

TURNING TRICKS AND THE MODERN FEMALE PROTAGONIST:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF THE ROLE OF THE
DEMIMONDE FROM VIENNESE OPERETTA TO MODERN
AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE

by

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ABSTRACT

The demimondaine, an exclusive courtesan in nineteenth-century Europe, and the modern mezzo-soprano protagonist are prevalent characters in American musical theatre and can be observed in various styles throughout European music and drama. In Arthur Schnitzler's *The Little Comedy*, the female protagonist is both a romantic heroine and mistress; and in Jules Renard's *Le Pain de Ménage*, the lead player is anything but the classic ingénue. In preparation for performance and to further the research in the contemporary music comedy realm, I prepared for the roles of Josefina and Monica in the University of Central Florida's production of Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann's *Romance, Romance* through in-depth analysis on the performance development process of two distinct female protagonist characters.

I first researched the historical world of the demimonde: identifying key characteristics of these famed courtesans and their fashionable emergence as "tart with a heart" characters in nineteenth-century dramatic works. Second, I traced the evolution of the "fallen woman" archetypal character and the mezzo-soprano from European grand opera and realism to contemporary musical theatre. This research better defined my character type and therefore assisted in performance preparation.

Third, Act I's *The Little Comedy* is a period piece set in nineteenth-century Vienna, and Harman's and Herrmann's adaptation reflect the musical and social aspects of the time. Through historical research on operetta style and the creators' perspectives, I more fully developed my understanding and performance interpretation in *Romance, Romance*. Finally, I evaluated my characterization process with a discussion of the practical implementation of research on the musical performance process.

This thesis document adds to the wealth of pre-existing musical theatre character analysis and discusses key components associated with the development of the modern female protagonist. Identifying the evolution of the “tart with a heart” stock character from its European origins to its current Broadway prominence, this manuscript advances the academic field with the illumination of the demimonde in American musical theatre. Last, for the purpose of developing believable and realistic characters for musical performance, this document analyzes and evaluates the research methods used to inform the rehearsal process when developing two female protagonist characters in contemporary musical theatre.

“I learned this, at least, by my experiment;
that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams,
and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined,
he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours...
If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost;
that is where they should be.
Now put the foundations under them.”

–Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (323)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Gillespy	Elaine & Thurman Gillespy Jr Theater in News-Journal Center
Josefine	Josefine Weninger (Pepi) in Act I: “The Little Comedy”
KCACTF	Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival
Mezzo	Mezzo Soprano
Monica	Monica in Act II: “Summer Share”
NJC	News-Journal Center in Daytona Beach, FL
<i>Romance</i>	Romance, Romance: Two New Musicals
SMT	Seaside Music Theater
TWAH	“tart with a heart”, a subtype of the “fallen woman” archetype category
UCF	University of Central Florida
WWI	World War One

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The courtesan character has always been a present and vital archetype in the musical theatre canon. From her role as female protagonist in grand opera and turn-of-the-century realism to her development as the character leading lady in contemporary music comedy, she continues to excite, mystify, and intrigue audiences. Historically, the demimonde was a specific group of high-end courtesans at the height of their literary fame in the dawn of the twentieth century. These original “working girl” characters are among the first of the “tart with a heart” types within the “fallen woman” stock character category (“Demimonde”, Collins). Evolving from European musical origins as the mezzo-soprano or soprano in French and Viennese operetta, the demimondaine character, which is an individual courtesan within the demimonde (now heard as the Broadway belt mixer), continues to adapt and change with the trends of current American musical theatre. But what are the characteristics of a demimondaine, and how does one incorporate those traits successfully into musical performance while also maintaining believability? I asked myself this question when first notified of the opportunity of creating and performing Josefine and Monica in the musical, *Romance, Romance*.

The two one-act musicals of this show that each feature a woman as the protagonist require the development of two distinct lead female characters separated by time and place. Josefine, written as a Viennese demimondaine in an operetta-influenced period piece, is a part of the turn of the last century—the fin-de-siècle, a decadent European cultural movement during 1880-1914 (“Fin De Siècle”)—whereas Monica is the strong character leading lady in a semi-pop/rock-influenced musical set in current day New England. Although these characters seem to

be connected only by the theme of romance, I propose that Josefine and Monica can be classified as “tart with a heart” stock types with similar characteristics at different stages in their romantic lives (Harman et al. 96). From this perspective, I began my rehearsal and performance journey.

In order to further connect the acts of *Romance, Romance* and aid in realistic portrayal of the female protagonists, I chose to embrace my “typecast” history (regularly being cast in roles with similar characteristics) and research the origins and evolution of the fallen woman character and mezzo belter from their “sweet tart” origins to the current day status. I first defined and identified the characteristics of a demimondaine. Not only did this give me further insight into playing with or against “type” in audition or employment opportunities, but it also forced me to re-evaluate my character-driven rehearsal process.

Second, as another means of connecting Josefine to Monica beyond the related themes of love, I explored the evolution of the mezzo/mistress protagonist. This process should offer insight into the development of Monica in that her characterization must be constructed with fewer historical references to build upon. Also, this information should give more breadth to interpretation of the concepts and themes of the show as a whole.

Third, both characters were initially conjured and first performed in the same decade of the nineteenth century, which is often considered the “golden age” for both operetta and fallen women characters. In analyzing the historical background and influences on the creation of the show, I give further evidence to support my theories on style, research perspective and theme.

Fourth, for the purpose of understanding an unfamiliar musical and acting style, I researched the history and influences of Viennese Operetta and its connection to Broadway.

The study led to discoveries regarding the physical realities of the period piece, informing my vocal and movement choices, and thereby allowing a more natural interpretation.

Last, I evaluate my rehearsal and performance process through documentation of the journey and then assess my findings for the characterization of the demimondes in *Romance, Romance*.

In order to create two realistic and believable individual characters within the same show, one must go beyond the traditional steps in performance preparation to the realm of research. This is not to say that traditional practices such as script and score breakdown or other proven methods of performance preparation should not be used or weren't explored and incorporated on this project. However, in order to add to the already extensive amount of research on character analysis and theatre research methods, I chose to focus my discussion of *Romance*'s character development practices on the ideas above.

Because "the Broadway musical is the one performance form that features women as neither passive objects of desire nor subjects of vilification" (Wolf 17), studying the performance interpretation of the demimondes in *Romance, Romance* is important in providing a new and fair perspective on these highly misunderstood and underrepresented type of female characters in the theatre research community. Through my comprehensive investigation, I found very little academic literature on this stock character in musicals. Further, by identifying the "tart with a heart" character from its European origins to the Broadway stage, this thesis advances the field on the classification and evolution of the demimonde in American musical theatre.

In summation, for the purpose of developing believable and realistic characters for musical performance, this document analyzes and evaluates the research methods used to inform

the performance process and development of the modern female protagonist in contemporary musical theatre. The progress of my work moved through research and evaluation of character and style, examination of the themes and concepts associated with the musical as a whole, documentation of the rehearsal and performance progression, and finally, evaluation and discussion of the practical implementation of research on characterization and overall musical performance.

CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The “fallen woman” type is identified under many labels including, but not limited to, mistress, bad girl, courtesan, hooker with the heart of gold, diva, seductress, temptress, and tart with a heart. A member of this archetypal category, the demimondaine, a courtesan of the social set demimonde, exemplifies the basic characteristics that identify this stereotype in literature and drama, along with some distinct additions to the qualities that make up this persona. In order to better define the characteristics of Josefine and Monica as fallen-woman types, an analysis of the demimonde and her evolution to the contemporary stage is required.

Demimonde and Analysis of the “Fallen Woman” Type

Definition and Historical Significance

A distinct social class of European aristocratic fin-de-siècle, the women of the demimonde, comprised a specific sect of courtesans who were supported by wealthy lovers. According to the *Penguin English Dictionary*, a demimondaine is a high-end nineteenth-century kept woman who engaged in sexual affairs out of wedlock. It is a French word meaning literally half-world (demi-monde) meant to imply these women were on the outskirts of respectable society (“Demimonde”, [Penguin](#)).

An alluring, ambiguous figure, the demimondaine was not just a prostitute, nor was she considered a regular mistress (who is usually the lover of only one man). As noted by Katie Hickman in her book *Courtesans*, these “professional” women not only accepted large sums in exchange for sexual favors, but also selected their “favored few” patrons for their own pleasure (4).

The close of the courtesan era, which was marked by the onslaught of World War I, reached new heights of refinement and exclusivity. Retaining the service of a woman of the demimonde was considered the “ultimate luxury good,” and advertising this relationship was an admission of prosperity (Hickman 12). However, the notoriety of the woman could also ensure a very costly expense. Laura Bell, a popular London courtesan in the 1850s, was allegedly paid \$250,000, the equivalent of nearly 400,000 US dollars today (“XE.com Conversion - 250,000.00 GBP to USD”), by the Nepalese Prince Jung Bahadoor for one evening of her company. However, other sources insinuate this was probably the total sum exchanged over the course of their entire relationship rather than one night. Regardless, it is certain that great monies and gifts were exchanged for the services of these celebrities of the day (Hickman 4). “Courtesans did not follow the fashion,” Hickman emphasizes; “they were the fashion.” In the Belle Époque or “beautiful era” (1890-1914), demimondes had become not only fashionable for men of the aristocracy, but also semi-mythical creatures (Hickman 4-8; “Boulevard”).

These special courtesans possessed the qualities and traits that have come to be associated with the “fallen woman” archetype, but can be further classified in the subcategory type of the “tart with a heart” or “prostitute with the heart of gold,” with subtle hints of the “unabashed diva” (Knapp 229, 237-238). Keep in mind, real people are never wholly one thing or the other and dramatic characters are molded after real people. The examination of this type or stereotype is for the basis of exploration on character development. Like a living person, a dimensional character will have strengths and weaknesses in order to balance the positives and negatives of that persona. This wholly realized character is the norm in modern musical theatre as audiences prefer characters they can relate to more readily.

The main distinctions of the subtype is that the “tart” is a prostitute with a generous, wholesome or caring nature and the “diva” is a poised, non-disconcerted glamorous lady with a large personality (“Tart with a Heart”; “Diva”). This description should not be confused with other definitions that include divinity, the prima donna, and the negative connotation that has come to be associated with “diva.” With its root word deriving from a Latin word, “divine,” meaning “shining,” the definition simply refers to the grandiose nature and appeal of a diva (“Divine”).

