go through and decide what I'm saying, and what my conscience is saying.

In scene 4, there is a difficult moment where Zero tells a story about how he yelled at a black man on the subway. The word "nigger" is used repeatedly and we haven't made a decision on whether to cut it or not. At the moment, the way I am playing it seems too overly vicious, like I,

the actor, have a preconceived notion of what a racist would act like and I'm playing the stereotype. Esteban has given me the note to make it more casual, as if anyone in my situation would have yelled at that "nigger." Hopefully, this will not take the audience out the moment and they can just give it up to the character.

Oct 26. Worked Scene 5

Today we made some adjustments to scene 5, the jail scene. This was just to tighten the sightseer's movements as a group and clarify their characters. I did not make many discoveries in this rehearsal. This scene has always felt a little forced, like we were adding circumstances to Zero's character that are not justified by the script. We were not able to deal with my concerns this night.

Oct 27. Worked Scenes 6 and 7

Today we worked scene 6 and 7, both scenes with Shrdlu. After the last time we ran scene 7, I made some adjustments that I wanted to try for the next time we worked it. One adjustment included intensifying the exhaustion of walking for months on end in the afterlife. I will also take away the fear of the afterlife and replace it with a feeling of jealousy for those who get to live in the fields (heaven). I also made some new relationship choices with Shrdlu. In the fields, I feel like I am the "cool guy" or the Alpha. I'll stay with him just because I know him, but I don't want to associate myself with him. He is a little over dramatic and awkward. If we get caught it will probably be his fault, but unfortunately I need his help. So my objective with Shrdlu will now be to get him to help me figure out a way to stay here and try and ditch him later.

We also worked scene 6 but I didn't make any new discoveries. I had already changed my physicality so I wouldn't hurt my costume. It involved putting the stiffness more in my hands, relieving the stiffness in my body much quicker. The stiffness in my hands will remain throughout most of the scene so that I can play with some physical business when I try to light a cigarette. Other than that my relationship with Shrdlu had remained constant and we are finding new moments every time we work the scene.

Oct 28. Worked Scenes 5 and 7.

Today we worked scene 7 with Daisy and scene 5 with Mrs. Zero. There are some things I still need to adjust. Zero believes there is no chance of Daisy and him staying here together. Being a married man, I, Zero, still believe I will get in trouble for loving Daisy. The moment where I hear the music needs to be more of an awakening moment for Zero's soul. Esteban would also like me to put back into the scene the fear of being dragged out of heaven. I'm still a little unclear as to how I feel about Daisy when I initially see her in the fields, which is probably how it should be at first, but after the initial shock how do I feel? Esteban wants the dance to be even more expressionistic and he has made the decision to not have the music be played over the speakers. So we will hear the music only in our head. I also need to initially believe I will not permanently stay in this place. I'm only there because they haven't caught me yet. This will help my decision to stay with Daisy even more exciting for me, and then more devastating for her when I leave.

Next, we worked scene 5 with Mrs. Zero and the Fixer. I was happy with where this scene was and only had a few adjustments to make. To add more tension when Mrs. Zero enters the jail, we created an event for our characters to be living with when they see each other, a

previous fight where Mrs. Zero stormed out vowing never to return. This new circumstance made the opening moments very tense and filled with unspoken anxiety. It really made the scene come alive. Esteban would also like a more physical response from Zero when his wife offers herself to him for one final fling. This means I will need to raise my physical disgust for Mrs. Zero. But, still, at the end of the day my objective with my wife is to leave her on good terms.

Oct 30. Worked Scenes 1, 3, and 5

This is the last week of rehearsals before tech week begins. I am terrified. I still have not found this character completely. I don't feel comfortable living his circumstances yet. I keep telling myself I'll find him during tech when all the elements come together, but I never really know.

We started rehearsal by working scene 1. All of my inner life is strong and clear from my point of view. The major objective change near the end of the scene that I had decided on works for my character and I am going to keep it. The only technical problem now is the tempo and pace of my movement from the bed to the window. That will depend on how urgently I want to see if Judy is there or if I want to get there and back without my wife noticing I'm not in bed.

Esteban gave me a word to describe this scene, "inertia." All of my movements and motivations are happening on sheer inertia. This is what we do every night. I'm just going through the motions. The thing that makes this night different is the 25 year anniversary of being employed as an accountant, but at the beginning of the scene I'm just trying to survive the rest of the day before I fall asleep.