Furthermore, the distinction between the tart and the diva helps to connect *Romance’s* Josefine and Monica. Although the time period and setting alter the psychological aspects of the two characters, both emulate traits of the demimonde. Josefine, in line with the Schnitzler/operetta style, at first seems to personify more of the “unabashed diva” throughout the act. However, she ultimately shows more compassion at times than Monica and lives up to the caring nature of the TWAH (“Tart With A Heart”) at the climax of the show. Monica, on the other hand, is a diva throughout the act, although she continues to consider the consequences of romantic notions becoming reality. She is the ultimate tease in that she flaunts her sexuality, but is considerate in always rationalizing the consequence of infidelity (Harman et al. 96). The two characters being fully dimensional exemplify some characteristics associated with all “fallen woman” types and women in general. After examination of the historical background of the demimonde and defining what traditional “types” apply to their characterization, it is essential to identify what those characteristics are.

Identifying the Characteristics of a Demimondaine

The characteristics that identified these half-world or demi-monde creatures are difficult to define. All were extremely attractive but for various reasons. Physical beauty was a factor, but some courtesans, like the most famous French demimondaine, Cora Pearl, were not considered conventionally pretty but by some as “positively ugly” (Hickman 5). Courtesans were sought after for such qualities as beauty of their complexions, eloquence of their eyes, sweetness or sauciness of their disposition, the vitality of their spirit, the wit of their conversation, or the mysteriousness of their allure. The one unifying physical characteristic of the demimondaine was her ability to make men think she was beautiful, and this was the most difficult and enviable trait of them all. As noted by journalist Georges Ohnet, “It requires more intelligence to succeed in being a whore kept in luxury than to make a future in a respectable business” (qtd. in Hickman 7). Out of necessity, these women were quick-witted and astute observers of the world around them. With these abilities, plus an excellent understanding of role-playing, it is not surprising that a number of them also dabbled in the performing arts. However, I must make the distinction that all fin-de-siècle actresses were not of the demimonde or vice versa (Hickman 4-8; Pullen 93-133).

It was this aura of mystic that perhaps made this type of courtesan so fashionable at the turn of the last century. Although chastised by respectable society, men and women were fascinated by them. Courtesans were bold enough to break all the rules pertaining to class, society and female propriety. The sheer display of confidence in demeanor and disregard for social etiquette was curiously alluring and almost respected. Fashion trends soon followed suit with the public’s fascination, and the line between aristocrat and courtesan was blurred with the

rise in popularity of the corset and its accentuation of the female form (Hickman 23-28; Workman 63-67).

Identifying the general characteristics of the demimonde and then applying it to the development of *Romance*'s two "fallen women" is important in establishing the similarities and differences between the characters. While stereotypes do not promote dimensionality in developing musical characters, recognizing traits associated with the archetype brings enlightenment to new possible characterization choices.

In the section "Bringing Characters to Life," the authors of *Writing Musical Theatre* discuss the important elements or traits that a protagonist must have in order to be a compelling or developed character. I will use their suggestions as a model or reference for character identification. They categorize their characters through physical type, vocal range and psychological and emotional makeup (Cohen and Rosenhaus 83-87).

Libretti contain some important information, usually in the first couple of scenes, about physical descriptions, such as gender, approximate age and vocal range. A demimondaine is usually a female of no specified age, though usually considered "middle aged" or of a mature disposition. Innocence is often times associated with youth; throughout history sexual awareness or promiscuity has been associated with the experience of age. This is why the traditional ingénue characters are usually played by seemingly virtuous, innocent youths ("Ingénue"). Also, these characters are often written as mezzo-soprano roles on the American stage. Then again, this is a fluctuating trend throughout history that will be explored more in-depth later in this chapter.

In *Voicing Gender*, Naomi André notes “Siren Songs” author Catherine Clement’s comparison of the mezzo-soprano with the baritone. They are older and more calculating types and are similar because, like the baritone, the perception of the mezzo often focuses on her “masculine way of life.” The life of the demimonde would be considered very “masculine” in that each demimondaine controls the world around her. In addition, she acknowledges the contralto as a powerful, spirited voice “bordering on the divine” (qtd. in André 5-7). The mezzo/belt voice, which is the evolved modern child of both of these traditional voice types, encompasses the quality of the alto voice and the perception of the mezzo.

In identifying a character’s psychological and emotional makeup, the protagonist should be likeable and interesting, and the audience should care what happens to them. As previously noted, demimondes are curiously intriguing and likeable, or at least admired. In the prologue of her book, Hickman recounts an evening in 1771 at the Little Theatre in London where it was reported that a play was halted for fifteen minutes while applause was redirected to a famous courtesan seated in the audience because of an ad lib made by one of the actors in reference to her beauty (xvii-xix).

Another identifying quality of the successful protagonist is her charm. There must be something appealing in the character that an audience can identify with. While the “unabashed diva” is revered, the TWAH is relatable for her persistence. People understand the “fight for survival” mentality and relate or sympathize with a “tart” who has a moral conscience.

Moreover, optimistic characters who are honest and direct about who they are and what they want are appealing in musicals. Josefina and Monica are realistic optimists: as demimonde characters they “take destiny into their own hands” and are obvious and open about their

positions in life. They do not apologize for their station and, if possible, take what they want. This type of character embraces life: both the highs and lows. In short, she has a queen bee quality mixed with sex appeal. Differentiating from the “girl next door” type or a “Cinderella” role, this “mature” character is more assertive and sophisticated, seduces men on purpose, and changes or evolves rather than just comes of age (Wolf 170).

Although never openly received in respectable society, these courageous women were powerful beings who secretly moved among the upper-classes with curious command and influence. Considered by some as early feminists, these women were completely independent in a highly patriarchal world. Not only were they financially autonomous but also morally, intellectually and spiritually free. With the advantages given to the women of this post, it might be concluded that the riches earned were in some ways worth the sins committed (Hickman 331-336).

Historically, the ladies of the *half-world* or *demi-monde* were an interesting sect of the fin-de-siècle and are considered exceptional women. Portraying the role of the demimondaine is as difficult to determine as is categorizing and identifying the qualities of real demimondes. However, with identification of some key components to observe while developing this character type, one can use the information to flesh out realistic characterization.

Origins and Evolution of the Mistress/Mezzo Character Type

The fallen woman as the female protagonist is a recycled trend throughout dramatic history, being premiered in works as early as ancient Greek tragedy (Engel and Kissel 15). “Writers have long employed the single-character heroine. Usually she is a woman of middle

age who is in no way typical of any kind of average woman,” writes *Writing with Lyrics* author Lehman Engel. “In any case, she is a fact of drama who occurs, disappears, perhaps for centuries, reappears, and again vanishes” (15). In other words, the non-ingénue leading lady as popular “drama vogue” has a lengthy, recycled history. However, the characteristics and physical qualities of the fallen woman drastically change with each new time period, reflecting the moral standards and fashion trends of each era. This may be why the character leading lady has been a difficult type for many to categorize or define.

The purpose of this research method is to aid in the portrayal of two character leading ladies in the musical, *Romance, Romance*. More than a century since the initial creation of *Romance*'s Josefina and Monica, as well as two decades between the Broadway production and UCF's rendition, inevitably, the role of the female protagonist in musical theatre has changed. Therefore, to stay up to date with current performance trends, one must track the evolution of the character leading lady and its development in modern musical theatre.

Evolution of Tragic “Tart With A Heart”

Nineteenth-Century Trend

The nineteenth century is considered the “golden age” of the demimonde or fallen woman. Because these women of moral question are the featured or central inspiration for many playwrights of the romantic and realist eras, it is not surprisingly that artists in contemporary theatre continue this trend. “The prostitute reigned over the hearts of artists with as much grace as she reigned over fashion,” wrote Brandeis University professor, Arthur Holmberg. The promiscuous courtesan character was both emulated and praised, but also shunned and usually punished. Holmberg continues, citing *Realism* author Linda Nolan, “Victorian adulation of the

family and its associated virtues seems to have been matched only by the Victorian preoccupation with vice” (qtd. in Holmberg). Setting not only the trends in fashion and art, these women were the fascination of all Europe and America in the Belle Époque.

The fallen woman as the character leading lady was successfully re-introduced in tragic theatre by French playwright Alexandre Dumas II in 1852. *La Dame aux Camelias* or *Camille* depicts the heroine as a prostitute who falls in love with a rich aristocrat, but tragically dies of tuberculosis before the couple can legalize their taboo affair. The sacrificial death of the heroine became a standard ending for most “bad girl” characters of this century. In fact, within the next year, Giuseppe Verdi would base one of his most popular operas, *La Traviata*, on Dumas’s original. However, the depiction of the tragic heroine evolved through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Romantic heroines seemed to be cleansed of their sins by this proof of love evidenced by a tragic death; whereas, the naturalists’ or realists’ fallen women were given back to “the devil” in a just demise. said the “demonization” of female sexuality in the fin-de-siècle era is due to the unconscious male fear of female power and the social pressures of sexual repression. Regardless of the reasoning, both “the romantic courtesan and the naturalistic whore [were] punished with death for claiming their sexuality” (Holmberg).

Although death is not the demise of *Romance*’s characters, both Josefine and Monica do not get a traditional happily-ever-after scenario, however hopeful it is. In the song reprise of “The Little Comedy,” although reunited in their true garb, Alfred admits his plans to “cast her off” within the year, and in Schnitzler’s original work she does not mention her plans to marry as she does in the musical. Also, it is Sam, not Monica, who stops the affair. Although Sam was the person who first voiced the possibility of an affair, Monica seems to be the one responsible or

at fault in the final scene of the act (Harman et al. 96). This is not to say that *Romance* is tragic or pessimistic. In fact, it is far from it considering the one unifying song between the two acts, “It’s Not Too Late,” is hopeful. However, it is apparent that some of the nineteenth-century realism influence on the original authors is present.

Realism and Verismo

In non-musical dramatic works, the trend of the fallen woman as the leading lady in plays remained in vogue through the Realism movement, as evidenced through the major works of European dramatists including *Romance*’s Arthur Schnitzler and Jules Renard. Some fallen women protagonists include Hedda in Henrik Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabbler* (1891), Kitty Warren in George Bernard Shaw’s *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1893), and Paula in Arthur Wing Pinero’s *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893). The realist view of the fallen woman can also be seen in early twentieth-century American plays like Anna in Eugene O’Neill’s *Anna Christie* (1922), Myra in Robert E. Sherwood’s *Waterloo Bridge* (1930) and Blanche in Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) (Holmberg, Garvey).

The romanticized redemption of the demimonde in opera, usually played by a soprano in the nineteenth century, continued as successful convention until Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*, the first Verismo opera in 1875. The Italian word for realism, Verismo was “a movement in Italian and French opera [that] placed the ordinary people that had previously dominated comic opera in tragic circumstances” (Dobkin 54). The most famous Verismo opera was 1896’s *La Boheme* by Giacomo Puccini, with the fallen woman as the leading soprano. Realism had invaded the grand opera and the character leading lady was present from its beginning in the form of *Carmen*, one of the most memorable mezzo-soprano protagonists (Dobkin 55).

Tragic Tarts of the Modern Musical

These tragic heroines who enjoyed success in nineteenth-century grand operas and realist plays finally became more prevalent as the protagonist in Broadway musicals with the international introduction of the “pop opera” with *Les Miserables* in the 1980s. Although Broadway audiences traditionally preferred musical comedy, the merger of opera with the pop musical now featured the TWAH or Tart With A Heart as a mezzo-belter in a large spectacle show. Some more recent tragic tarts in dramatic musical theatre include Fantine in *Les Miserables* (1987 Broadway); Kim in *Miss Saigon* (1991 Broadway); Mimi in *Rent* (1996), although without a tragic death; Lucy in *Jekyll and Hyde* (1997); Santine in *Moulin Rouge* (2001), although a film musical; and Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil’s new musical based on Dumas’ *La Dame aux Camelias – Marguerite* (2008 West End) (“Internet Broadway Database”). These musicals are nearly all based on European realist works and operas from the turn of the century. Having addressed the origins and evolution of the tart from European realism and opera in the nineteenth century to modern pop opera in the West End, it is important to address the evolution of the mezzo-soprano from light opera to musical comedy.

Evolution of the European Mezzo to American Belter

A question should arise when comparing traditional Viennese operetta protagonists with *Romance*’s Josefine: Why is she written as a “strong alto with high belt” (Harman et al. 6) when most Viennese heroines and operetta tarts of the time were written as legit sopranos? True, besides the inclusion of a waltz and polka number, the score differs greatly from the works of Austrian composers Johann Strauss or Franz Léhar. However, to determine the voice qualities or proper vocal style associated with the characters of Josefine and Monica, the connection from the

mezzo-soprano in operetta (roughly equivalent to the range of Josefina) to the belter in American musical comedy must be made (DeVenney 121-122).

Operetta Tarts and Mezzos

The trend of featuring non-ingénue protagonist roles played by women took an interesting turn in early operetta. Like her opera relatives, the operetta demimondaine was usually played by a soprano. For example, the famous operetta soprano, Hortense Catherine Schneider (1833-1920), played many fallen woman characters in the works of “the grandfather of the modern musical,” French composer Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) (Kenrick). Perceived as promiscuous both on and off stage, Schneider appeared regularly in the Offenbach tart roles such as Helene in *La Belle Helene* or *The Beautiful Helene* (1864), Boulotte in *Barbe-blue* or *Bluebeard* (1866), Metella in *La Vie Parisienne* or *Parisian Life* (1866), Duchesse in *La Grande-Duchesse de Gerolstein* or *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* (1867), and *Perichole* in the original version of *La Perichole* (1868) (Traubner 43-68). Fortunately, soprano singers would not be the only female players to benefit from this genre of musical entertainment; for early operettas offered many leading parts to women of all vocal types.

Traditionally, mezzo-sopranos have played secondary roles or the “witches, bitches, whores, and britches” roles in opera and operetta (Brown). Naomi André, author of *Voicing Gender*, describes the mezzo as the “second woman” or all the non-heroine female characters. The mezzo usually has a wider and lower range, darker vocal tone and a weightier sound than the soprano. In describing the second woman, André remarks:

I have thought of the second woman as the interesting character whom no one knows how to categorize. Surprising us as sometimes a man or sometimes a

woman, sometimes heroic or sometimes spiteful, she is invariably the less predictable, though certainly that more animated, of the principal roles for women. As I came to understand her function and character, I decided that she was definitely the one I would rather sit next to at a dinner party. (xii)

Although the second woman would continue to dominate supporting roles, the mezzo began to occasionally take center stage in several French light operas of the Belle Époque. Since most were burlesque comedians from the Parisian café-circuit, female artists in Offenbach's early works were considered singing actors rather than trained operatic singers. The need for direct, funny characters, along with the influence of nineteenth-century literary movements may be why the mezzo began to play more lead roles, although these parts would usually incorporate a cross-dressing element at some point. Some of Offenbach's protagonist mezzo roles include Public Opinion in *Orpheus in the Underworld* (1858), Daphnis (trouser role) in *Daphnis et Chloe* (1860), Vendredi (trouser role) in *Robinson Crusoe* (1867), Perichole in revised version of *La Perichole* (1874), and Nicklausse in Offenbach's only opera, *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1880) (Traubner 19-74).

The mezzo as a protagonist grew more prevalent in Vienna with the consistent use of the trouser role (female mezzo playing a male character). The most famous Viennese heroic role is Prince Orlofsky in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. However, the trend of the pants role would die off by the end of the nineteenth century and the Offenbach influenced "dominant, witty, influential, energetic" female characters once again gave way to the sweet, romantic ingénues that dominated American operetta (Crittenden 22-24). The mezzo would once again become the "second woman" of the music world.

Much like the “self-sufficient, scheming” females of early Viennese works or Offenbach’s strong mezzos, Josefina is confident, energetic, mischievous, and the romantic heroine (Crittenden 24). Therefore, Josefina is rightly scored as a mezzo-soprano, or “alto with high belt,” for she shares far more traits with operetta’s second women of the late 1800s (the time period for *The Little Comedy*) than the dreamy-eyed operatic sopranos of the 1900s.

American Belters

Romance’s second act female protagonist, Monica, is written for an “alto” who must be able to incorporate a pop rock sound to the voice on numbers like “It’s Not Too Late” reprise (Harman et al. 6). In order to apply this texture of the voice to Monica and to further justify Josefina’s high belt in an operetta pastiche piece, one must understand the evolution of the American stage singer.

Legit to Belt

Classical operatic singing, or the “legit” sound as it is known today, was well-liked and accepted by Broadway audiences for most of the first half of the 1900s. Although, as Stephen Banfield notes of in his article, “Stage and screen entertainers in the twentieth century,” neither the musical comedy soprano nor the operetta soprano sang in the same registers as their opera sisters. The “real” operatic register is usually set slightly higher for opera sopranos than most Broadway high female singers. Therefore, the Broadway trend of using a mid-voice female for a protagonist was established early in both the light operatic musical entertainments as well as the vaudeville/burlesque shows of the American stage. Today, this style, referred to as legitimate classic Broadway singing, is often used by pre-1960 romantic ingénues in musical theatre (74-75).

Banfield argues that two distinct shifts in the American entertainment voice occurred during the twentieth century; the “first was about class, the second was about age and gender” (79). The first shift away from the classical sound to popular singing began simultaneous to the fall in popularity of American operetta. This took place over the course of several decades with most variation occurring from America’s entrance into WWI to just after the Second World War. America had significantly evolved during this time with the merge of classes and ethnicities in urban cities, great economic change through the great depression, record immigration numbers, the industrial boom, and the country’s rise as a world power. Broadway audiences, gaining a stronger sense of national pride from both world wars and longing for non-European influenced stage works, turned to entertainments that were recognized as American originals. These works were influenced by American folk/popular music: the all-black musical revues of the twenties, like Eubie Blake’s *Shuffle Along* (1921); Jewish immigrant composers’ influence on New York City’s Tin Pan Alley; media recordings including film and radio; and the popularity of the red-hot mammas which directly influenced the rise of the demimonde character in American musical theatre (Banfield 62-83).

Red-Hot Mammas and Early Belters

The origin of “belt” singing can be traced back to the popularity of “coon shouters” in American vaudeville and revue. Coon shouters were white female singers who are “the last descendent of the nineteenth-century minstrel show” (Brown-Lavitt 253). Popular from 1880-1920, this unique performance style, first mimicking plantation slave songs, featured female comic singers who stretched their upper range with “the scorching sexual heat of a shout” (Brown-Lavitt 258). “Getting’ hot,” as this vocal technique was called, allowed many female

performers to sing in a more masculine style that was often paired with bawdy, witty or rough lyrics; thus leading to the reference term for shouters as “red-hot mammas.” Some notable red-hot mammas were Mary Irwin (considered the first coon shouter), Artie Hall, Anna Held (first Ziegfeld Follies star), Nora Bayes, Fanny Brice, and Sophie Tucker (the last of the red-hot mammas) (Brown-Lavitt 253-290; Reublin and Maine).

According to Pamela Brown-Lavitt in her journal article, “First of the Red Hot Mammas,” coon shouters crossed or “blurred” racial and ethnic lines in the still segregated American entertainment industry. From their premiere in vaudeville and their last appearance in revue, these mammas were the predecessors of Broadway belters (253-290). Like demimonde types before them, red-hot mammas were raw, edgy, and sexually explicit, and they passed those characteristics on to the up-and-coming, more melodic shouters that would soon be known as the first of the Broadway belters.

Considered one of the first American singers to belt in a book musical was Ethel Merman in *Girl Crazy* (1930). Although, as noted above, this form of singing had long been on the American stage in revue and vaudeville, Merman’s emergence on Broadway brought the belt to American book musical comedies. For it is evident that many female Broadway performers after Merman belted, and composers began to write for them. In addition, with the introduction of the successful musical film (*The Jazz Singer* 1927) and American radio’s “broadcast boom” in the previous decade, the belt sound soon dominated most forms of American music entertainment (Wolf 102; White; "United States of America").