Next, we worked scene 3. The last few times I have worked this scene, my objective has shaped itself into "I want to tell my wife what I did without her getting upset," but within that

statement lies the conflict as well. No matter what happens my wife will get upset. The reason I do not speak is because I cannot find a way to tell her. I have also developed this value of pride. Throughout the rehearsals, my character has been gaining a sense of pride and entitlement. I believe this is influencing his actions in the dinner scene after he killed the Boss. He does not want to give his wife the satisfaction of being right about him. Then once all the couples come in he is in a state of shock and awe. I worked with these ideas today, but had only a little success in moments where there is direct interaction with my wife. These actions did not sustain all the silent moments I had in this scene. I believe when I work it again, I will go back to working with a sense that I am still picturing the murder in my mind and see if that will sustain all of my silence.

Finally, we worked scene 5, this was just the portion of the scene between Zero and Mrs. Zero. What I wanted to work on today was finding a logical balance between my desire to connect with her emotionally but not physically. What resulted was a couple who fought for so long that they did not remember how to be affectionate and when they were affectionate, it took them completely off guard. This gave us many good moments in the scene. When we become hostile toward each other, it is almost a relief because it puts us back in our comfort zones. I also realize I have an objective change at the end of this argument. It is after I say that I would have married Daisy if I'd met her first. That's when I realize what I will be leaving behind. My new objective is to live. That will propel me into the Fixer portion of the scene.

This rehearsal went well and I am feeling like I am finally making concrete decisions about what my character wants and what he is living with at any given part of the show. Now, I just need to let go, stop thinking about character and live the play.

Oct 31. Worked Scenes 5 and 6. Tech Watch.

Today we made a big change to scene 5. Before, the sightseers had been very enthused to see Zero in his cell. There was no sense of them being near a dangerous criminal. Esteban wanted to capture the thrill of being next to a murderer. He wanted the sightseers to play like they were in a haunted house. They are afraid, but that is why they are there, for the thrill of being close to a known murderer. This image gave me the idea of a tiger pacing behind the bars of a cage. I adjusted my blocking to incorporate that image and had great success. The sightseers were dead silent and hung on my every move. The new movement also changed what I was living with at the beginning of the scene. I allowed Zero to live with more of a sense of his execution. This bred a feeling of spite toward everyone. It made a nice contrast with the other parts of scene and created a very interesting journey for the character.

Tonight, we did a run of the show for our technical crew. I felt my whole performance was choppy and filled with gaps in my character arc. I did not feel any personalization of the character and I am still worried too much about mechanics in the blocking and movement. There are moments where I am just going through motions because I have not fully dropped in values or character objectives. I am not feeling the inner life progression of the scenes. I have decided that I need to find the major things that my character is living with before each scene and just focus on that for a run-through. I will push all other mechanical problems aside. Because of the episodic structure of the play, it is very difficult to transition between scenes and maintain the truth of what this character is living with.

Nov 1. Worked Scenes 2 and 3.

Today was one of the last times we could work scene 2. We had already made final

decisions on the blocking and the mechanical movement. So today was about character development, actions, and inner life. The biggest note I got was to play both ends of the spectrum in my mind with more confidence and certainty. Because this is my mind, I need to have more freedom to explode into my fantasies with each new idea being more exciting than the last. For example, when I consider murdering my wife, I jump back and forth between whether it's possible or not. I need go further in excitement when I believe I can do it and further with my dismay when I think I'll get caught. After all, in his mind Zero is always right. So the biggest note for me here is to go further with enjoying my fantasies and really try to make Zero the most amazing person when he is in his imagination.

We also worked scene 3 for mechanics, which did not affect my inner life or objective. One thing that is working in this scene is the "I'm thinking moment." I believe I need to tie that more into the through line of my character. Zero has a need to escape his current circumstances and identity, but in reality the only way to do that is to self-correct or "think," which he avoids. I now believe the way to handle the silence in scene 3 is to think about everything all at once. The murder has jarred me back to consciousness and I am painfully aware of who I am and what my life is worth. Throughout the scene my senses are in overload and I am seeing everything for what it really is. I see the couples for the soulless creatures they are. I see my wife for the superficial being that she is and I see myself for the failure that I am. All of these come at me at once and literally paralyze me throughout the scene. When I am asked "why so pensive," the only way I can explain what I am going through is to say "I'm thinking." I believe that will help tie all of these scenes together and create a playable character arc. I believe self-awareness is one of the possible spines of this play.

Nov 2. Tech Watch.