Like the red-hot mamma shout, “The belting voice is a voice of strength, demanding that the woman sing high in her chest voice, that she support the sound to hit the note seemingly just

out of reach,” said Stacy Wolf, a scholar of performance pedagogy. “It is a voice that evokes darkness in tone and timbre, a ‘colored’ voice” (104). A similar definition, cited by Banfield, is given by C. Osbourne in the 1979 *High Fidelity* article, “The Broadway Voice.” Belting “is an attempt to extend the normally ‘short’ female chest register upward,” said Osbourne. “When secure, the belt produces an edgy driving sound” (qtd. in Banfield 66). In spite of this, Osbourne is skeptical of belt singing, claiming that “there is no such thing as a quiet belt, or a beautiful one” (qtd. in Banfield 66). However, the belt sound and the Broadway singer have continued to evolve since Osbourne’s 1979 article and many contemporary singers, with the aid of amplification, incorporate a vocal mixed placement which allows for distinct audibility and quality.

Belt Mix and the Millennial Mezzo/Mistress Journey

The Broadway belt mix, which developed gradually over the golden years of American musical theatre (roughly 1943-1966), is the “combination of girlie and woman, of purity and passion” (Banfield 79) and as Osbourne defines is the attempt to merge the two styles by “alternating belt and legit sounds in the same range” (qtd. in Banfield 79). In other words, it is the mixing of the placement and power of the chest voice with the sweetness and effort of the head voice. This shift to a high belt or mix sound in female voices is believed to have occurred with the steady use of amplified sound in live performance venues (1957’s *West Side Story* is considered the first ‘miced’ Broadway show) (Banfield 76-79; Porter 29).

Banfield makes the following comments on the American musical’s second shift from youth to age and from the couple to the single-character protagonist:

The second (shift) wanted youth to have the resources of age, innocence to have experience, purity to have grit, agility to have authority, evanescent beauty to have permanence of soul, always and only with the aid of the microphone. And as the microphone increasingly took care of the sound, the performer in a visual age focused audience attention on sight and movement: the acting singer became the singing actor...Now one sex should be able to represent, and have, everything. The microphone became the Holy Grail bringing power to the individual's quest, not to the complementary couple. (Banfield 62-83)

This individual was the mature female protagonist character first played by belting mezzo-sopranos. Another cause of this second shift was the popularity of female stars of film musicals like Judy Garland, who brought a sensual and intimate belted sound to the romantic lead (Banfield 66). Composers began to follow this trend and wrote their female leads and even romantic leads as belters. Therefore, the demimonde character began to appear more regularly as a secondary character as well as a romantic lead in American entertainments.

Another interesting development occurred as a result of performance amplification and film's ability to show everything at once. The triple threat performer or a singer/actor/dancer, which has come to be expected in the latter part of the twentieth century into the millennium, began to appear in the female form as the demimonde character of musical comedy (Banfield 76-79). Some golden age Broadway demimonde characters include Ado Annie in *Oklahoma* (1943), Lois Lane in *Kiss Me Kate* (1948), Lorelei Lee in *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* (1949), Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls* (1950), Lola in *Damn Yankees* (1955), Nancy in *Oliver* (1963), Charity in *Sweet Charity* (1966) and Sally in *Cabaret* (1966) (Green, Broadway Musicals 119-219).

The mezzo/mistress character continued to evolve in musical productions over the next couple of decades through the post-golden age era of rock musicals, concept musicals and, as previously, mentioned the pop opera. By the time the demimonde characters of the original 1987 production of *Romance, Romance* were created, the female protagonist was more and more expected to incorporate rock or pop flavoring in the singing style such as free style riffs or rock nuances that were written in the score. Musicals were still story based, but now mimicking the popular entertainment scene as opposed to Broadway being the trend setter in the music industry. For example, prior to 1960 it was likely for the top 20 radio hit song of the week to also be an original Broadway sensation. However, musical creators have adapted, and the demimondaine remains a present stock character in the canon (Porter 31-35).

Interestingly, in ensemble pieces like the dance musicals of 1975, the tart character was no longer just a single role. Both *A Chorus Line* and *Chicago* feature multiple mezzo belt mixers that can be considered tart parts. This multiple tart character can be seen in various other ensemble productions of the era like the women of *Nine* (1982) and *Gigi* (1973) as well as the working girls of *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (1978). Some other tarts of this musical era include Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), Sonia in *Godspell* (1971), Betty Rizzo in *Grease* (1972), Desiree in *A Little Night Music* (1973), Eva in *Evita* (1978), Audrey in *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1982), and Dot in *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) (Green, Broadway Musicals 233-269).

As noted previously in discussion of the evolution of the tragic tart, with the success of incorporating opera and realism components into American musicals, the demimondaine character continues to be in vogue since the original production of *Romance, Romance*.

Coincidentally, with a 2008 West End production, the use of demimondes in dramatic works has come full circle. Using Dumas's original as a basis, fellow French countrymen Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil premiered *Marguerite* earlier this year in London ("Marguerite"). Some other tart roles of the millennium era include Mayzie LaBird in Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens's *Seussical* (2000), Queenie in Michael John LaChusa's *Wild Party* (2000), Ulla in Mel Brooks's *The Producers* (2001), Lucy the Slut in Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx's *Avenue Q* (2003), Drowsy Chaperone in Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison's *The Drowsy Chaperone* (2006), and Inga in Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (2007) ("Internet Broadway database: Advanced Search Page").

Summary

Going through popular cycles as the protagonist or the supporting character, the demimondaine character continues to be a present and an integral part of the millennial musical (Refer to APPENDIX A: EVOLUTION OF THE DEMIMONDAINE CHARACTER). Traditionally, in music comedies with multiple female characters, she is often written as the funnier/quirkier supporting mezzo who does more dancing and less romancing, whereas in dramatic musical works, the demimondaine is usually the central romantic protagonist voiced as a soprano. However, from the last part of the twentieth century into the millennium, the most notable change is the standard use of the belt mix or high belt voice quality for most female lead characters in musicals. Regardless of the character's tart status or whether scored for a classic soprano or mezzo, it seems that the brighter, stronger voice quality is preferred for female protagonist characters. This trend inevitably allows for heroine characters to share similar

characteristics associated with the historic demimonde, if not written as a part of the fallen woman archetype to begin with.

Having defined and identified the qualities of demimonde characters and tracing their evolution from mid-nineteenth century to the modern day, I feel secure in using this research to inform my rehearsal and performance practice. In order to further connect and distinguish between the characters of Josefina and Monica, I will explore and apply different voice qualities (i.e. legit, belt, belt mix) in my rehearsal and performance process and document the journey (See CHAPTER FOUR: REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE JOURNAL). With character research complete, examination of the concepts, themes and styles associated with the musical and its creators needs to be carried out.

CHAPTER THREE: *ROMANCE, ROMANCE AND VIENNESE* OPERETTA

“You will always enrich your understanding of a piece by reading relevant history,” said David Ostwald in his book, *Acting for Singers* (98). The following includes, first, an overview of the research collected on the production’s conceptual history, as well as author biographies and cultural influences; second, an exploration of the theme of romance; and third, an analysis of the style of operetta and its evolution and connection with the American stage. In order to more fully understand the motivation driving the protagonist characters, one must research the origins of the musical and its creators’ perspectives and influences.

About *Romance, Romance*

The best-known example of an intimate “anthology musical” in the latter part of the twentieth century is *Romance, Romance* (Cohen and Rosenhaus 12). Linked by the common theme which the double title suggests, this show is actually two short book musicals that examine two different couples’ quests to find or reclaim love.

The first act, “The Little Comedy,” is based on the 1895 short novella, “Die Kleine Komödie,” by Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler. The epistolary story, told through a series of letters written to distant friends, is about a “pair of stylishly world-weary, fin-de-siècle Viennese” who are determined to find true love by shedding the confines of their wealth and class (Gerard). Set in Vienna at the close of the nineteenth century, the aristocratic “handsome man about town,” Alfred Von Wilmers, and the demimondaine, Josefina Weninger, “a beautiful young woman with an ‘active past’,” meet while disguised as members of the bourgeoisie or

working class (Harman et al. 6; Green, The Guide to Musical Theatre). Josefina, also known as Pepi, successfully masks herself as a simple seamstress. Alfred, disguised as a poor poet, is “happy” to have found a girl “not like other women of Vienna” (Harman et al. 38). Unexpectedly they fall for the false image of one another and with inevitable trouble looming, they merrily continue the charade.

Although the couple knows their affair will end, both are delighted and relieved to learn of the other’s devious disguise when the truth is revealed. Their courtship is, as Alfred admits, “operetta...pure operetta” (Harman et al. 50), though in true Schnitzler fashion it does not lead to a tidy happily-ever-after. As travel plans solidify for Dieppe, their clever ruse is not without complications or consequence. Although they love one another “a little,” Alfred admits his plan to “cast her off” within the next year, and Josefina confides her design to become his wife (Harman et al. 51). This light farce is enhanced with a masked dancing couple who double as various supporting characters throughout and a “sophisticated neo-operetta” score (Evans, "Songs make 'Romance, Romance'").

Similarly, the more intimate second act, “Summer Share,” concludes with an untidy ending. Based on French playwright Jules Renard’s 1898 *Le Pain de Ménage* or “Household Bread,” Act II explores romance and monogamy between two married couples who share a summer house. Originally written to be set in the present-day Hamptons, this more contemporary storyline takes place in the course of one late evening between platonic best friends, Sam and Monica. While their spouses, Barb and Lenny, sleep, Sam and Monica, asserting their faithfulness, flirt with infidelity. The absent spouses appear throughout the act

only as “ghost-like martial consciences” or as Greek chorus roles that comment on or narrate the action of the scene (Green, The Guide to Musical Theatre).

After romantic fantasies are revealed, which bring to surface long-suppressed sexual tensions, Sam and Monica seize the moment with a passionate kiss and decide to consummate their shared desire by fleeing the scene. However, guilt overpowers their passions and the couple returns to the summer house just minutes later. Monica’s ego slightly hurt, she pressures Sam to acknowledge the realities of their relationship, but with little avail. With their friendship only partially mended, each retires to the appropriate spouse, agreeing to hold on to their “romantic notions” (Harman et al. 79-83).

The Creators

Barry Harman

Born on March 14, 1950, in New York City, Barry Harman began writing at Harvard University, penning works for The Hasty Pudding Theatricals and working as editor of *The Lampoon*. He began his career in television, winning two Emmy awards for “The Carol Burnett Show” and “All in the Family.” An established director, writer and lyricist, Harman made his Broadway debut with *Romance, Romance*. Having authored and directed one previous Off-Broadway show, *Olympus on My Mind*, which won a 1986 Outer Critics Circle Award for “Best Lyrics,” he is also credited with writing *Telecast*, an original musical. In addition, he shares lyric authorship with the late Alan Jay Lerner for a revised 2006 Off-Broadway version of *Carmelina* (Harman et al. ii; Sturiale and Harman iii).

Since *Romance*'s initial reception, personal and professional reasons have slowed his progress on follow-up projects. "First, there have been big changes on Broadway in the past 10 years or so," Harman said in a 2001 interview with the Houston Chronicle. "It's become very corporate-dominated, with a decreasing market for original pieces." He continues, "If a show is not a global phenomenon...with presold material, it's hard to get producers interested" (Evans, "Pucker Up").

In addition, for personal reasons Harman moved from New York to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, making creative association difficult. However, Harman and his creative partner, Keith Herrmann, have rekindled their working relationship in recent years with their latest collaboration, *Lucky Lindy*, which was showcased in the 2007 National Alliance for New Musicals Festival ("Festival of New Musicals").

Keith Herrman

A Broadway composer, arranger and conductor, Keith Herrmann was born on March 4, 1952 in New York City. Beginning his career as the musical director for the 1974-75 national tour of *Godspell*, Herrmann also worked on the tours of *Magic Show*, *Grease* and *Starting Here*, *Starting Now*. His New York career began as a pianist for the Cort Theatre before adding Broadway credits that include *Cats*, *Whoopee* and *Censored Scenes from King Kong*. Unfortunately, *Onward Victoria*, his only other Broadway composing credit, closed on its opening night in 1980 after only 23 previews ("Keith Herrmann"; "Onward Victoria").

Since being awarded the Outer Critics Circle Award for "Outstanding Music" for *Romance, Romance*, Herrmann had some success with the 1991 Off-Broadway musical, *Prom Queens Unchained*. However, like Harman, personal obstacles have interrupted the success of

his composing efforts following *Romance*. He has since rejoined with his most successful writing partner, and, prior to their most recent work, finished composing a musical based on a Wilkie Collins novel called *Femme Fatale* (Harman et al. ii; Evans, "Pucker Up"; Witkin, Goodsight and Herrmann).

Arthur Schnitzler

The Viennese writer and physician, Arthur Schnitzler, was born in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on May 12, 1862. The son of a Jewish laryngologist and university professor, Schnitzler followed in his father's footsteps and studied medicine receiving his doctorate in 1885. He soon began practicing in Vienna's General Hospital and was appointed for a short time as an assistant to neurologist Theodor Meynert. This temporary assignment triggered his lifelong interest in the field of psychiatry and was the start of his personal association with Sigmund Freud, creator of psychoanalysis. However, dissatisfaction with his chosen specialty, laryngology, and his passion for prose, would lead to his eventual abandonment of the profession altogether, soon after the passing of his father in 1893 (Ungar vii-xii; Thompson 22).

Within the same year and with the first success of his play *Anatol*, Schnitzler changed his professional focus and became a popular and important playwright of the day. In the early part of his writing career, he was associated with the avant-garde group *Jung Wien* (or *Young Vienna*), which opposed the naturalism movement in the mid 1890s (Lorenz 1-3). Schnitzler's early works focus on stories of romantic intrigue and role-playing; although, there is a very realistic undercurrent to his style and development of his characters. In *The Little Comedy*, an example of one of his early works, the first English translator, Frederick Ungar, said it was a

masterpiece of characterization that captured the atmosphere of Schnitzler's Vienna in a charming, lighthearted way (vii-xii).

Schnitzler is best known for his short novellas and plays which explore the subconscious aspects of sex, love, marriage, feminism, and anti-Semitism ("Arthur Schnitzler"). Best known for his 1900 play, *Reigen* or *Hands Around*, Schnitzler was criticized as being an "immoral, nearly pornographic writer" (Ungar viii). In fact, the Berlin premiere of this show was forced to close and later triggered a court case on the freedom of theatre. This scandalous play would become the basis for another musical adaptation, Michael John LaChusa's *Hello Again* (1993) (Lorenz 6-8; LaChiusa).

Early on, Schnitzler was designated the "dramatist of love" and lived up to his reputation both professionally and personally (Ungar viii). He was a well-known womanizer who usually juggled several relationships at the same time. Continuing his affairs and adulterous relationships, he married the actress Olga Gussmann in 1903 and fathered two children. Divorcing in 1921, he never remarried and sustained his life of promiscuity until his death in Vienna on October 21, 1931, due to a brain hemorrhage (Lorenz 7-8).

Although historically criticized, modern critics consider his plays to be wonderfully insightful on developing the individual psyche in dramatic characters. Through his subtle use of satire, wit and comedy, he truthfully exploited the "decadent, frivolous, upper-class Vienna society of his time" (Ungar viii). And through his characters, who were often bored pleasure seekers, he popularized the stream of consciousness technique in literature. He is credited with bringing the psychological play into the modern dramatic canon and for introducing the interior monologue to German literature (Ungar x-xi).

Jules Renard

Jules Renard, a French author and politician, was obsessed with capturing the truth through the voice of his characters. Born in 1864, Renard is best known for his five-volume collection of journal writings and the nearly autobiographical play, *Poil de Carotte*, which stirred up the 1900 Paris Exposition (Renard 9). Recovering from a neglected and abusive childhood, he battled his anger with his pen using cunning, ironic and humorous prose. His writing style is considered “bitingly honest,” and he is considered one of the French literary masters as noted by Louise Bogan in the preface to Renard’s journal (qtd. in "Jules Renard").

Marrying wealthy Parisian Marie Morneau in 1888, Renard associated with many artists who advanced the literary movements of naturalism, realism or symbolism in the capital city at the turn of the century. As an editor of “*Mercure de France*,” an edgy scholarly magazine founded in 1890, Renard furthered his dedication to the written word as a journalist for 19 years ("Jules Renard").

In 1904, he followed in his father’s footsteps and was elected the mayor of Chitry-les-Mines, which office he kept until his death from arteriosclerosis in 1910. Renard, through his skilled observations of the world around him, brought satirical, witty and daringly frank characters to life (Renard 96).

Production History

Original Run

In 1987, an original small-scale musical was a welcomed alternative for Off-Broadway and Broadway audiences. *Romance, Romance* was a uniquely intimate entertainment compared to the London imported mega-musicals that headlined the Great White Way in the late eighties.

In a 1988 *New York Times* article, columnist Jeremy Gerard introduced the show as having “No careening chandeliers, no raving madman scurrying across a false proscenium. No roller skates, no barricade, no neon dragons descending from the heights. Just two couples in two small musical plays about grown-up love” (Gerard).

This “littlest big musical” was created by two New Yorkers and premiered at the tiny Off-Broadway Actor’s Outlet Theatre in the fall of 1987 with an initial thirty-seven-performance run (Goodman 15). The four-person cast featured romantic leads, Alison Fraser and Dennis Parlato, supported by Deborah Graham and Robert Hoshour.

The hit show was transferred to the Helen Hayes Theater with the aid of producer Dasha Epstein for about the cost of \$700,000, which was “about a tenth the going rate for Broadway musicals” at the time (Gerard). “We were going to be happy with our six-week run at a 99-seat theater,” Harman remembered in an interview in the *Houston Chronicle* in 2001. “But there was such a strong response. Timing had a lot to do with it, especially that we had an intimate piece at a time when Broadway had been flooded with British spectacles” (Evans, “Pucker Up”).

Opening April 20, 1988, just in time for the American Theatre Wing’s Tony award consideration, the cast was joined by TV star, Scott Bakula, who replaced Parlato as the male lead character. *Romance, Romance* quickly gained notice with five Tony nominations, including Best Musical, Best Score, Best Book, Best Actor, and Best Actress. Although losing the prize to other hits like *Phantom of the Opera* and *Into the Woods*, the show ran for 297 performances before closing on January 15, 1989 (“Romance/Romance”).

Original Player

The original Josefina/Monica was played by Alison Fraser. A Broadway veteran, she originated the roles of Trina in *March of the Falsettos* and *In Trousers*, Martha in the *Secret Garden*, Dorine in *Tartuffe: Born Again*, and was a replacement for the role of Helena in the *Mystery of Edwin Drood*. She received Tony nominations for *Secret Garden* and *Romance/Romance*. Some other interesting production history includes playing opposite Nathan Lane as Jessie in Terrence McNally's *Dedication, or The Stuff of Dreams* and playing Ida in the American premiere of the Olivier Award-winning musical, *Honk!* Fraser is currently appearing as Tessie Tura in the 2008 revival of *Gypsy* with Patti LuPone (Fraser).

Fraser, as noted above, has made a successful career of playing various kinds of “bad girls” or TWAH roles. Appropriately, I have taken on characters she has previously tackled. For example, aside from both undertaking the roles of Josefina/Monica, we both have also appeared as Diana in the play, *Lend Me A Tenor*. This character may be viewed as more of a “tart” than having a “heart,” but she is definitely a part of the “bad girl” canon of stock characters (Fraser; "Resume").

Conceptual History and Theme Analysis

Conceptual Influences

Romance, as promoted on its licensing agent's website, Samuel French, is considered by the *Hearst News* as “a sweetheart of a musical that knows more about entertaining an audience than most of its larger, more pretentious peers” (qtd. in "Samuel French"). However, its success

is surprising in that this was the first major collaboration between two fairly unknown artists of the time.

Keith Herrmann and Barry Harman were brought together by Henry Guettel, who is father of the *Light in the Piazza* composer, Adam Guettel. With their recent unsuccessful ventures, *Onward Victoria* and *Olympus On My Mind*, the new partnership used the St. Regis Hotel as a testing ground for a series of short revues of new works. Harman said they were on the same page from the start and agreed to begin work on a larger project (Evans, "Pucker Up").