Today was our second tech watch and actually I felt much better about my character. Now that we are doing full runs of the show, I am starting to be able to feel the character arc and live the show. The prologue and scene 1 was very good. Running the prologue into scene 1 helps tremendously because it gives me the feeling of inertia that Esteban was talking about; having my senses be overloaded by the activity of the prologue physically exhausts me and creates the inertia for scene 1. The new stakes of scene 2 work very well and needing to look as professional as possible today of all days, really allows me to get mad at Daisy when I feel she is slowing me down. Scene 3 was a little off just because of mechanics, but overall it was OK. Scene 4 worked very well with a new note to include the audience as the jury as well. I also dropped in the circumstance of never having done public speaking before. Scene 6 feels different every time because my partner can change actions so often that I am literally just living moment to moment with him onstage, but the overall scene is consistently telling the story of how my character still grasps at his earthly social norms even in the afterlife. Scene 7 feels very good, the dialogue is written realistically and it is easy to play action with my text. I am in constant communion with my partners onstage. The dancing still needs to be cleaned up a bit. We need specific moments to navigate the progression of our playfulness. Scene 8 is very fun to play. My objectives for this scene have remained pretty much the same throughout the entire process. The objective actually changes a few times as new information is revealed to Zero about his purpose in life. My actions are strong and interesting and come from my relationship to Charles. I really feel comfortable with what I consider the moment of truth for Zero when he declares "he can't stop thinking," then Charles says he'll help him by giving him a little "hope". Hope is a girl that Charles will send back with Zero, but in truth, "hope" is just more escapism

that Zero will cling to. Overall, this run helped give more shape to my overall super objective, which is shaping into something like “trying to find happiness” or “trying to be successful man in society.”

Nov 3. Worked Scenes 1 and 2.

Today we ran scenes 1 and 2 for Mavourneen Dwyer, our dialect coach. We had decided to remain with the dialects we started off with. We were unable to shake them and they really are engrained in the script. Basically, this run was to see if we could be heard and understood in our dialects. I did not get any notes from her, which means my volume and diction is at least acceptable. We also worked scene 2 again because we changed it recently. Our main goal was to just have fun in this scene. We had the mechanics down. Now we just need to enjoy the moments. Overall, this rehearsal went very well. It's nice to be told to just have fun. As an actor, that's when I feel the most in the moment and on partner.

Nov 4. Full Run.

Today was our last full run before tech week. It still feels a little disjointed. I'm still struggling with how difficult it is to play a character whose story spans about 30 years. There are so many different things that need to be living in me at the beginning of each scene and I only have fractions of a minute in the transitions to make the inner life changes that will show how much the character has gone through. Although this feels impossible and is stressing me out like crazy, I do feel a through line now and I know I am on my way to having a full character arc.

Nov 5-10, 2011. Tech Week.

In my experience as an actor, my character never fully lives within me until all the elements of the show come together. The costumes, sets, lights, sound, crewmembers and transitions are all part of the character's world. As an actor, I give all these theatrical elements to the character and allow them to shape him into what the audience will ultimately see onstage. I am an actor who needs lights and costumes. There is something about the mixture of all the elements that allows me to get out of my head and live in the moment. In the rehearsal process, I am constantly in a state of analysis. I try to gauge my performance and adjust things intellectually. But, in tech week, with the full picture created, I throw out all of my circumstances and prep work that I have been doing, trusting that they have been embedded into my soul, and just have fun onstage. I tell myself that I am enough and work my hardest to relax and try not to force anything. These are all ideas that I shoot for, but in reality it's much easier said than done.

The tech week for *The Adding Machine* went off without a hitch. For the actors, it began with staging the transitions which I wasn't involved in. Then, we had a Cue to Cue with lights. We only had to make very minor adjustments to staging. None of them affected character choices. For me, there is something magical about feeling the lights onstage that makes the environment real. All of a sudden the rest of the world is eliminated and there is only you, your partner, and the world of the play. We finished the Cue to Cue around 7pm and were able to take the rest of the night off for some much needed rest.

Sunday was our stop and go with full tech. This added another necessary element: sound. There were a few sound cues that I was anxious to let my character react to onstage. These were the street sounds in the prologue, the carnival noises right before I kill the Boss, and a loud

thundering noise in the last scene that stops me from running away from Charles. Finally getting to hear these sounds was immensely helpful, especially the carnival noises. I was able to feed off the chaos that the sound effect created so much so that I carried it over into the next scene. It helped me live the silence that is required of my character in the dinner scene. I would just let the memory of that sound effect play over and over again in my mind. The thundering sound in the last scene felt very weak compared to what I had been reacting to in my mind during rehearsals. I think it is because of where the speakers are positioned. I will just have to imagine a louder sound onstage.

Monday we had another working rehearsal to give our tech crew a break. This was very helpful to Esteban who used it to make some last minute adjustments to actions and staging. The biggest note for me was to adjust some of the circumstances with my relationship with Shrdlu and let those adjustments influence my actions on him in scene 6, the graveyard scene. The changes gave the scene a more casual feel. Esteban said that the tension and expressionistic element of this scene is not in the characters' stakes but in the fact that these are two dead men sitting in a graveyard discussing their crimes. We were overplaying our circumstances before. The rest of this rehearsal was used to work physicality and timing.