"We wanted to write something romantic," Harman said to Gerard. Thus, the central theme and idea was born and incorporated from the initial stages. They began working on an original idea about people sharing a summer house but agreed that "it just wasn't coming together" (Evans, "Pucker Up"). As a "means of escape," the team began adapting the story of *The Little Comedy* which proved to get them easily over their creative block (Gerard 5). However, it was not long enough to develop into a full musical. They needed a second short story to round out a whole show.

Written around the same time as Schnitzler's work, Renard's *Le Pain de Ménage* became their choice of inspiration. They felt it had a more "contemporary sensibility" (Gerard), and since the original piece was set in a country home, the plot worked well with their initial summer share idea. Because both stories examine the "psychological underpinnings" in relationships from a very intellectual and realistic perspective, they felt the two pieces paired well together (Evans, "Pucker Up").

As noted by Gerard, they wanted the audience to "discover something about themselves" and felt that developing these stories in completely different styles accomplished that for a

greater number of people. In addition, they wanted to present a new perspective on the evolution of our social attitudes toward romance and love. In the first act, the two characters are more open to exploring love with little regard for the public consequence of such actions, whereas in the contemporary setting, free love is frowned upon yet openly discussed. In other words, the Viennese couple in the seemingly wholesome Belle Époque or Victorian era “walks the walk,” whereas the modern couple with a looser class system chooses to only “talk the talk.” Off-Broadway producer Harve Brosten further emphasizes that “romantic” not be mistaken for the traditional white knight scenario. “I’d call it a realistic look at love,” Brosten said. “The show is about how much we’ve changed, how little we’ve learned” (Gerard). Therefore, the show was created through as much of a realistic lens that can be applied when creating a song and dance show.

Freudianism and Realism Connection

When approaching a new piece, one should look at the perspective and lens that influenced its creators at the time of conception in order to form a personal viewpoint. Since the musical is made up of two plays from the turn of the last century, it is important to note the influences evident in each of the works.

As examined earlier in this chapter, Arthur Schnitzler’s work was always created with special consideration toward the individual psyche. In a 1922 letter honoring Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud wrote:

I think I have avoided you from a kind of reluctance to meet my double...whenever I get deeply absorbed in your beautiful creations I invariably seem to find beneath their poetic surface the very presuppositions, interests and conclusions which I know to be my own...So I have formed the impression that

you know, through intuition or rather from detailed self-observation, everything that I have discovered by laborious work on other people. (qtd. in Ungar vii)

Rightly, Barry Harman acknowledges the influence of Freud in the development of the second piece as well. In contemporary society, people have difficulty in supporting romantic fantasies when personal motives are openly understood. Harman said, “That’s what Freud did for us. We’re trying to find a way to sustain romantic illusions. Because if we don’t, then we’re dead” (Gerard). The performances in both of the acts require a realistic approach to the development of its characters with a special acknowledgement given to the individual psyche. In order to bring truth to these characters, I incorporated some “realism techniques” into my performance as a practical application to more fully develop this essential component. I further discuss the choices made and their affects in my rehearsal journal (See Rehearsal Journal).

Theme and Research Summary

As the show title suggests, romance and the pursuit of love are the central themes of the two musical plays. In reference to the exploration of love between the acts, author Barry Harman said:

The first act is about the need and search for romance, what people feel is missing in their lives before the fact of love. The second act is about what happens in relationships after the fact of love, how to recapture what feels like the loss of romance. (Beaufort)

Through in-depth research conducted on the show, its creators and its history, I was able to make informed characterization choices and structure a theme statement. “A theme statement combines your distillation of the main issue of a piece and the viewpoint from which it is explored,” said David Ostwald in his book *Acting for Singers*. He continues, “Your

interpretation of the theme is one of your most important artistic choices... it becomes the compass that guides you toward a believable character at each fork of the road” (Ostwald 91-103). I am in agreement with Harman’s theme analysis in that *Romance, Romance* is about the challenges of love at different stages in intimate relationships. However, I viewed this theme through the realistic perspective of a “fallen woman” type and make note of my conscious choices in the rehearsal journal (See Rehearsal Journal).

Viennese Operetta and Style Analysis

An important element of the first act period piece is its pseudo-operetta score that is reminiscent of compositions from the Viennese “golden age.” Although both musicals were adapted from short works by turn-of-the-century realist playwrights and written to appeal to twentieth century audiences, *Romance’s* “The Little Comedy” has a flavoring of operetta style that is present throughout the act. In order to understand the relevance of the suggested style and to determine its influence on character interpretation, one must first research the origins of operetta and the Austrian influence.

Evolution of Operetta

Offenbach and Opera Bouffe

The unique style and sound of operetta in Austria developed as the result of many local artistic traditions including the Viennese satire and waltz. However, the Viennese operetta was most influenced by the works of Jacques Offenbach and the genre’s Parisian beginnings (Yates 149).

According to Richard Traubner's *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, operetta is a "genre derived from opera bouffa" or an "opera that literally takes itself lightly" (x, 1). These early musical comedies were farcical satires that used catchy sentimental melodies and included both song and spoken dialogue. Although French opera-comique can claim some parentage to operetta, it was Offenbach's opera bouffas that birthed the genre.

In 1850, the French government enforced a law that limited musical composers outside the grand opera to produce one-act works with no more than two or three speaking or singing characters. Offenbach prospered under these strange restrictions. In time for Napoleon III's Exposition Universelle, he produced a run of one-act light musicals. These operettes, as they were labeled, gained much attention, and he continued to create and produce these works under a group of players known as the Bouffe-Parisians (Kenrick).

In a matter of a few years, the songs from these shows were heard in the parlors and dance halls all over Paris, and Offenbach's melodies were quickly gaining European appeal. In 1858, he joined forces with librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halevy on *Orfee-aux-Enfers* which was the first two-act operetta. Offenbach's light operas, supported by Meilhac and Halevy's farcical plots, bizarre characters and witty lyrics, soon became international sensations and Austrian audiences welcomed them with open arms (Traubner 185).

Vienna Gold and Silver

Viennese operetta is usually divided into two periods: Classic or Gold and Modern or Silver. They merge at the turn of the century with the death of the father of Viennese operetta, Johann Strauss II. The first age of operetta supported the works of Franz von Suppé, Karl

Millocker, Karl Zeller, Richard Heuberger and many others, while the silver era was dominated by the works of Franz Lehár, Leo Fall, Oscar Strauss and Emmerich Kalman (Lubbock 159).

Enticed by the success of the Parisian imports, the golden age composers began imitating the French light operas, especially those of Offenbach, Meilhac and Halvey (Crittenden 8, 9). In fact, Suppé introduced the era with his minor hit, *Die Schone Galatee* or *The Beautiful Galatea*, in 1865, which was nearly a replica of an Offenbach piece that played in Vienna earlier that year (Traubner 103-106). However, the genre would soon become uniquely Viennese as it incorporated local artistic tastes and traditions.

The main difference between Austrian and French works was the incorporation and choice of dance genres. Whereas the French preferred the can-can and gallope, the Austrians enjoyed the home grown music of their grand dance halls, specifically polka and waltz. Also, the Viennese light operas were less satirical with more attention paid to sentimental and romantic elements. Elements of parody were used more often than farce, which was most evident in the gestures and movements of the Austrian performers and the incorporation of the standard trouser role. The international appeal of the Viennese silver era perhaps is why today the general public associates operetta with the more romantic style than its livelier, more satirical Parisian origins. Despite its longer-lasting appeal, the Viennese operetta is unmistakably rooted in the French model and works of Offenbach (Traubner xi; Crittenden 12-14).

Offenbach visited Vienna often in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, with his first trip in 1861. In fact, it was rumored that it was Offenbach who persuaded the most influential Austrian composer to take up the genre, thereby surpassing his own international popularity (Traubner 113; Yates 151). The composer who dethroned Offenbach from his power

in Vienna was the “waltz king” himself, Johann Strauss II. Already the toast of Vienna ballrooms for his dance compositions, Strauss’s first operetta, *Indigo* or *Forty Thieves*, produced in 1870, was an instant hit. He would compose fifteen more operetta scores, including the most famous Viennese piece, *Die Fledermaus* or *The Bat*, in 1874 (Kenrick). The lush melodies, with emphasis on the waltz and comic plot, including mistaken identities and romantic intrigue, set the Viennese standard and model for many years to come.

The American Connection

Romance, Romance is not the first musical score to incorporate a flavor of the Viennese style. Many American stage works have either parodied or paid homage to this important European influence in twentieth-century musical theatre. Some productions of note are Rick Besoyan’s *Little Mary Sunshine* (1959) and producer Joe Weber’s *The Merry Widow Burlesque* (1907), which parodied the popular Viennese silver era shows like Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow* (1905); and Stephen Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music* (1973), which pays homage to an earlier Viennese composer, Mozart. Other less successful operetta spoofs on Broadway have been Rick Besoyan’s *The Student Gypsy* (1963), Rodgers and Hart’s “Rose of Arizona” in *Garrick Gaieties* (1926), and Desmond Carter and Moss Hart’s *The Great Waltz* (1934), based on E. W. Korngold’s *Valses de Vienne* or *Waltzes from Vienna* (1930), which is a Viennese musical featuring music by Johann Strauss I and his son (Green, Broadway Musicals 15, 87, 186, 237).

However, the Viennese light operas would be most influential on the American operettas of the early twentieth century. Author David Ewen, in *The Story of America’s Musical Theatre*, makes the following comments on American operetta:

It did not matter if the plot was...confused...if a song or dance had little or no relevance...that the characters were made from the same cardboard and papier-mâché as the scenery. But what did matter...was that the scenes and costumes were nice to look at, the tunes delightful to listen to, and the performers pleasant to watch. (13-14)

Although the early American operettas were focused more on romantic melodies and exotic locales than logical storylines and dimensional characters, American operetta was embraced by the recent number of European immigrants and the social climbing urban middle class who wished to be entertained with a more sophisticated genre. Operetta, along with the American forms of revue, burlesque, and vaudeville, would pave the way for the development of the modern American musical comedy (Lamb 168-172; Everett and Laird 40, 41, 47).

The last European-influenced form of early musical comedy was American Operetta, which was first led by the European trained composer, Victor Herbert, in the beginning decades of the twentieth century. He was joined by other American composers, namely Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg, who enjoyed success with romantic compositions that resembled the more popular Viennese operettas (Porter 7, 8). Marking the Americanization of the Viennese style was Herbert's *Naughty Marietta* (1910), which moved the stock operetta scenario of romantic intrigue, exotic opulence and the token female in drag to New Orleans. Along with Friml's *Rose-Marie* (1924), these are the most parodied light operas, where songs like "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life" and "Indian Love Call" are now performed as overindulgent "camp" songs making fun of the traditionally celebrated European sentiment. With the refocus from an agrarian to an industrial society, the perception of operetta changed in that this once exotic form of escapism that appealed to Americans now seemed dated and foreign (Knapp 31-35).

American Operetta reached the peak of its popularity by the 1920's with the music of Romberg teaming up with lyricists Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II on *The Desert Song* in 1926. Although this marked the quick descent of the genre, the collaboration planted the seeds for the future of musical theatre where the focus shifted from the score to the book and its characters. The influence of operetta is evident from the first book musical, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Show Boat* (1927), where grandeur and romance are still important components of the show (Porter 10, 11; Lamb 170-175).

Style Implementation Summary

Although operetta today is generally mistakenly seen as melodramatic camp, the style and focus of the art form undeniably shaped the modern musical. The important element to grasp about its style is the nostalgic tone. It is trying to recapture the romanticized grandeur of nineteenth-century European aristocracy long before WWI and the fall of the world's great monarchies. Therefore, in applying the flavoring of the style, one should focus on the elegance and sentiment rather than the comic frivolity of its characters.

How do you incorporate style into your performance? *Acting for Singers* author, David Ostwald, said, "Audiences don't read minds, they read the physical clues that you give them...They enter your character's world by interpreting what you do with your voice, face, and body" (11). Therefore, to show flavoring of operetta style you need to incorporate a technique known as "heightening" (Ostwald 11).

Heightening, according to Ostwald, is the process of energizing, focusing and motivating your gestures and feelings with stylized movements from a particular time period or genre while

keeping your actions true to your character's feelings. This process is explored in further detail in the rehearsal journal of the next chapter (Ostwald 11).

Ostwald makes this final comment on heightening: "if you want to understand your role in depth and want to bring the music and text to its highest realization, you will be well served by grounding your performance in a thorough understanding of the original context and performance style" (143-146). Having thoroughly explored the themes, styles and concepts associated with this piece, the next step is to implement this information into the rehearsal process always maintaining the goal of creating believable characterization.

CHAPTER FOUR: REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

Introduction

The rehearsal process is an important part of character development in that you are allowed to freely explore all of your possibilities. The following account is a personal record of my experience working on and performing in the University of Central Florida's fall 2007 production of *Romance, Romance*. It is a first-person account of the process I encountered when researching and creating the musical roles I performed.

My journal covers a wide variety of topics, including the challenges faced, the discoveries made, and the evolution of the interpretation of the roles. The purpose of this chapter is to aid the reader in understanding my perspective and reasoning behind the final performance choices I made. I do not claim that this is the only way to approach these roles and reaffirm it simply as an informative resource.

Rehearsal Journal

Monday, August 27 (Ensemble Vocal Rehearsal): A quote comes to mind as I begin this new and exciting adventure. During the climax of *42nd Street*, the character Julian Marsh, from Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble's musical, proclaims, "I'm talking about musical comedy, the two most glorious words in the English language!" (qtd. in Steyn 178). Of course, in the real world these words do not magically solve all major conflicts. Large set pieces and several tap dancers do not glide into view making my worries disappear. However, I am thrilled finally to be at this stage in the "glorious" process. It has been nearly five months since the decision of my

involvement with this show was finalized. My anticipation jitters have been steadily building and are now moving at a rapid speed now that I am at the starting line.

The rehearsal began with a brief re-introduction of the cast with one another and the creative team. It did not take long as there were only the six of us there and all have previously worked with one another. Nicholas Wuehrmann, the director, welcomed me and my fellow players, Kelli Sleigh, Colin Bryson, and JP Haynie; then he immediately turned the directorial reigns over to our musical director, Nate Beversluis, to begin working on the music. Although seeming a pointless task, I still enjoy this first rehearsal tradition. It was important for me to reconnect with our visiting actors/colleagues from Orlando, Kelli and Colin, because I missed the opportunity of bonding with them at a formal audition. Having the privilege of assisting with the Daytona Beach/MFA season selection, I bypassed the creative possibility that arises from performing cold readings with other actors in an audition setting. From past experiences, this usually allows me to play more freely with initial ideas and acting impulses. I tend to be more daring with choices in an audition than in the early stages of a rehearsal process. The pressure and excitement of performance drives me to take these risks. This will have to be something I work on so my exploration of acting choices doesn't interfere with the opening of the show.

Although the evening continued behind music stands, I immediately began incorporating new ideas into my work by merely being engulfed in this creative energy that seemed to permeate throughout the room. Meeting one another again as part of this new project shed a great deal of light on the world I had just started to envision when preparing for this production. It was as if the pieces of my research puzzle finally came together and Josefina's Emil and Monica's Lenny are real people.

The evening proceeded with our director and musical director sharing their thoughts on the possible development of this theatrical work. At this point, the production budget is not finalized, but we are proceeding with the hope and belief that a stage manager, design team and orchestra pit will eventually join us. Therefore, this week will be dedicated to the musical score.

After working privately on the score for the last month, I am very grateful for the opportunity to work closely on this challenging music with Nate. We bit the bullet and tackled the most challenging piece of music at the start of rehearsal. We struggled through the reprise of the show, “Romance, Romance.” Although I’ve usually been pretty quick to pick out harmonies, this song arrangement is rather difficult for me to adjust to due to its unique style. It reminds me a great deal of the group “Manhattan Transfer.” It seems our vocal blending will need some further attention and definitely the shaping of the piece as it can be done a capella.

The evening continued with music rehearsal for the second act as there are no ensemble numbers, musically speaking, in the previous act. The rest of the rehearsal moved much faster, although we were unable to begin group work on two of the smaller ensemble pieces. We made some great progress on “So Glad I Married Him/Her,” and I was pleasantly surprised how quickly we identified with and worked through “Romantic Notions.” This was a successful first rehearsal and I am excited to continue on the journey.

Tuesday, August 28 (Duet Vocal Rehearsal): This morning’s vocal rehearsal was a difficult reality check for me. Yesterday evening I felt I was really prepared for duet work with my leading man, JP Haynie. It seems I need to direct more of my focus toward solidifying rhythms and making exact vocal choices to assist with differentiating between the many distinctive musical styles used throughout the show. Part of my draw toward this musical was its

varied and lush score. I now know the full meaning behind the words of an early twentieth century American author, Hamilton Holt, when he said, “Nothing worthwhile comes easily. Half effort does not produce half results. It produces no results. Work, continuous work and hard work, is the only way to accomplish results that last” (qtd. in Mason 48). I have never had to carry such a large musical load, and today I realized how truly challenging this show will be for me vocally. I have come a long way in my voice development in the last year and truly hope this production may be my final turning point to understanding my voice as an instrument.

A choice I played with today was placement of the voice in order to inform the character. I play two different characters in the show and have been pondering how I might do more to help the audience distinguish between the two characters and stories. After working on selections from Act II’s “Summer Share” last night, singing through the music from Act I’s “The Little Comedy” seemed to be out of place. I naturally have more power in my chest/belt voice, but it seemed to not fit Vienna at the close of the nineteenth century. It occurred to me that it might be worth developing the idea that my voice placement may also help inform my acting choices. I discovered I preferred Josefina’s voice to resonate in a more head or nasalized placement and Monica’s resonance in a more grounded, chest voice. Josefina as expressed in the duet, “Oh, What a Performance” is playing a part. My voice naturally lightens and rises in pitch when I am trying to persuade someone; I will further my development of this idea.

Wednesday, Aug. 29(Solo Vocal Rehearsal): I am excited to work on my solos with Nate today. With a cast of four, I have never had so many songs in one show, and I am delighted for the challenge. I worked further with my development of vocal placement for the two characters and seem to feel that it works wonderfully for some of Josefina’s songs such as “Goodbye Emil”

and “Rustic Country Inn,” but not for others such as “The Night It Had To End.” I am not sure if it is the styles of the songs that are making the vocal placement difficult for me to find or if it is the idea of confining Josefina to one voice placement. It is rather odd that she is written as a mezzo-soprano since the act is very reminiscent of Operetta. However, Josefina is not the traditional romantic heroine. She is described by the author Barry Harman within the list of characters found in the preface of the script as “a beautiful young woman with ‘an active past’” (6).

When I think of early ingénues, I do not picture many courtesans playing the leading lady or soprano role in light opera. This may be an interesting avenue to expand upon in my research monograph. Monica’s solos, on the contrary, are going to be challenging in a dissimilar way from Josefina’s. Since “Summer Share” is in more of a contemporary pop music style, a brassy belt voice works quite well to help develop the character. However, I find that her songs stretch to both ends of my vocal range and require more emotional vulnerability to convincingly carry the lyrics and mood of the storyline like in “How did I end up Here?” and “Now.” I am very glad for this opportunity to work specifically on the music for it is informing my decisions on my characters’ emotions, motivations and impulses.

Thursday, Aug. 30 (Ensemble Vocal Rehearsal): We are joined once again by our Orlando neighbors. It is hard to believe we finished working all the music in the show by this point. It just seems we have gotten a great deal of work done in such a short time. I really enjoy working with Nate. He is so meticulous about details from the very beginning. He does not let anything slide, and I love his ability to really color the music. I am still a bit worried about the closing number of the show. It seemed to be even more challenging in review than when we first

went through it. Nate feels we should start each rehearsal next week with review of that piece. I concur. My favorite number of the evening was the work done on “Plan A & B.” I had a great time with that song and can’t wait to block that scene. What will my acting choices be to portray a nymphomaniac?

We had new information given to us about the setting of Act II. It will now be set at a lake in New Hampshire instead of in the Hamptons. I kind of like this change for the setting is now in a cabin instead of a beach house. The energy is much different in those two settings; the late night atmosphere may seem more alluring in the mountains than by the ocean. Also, I am scheduled for my first costume fitting next week and am really excited to try on those Seaside Music Theater company stock dresses to get another clue into my characters. I should get a good general idea of what costume props/accessories I will need to start working with at rehearsal. Incorporating these pieces early always assists me in my ease into the physical movement of the character. I suspect I will need to wear character shoes, a corset and long skirt for Act I but am clueless as to what to expect for Act II. Time will tell.