The next three nights were devoted to dress rehearsals. As I expected, the first dress was very loose and timid as everyone got used to their costumes. Luckily for me, I only wear one costume throughout the entire show and just remove elements of the costume as I become dead. My costume fits my character perfectly. It is mundane and without any features that give him a sense of individuality. When I put on the costume for the first time in the dressing room, it all came together. I felt the physicality of the character. I acquired his inner life and history. I am an actor who needs a costume. Without it, my character is never fully complete.

With each subsequent dress rehearsal, I was able to live more and more freely onstage. Of course, there are still moments where I get inside my head and try to manufacture certain emotions, but overall, I am living the circumstances and going on Zero's journey. All of our theatrical elements are staying concise. Our characters are present with strong objectives and actions. Now all we need is an audience to bring the show alive.

Performances and Final Thoughts

We opened *The Adding Machine* on November 11, 2011 in the University Theatre and ran until November 20, 2011. We had eight performances. By opening night, we were all desperately in need of an audience. We had gone as far as we could go with scene work and now needed to let the play live and breathe on its own. I am still very nervous about how this play will be received by the audience. It is a style that I have never worked with before. It is not a traditional crowd pleaser. In fact, it may not even emotionally move the audience. The message is the most important aspect of this show. However, I do believe that the audience will be engaged intellectually. The staging and theatricality is so interesting and thought provoking that I do believe it will hold the audience's attention.

As an actor, I am excited to allow the audience's energy to bring my performance to new places. I hope I have done all that I can to prepare for this role. I always have a horrible feeling of never being fully prepared before an opening night.

Overall, I think the show was a success. I came away feeling accomplished and exhausted. The emotional and physical roller coaster this character has is totally draining. With an audience, my performance was reignited. I felt in the moment and on partner. I didn't have to struggle to reach any moments of heightened inner-life. They all came naturally and with ease.

The audience responded very positively. However, I know that opening nights give an extra boost to the performances because the actors have so much adrenaline. The new energy from the audience gives them such a rush that the show takes on a completely new form. The trap here is when the actors try to repeat the performance they had opening night. This is impossible. When we do that we lose the honesty of the moments and don't live truthfully onstage. The acting appears forced

Our opening night crowd was wonderful and responsive. The next couple of nights were very quiet. The audience was paying attention, but they were very pensive and analytical, which is what I had expected in the first place. After opening night, I was able to notice some moments that were just a little bit forced. All through the graveyard scene, Shrdlu and I had originally played off of each other so well, but with an audience, I think we began to play for laughs and when one plays for laughs one usually doesn't get any. Throughout the run of the show, we continued to try different tactics in the scene. I honestly believe we lost the truth of the scene by the last weekend of the show. We were just trying to recreate the fun we had with the scene during rehearsals. This was the only part that I thought was lacking. Going back, I would have given myself even higher stakes to play in the graveyard.

The rest of the show had its ups and downs, but I believe I told the character's story to the best of my abilities. One scene that was different every night was scene 4, the jury scene. It was because the audience was different every night. I took Esteban's note and addressed the audience, bringing them in to the scene. I began feeding off their reactions to my speech and sometimes they took me places I did not expect. This threw me off in some places and I had to search for my line, but overall that scene was such a rush to perform. I never knew what was going to happen.

The scenes that I was so afraid of at the beginning of the rehearsal process proved to be the most memorable to the audience. The office scene became one of the most fun scenes to do. It was almost cheerful and “sitcomy.” Voicing the inner monologue became a real life dialogue with the audience. It wasn't direct interaction, but I can see now that this dialogue was written keeping the audience reaction in mind. Who knew? I was told the prologue and scene 1 were mesmerizing. Scene 3 was chilling. Scene 7 in the Elysian Fields was heartbreaking. All around, I had great feedback. Understandably, the show was more relatable to the older generations. There are things in this show that a 20 year old will not get. They may understand it intellectually, but until they have spent a decade working the same job with the same day-to-day routine, they will not be touched by this show's message.

I am incredibly fortunate to have gotten the opportunity to play this role. It was a challenge and a thrill. It taught me that analysis and prep work is all essential, but in the end, you have to trust the text and the truth of the moment and let go. You can't press your ideas into the script. It also taught me to trust that my own inner-life is enough for any role. I am still working to not manufacture moments onstage when I don't feel connected emotionally, but I know I will be working on that forever. I gained a lot of experience bringing the physical nature of this character to life. It was a mix of expressionistic and realistic movement. I learned not to try to justify the expressionistic movement. If I just go with it, the movement will create its own inner life within me.

The final performance was bitter sweet. I enjoyed the process and was happy with the result, but I am physically exhausted. Not just from this production, but from this semester. I am looking forward to a break. My performance was fulfilling and informative. I hope to incorporate the lessons I have learned from playing the character of Zero into my own life.

II. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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