Labor Day weekend starts tomorrow and I am planning to make a trip to the University of Central Florida Library to gather further research for reference. With the need to finish organizing my thesis committee, I feel I should narrow my thesis topics down so I may submit my abstract by Tuesday. This weekend will also give me some needed time to review the score and work on the upcoming scenes to be blocked. Wow, this weekend also marks my anniversary of moving to Florida.

Tuesday, Sept. 4 (Sing/Read Through): It is now one of my favorite days in the rehearsal process. It is read/sing through and table work day. I can try any idea or go with any impulse at

rehearsal and feel free to discuss it. I like having a few improvisation or exploratory sessions scheduled into the rehearsal journey. With only so much one can accomplish in private, it is nice to spend time early in the process exploring relationships and listening. The run went better than I was expecting, and I was pleased with how much progress I had made in the last week. I definitely have some areas to look at musically, but I feel confident in my new choices from the research I gained over the weekend.

As a side note, I find it interesting that it has been decided that I should use a “Standard British Received Pronunciation” accent or also known as “BBC English” in Act I (Blumenfeld 20). Vienna and the Austrian countryside serve as the setting for the piece; and though I have not yet been able to verify Josefine’s specific country of origin, England is not a likely candidate. I will research further into this but am at present inclined to believe that understandability is the reason for the choice in accent and perhaps to reconfirm the character’s status in society. The stereotype that proper English speakers perpetuate on American shores is one of superior intelligence, wealth and class (Blumenfeld 29). Although Josefine was once an actress and now usually a kept mistress (Schnitzler 7, 23), she still considers herself as part of the upper-class of Vienna and is included, if only tolerated. Therefore, the accent is a good choice to further solidify the differences between the foreign Josefine and the Bostonian Monica.

I feel inclined to further explore and develop my research on female mistress characters in dramatic literature and hope this will help me define the differences and similarities between the two women in the show as well as understand the themes of romance and love that connect the acts. With Gary Flannery, the choreographer, joining our small crew, our show is on its way.

We have worked and explored our characters through music rehearsal, table work and personal research. Now it is time to get up on our feet.

As a side note: I went for my first costume fitting today and am blown away at the quality of care I am going to have through this process in reference to my costumes and how they fit. Confidence will surely ooze out of me while clothed in such exquisite attire. The Act I costumes are lovely and I borrowed a corset for the rehearsal process. This piece of erotic underwear will not only get Victorian physicality in check but also brings a sense of sensuality to Josefine. In the article, “Victoria to Victoria’s Secret,” Nancy Workman argues that the corset has always been accepted and associated with sexuality and desire as well as a class defiant. This undergarment was worn in the nineteenth century by upper-class women, among courtesans and royals alike (61-73).

I was a bit surprised by the second act costume being that it was a bit more refined and mature for what I pictured. Perhaps I can discuss with the designer some small changes as the process continues. For example: A rolled sleeve and slightly unbuttoned collar may be a more relaxed evening look that I believe will still uphold the quality of the design but also work for the character. Although not openly expressed, Monica is a similar character type to Josefine and very sexual in nature. Her wardrobe should at least hint at this.

Wednesday, Sept.5 (Staging & Choreography-Act I, Prologue through Scene #2, pp.11-20): The staging of Act I began tonight, and I am thrilled to begin staging choreography. It is directed that we begin behind a scrim and hold specific positions to suggest profile silhouette paintings. According to the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, silhouette portraits were very popular in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before the general availability of the

photograph (“silhouette”). “The Little Comedy” opens as a prologue and foretells the story of the courtship of Josefine and Alfred. In this scene, I am to be a narrator commenting on the masked “Him” and “Her” which are representations of Josefine and Alfred.

Act I is sort of a game of mask-wearing whereas there are no protective masks in Act II. The masks symbolize the outward disguise that is worn in the pursuit of romance. Both are masking their true selves to find romance in Act I, while in Act II they are without their masked emotional barriers while they discuss their “romantic notions.” Perhaps my voice placement as Josefine could change when I am not wearing my mask. Therefore, the head voice choice would be adding to the facade and I would be available to all emotional and vocal choices. I am quite happy where this discovery is going. In his book, *Nonverbal Communication*, Albert Mehrabian asserts that “thirty-eight percent of the impression we form of others is derived from the speaker’s tone of voice” (qtd. in Obert and Chicurel xi). At least my manipulation of vocal tone may alter the impression from one character to the next.

We were also able to block the first “letter scene.” This scene is important for it sets up the convention of the letter-writing and my friend, Helene Brier, who is represented in the fourth wall or audience. The exposition and progression of the act is made through the vocalization of this pen-pal relationship. Alfred and Josefine tell the un-masked story of their courtship and express their genuine feelings through a series of monologues or oral letters. Also, Josefine’s first song, “Goodbye Emil,” is introduced in the scene and requires the believable use of a glassless mirror vanity with several personal beauty props.

Two previous acting classes instantly come to mind as I prepare to begin work on this scene. The first was UCF Professor JJ Ruscella’s Realism class where I learned to write a real

and relevant letter to the scene, while at the same time continuing with the action of the play. It is very difficult to work with several props while on stage and not draw attention to them. The props should help confirm your actions and surroundings, but not steal the spotlight and become more important than the action of the play. I learned that props are very useful when trying to create real situations and natural points of conflict, because in real life you can handle many activities at once and sometimes you do mishandle or drop things. It is your reaction with the prop and surrounding players that ignites the interest in a scene. Self-observation in your natural state or awareness of your “organic actions” helps identify your obstacles in “acting in the moment” and can improve your work and physical awareness while using inanimate objects (Crowley and Benedetti). With hope in my heart, the letter-writing and prop-handling in this scene will become more effortless with time.

The second class that came to mind was UCF Professor Nick Wuehrmann’s Musical Theatre Acting I course where we learned about Uta Hagen’s work with the “fourth wall” and presentational acting. As noted from her instructional film, Hagen argues that an actor can reveal true behavior through an understanding of oneself as a “presentational actor.” It is difficult to be confidently speaking with only yourself on stage. However, it is possible with attention to self and your focus that you may draw more truthful reactions from within.

I faced a small challenge at rehearsal today. The Emil scene struggled a bit. Although I am inclined to believe that being on-script blocked our energy, I fear that Bryson may not be comfortable with his character or in working with me; therefore, he does not desire to listen or watch. The rhythm of the scene was very irregular, and we were talking at each other rather than to or with each other. I hope we can find time to work this scene in a future rehearsal and I know

I will have to further explore techniques I can try to improve our chemistry on stage. Although a very short scene, it is an important turning point for the character of Josefine. It establishes her true position on romantic relationships and ultimately justifies her singing the song, “It Had To End.” The audience has to relate to Josefine at this point or the rest of the act is just frivolous entertainment and not a relevant, heartfelt journey.

Thursday, Sept. 6 (Staging & Choreography-Act I, Scene # 3 & 5, pp.20-26 & 33-37): I had a great deal of time for character reflection while other scenes were being blocked at the beginning of rehearsal. I began to ask questions about Josefine’s wants and desires. Why does she hide behind a mask to find romance and love? Does she enjoy her independence as a “kept” woman or does she long for something else? Is she truly looking for love or just romance? Why does the romanticizing of love appeal to so many?

The final question struck me as a rather interesting connection between this thesis topic and my undergraduate thesis monograph. I composed a research-based document on the romanticizing of love in family friendly films and the possible outcomes and reasoning behind these unrealistic portrayals of adult courtship. This begs me to ponder the question: How does an actor bring truth and realism to a possibly unrealistic portrayal of romantic love? It may be possible that Act I and Act II operate as a sort of yin and yang or balancing opposites. The first act ends with all being forgiven, whereas the final act ends more realistically with the possible demise of a friendship over romantic notions.

Ending on a more positive note, we blocked and learned the choreography to “I’ll Always Remember the Song.” This is a very fun number that has an interesting twist towards the end. In answering an earlier question, Josefine decides at this point in the play that she is truly looking

for love and not just a fine romance. The play is at another important turning point. It appears she gives over to her true feelings when they dance and kiss for the first time. I believe that even in this lovely make-believe world, there can be truthful moments and perhaps that is why the romanticizing of love is so appealing.

Friday, September 7(Staging-Act I, Scene #4, pp.26-33): I felt as though I was going in circles all night. We blocked the “Ringstrasse” scenes tonight and, surprisingly, I struggled a great deal more remembering my blocking patterns. Haynie and I are staged to cross at very specific times within the dialogue and never in the same pattern twice until we finally meet and then once again continue movement. It seems that I can pick up a difficult dance combination with secure ease, but simply walking on stage is now one of my physical challenges as an actor. With great hope, in time I may again recall which way are my left and my right.

In spite of my two left feet, the duets, “Great News” and “Oh, What A Performance” went very well and showed much improvement. The staging of the “Great News” greatly helped me motivate the number and also allowed me not to worry as much about emphasizing every single word. Patter songs always make me stumble at first and it was nice to have the action of the scene assist me with this personal challenge. Rhythms in “Oh, What a Performance” finally synchronized between Beversluis, Haynie, and me, and the energy of the song took off. This number is finally starting to get very exciting and now I can “play the part of the martyred little seamstress” (Harman et al. 31).

Pretending convincingly to be a common seamstress to Alfred, while at the same time addressing the audience as an elite mistress, seemed to puzzle me at first. The dialogue in this scene switches constantly between Josefine and Alfred and their pen pals. I wasn't sure how I

might better clarify this dilemma and was happily aided by Wuehrmann in his choice to use the form of soliloquy. While each of us speaks away from the action and toward the fourth wall, the other is to freeze in an Operetta appropriate poise. Not only does this choice clarify the action, but it also brings in historical elements and comedic timing. I will work over the weekend in exploring the physical movement of Josefine and how those choices may be justified and enhanced with my research on Viennese Operetta.

Monday, Sept. 10 (Staging & Choreography-Act I, Scene # 6A, 7 & 10, pp.37-42 & 49-52): The full creative team assembled for rehearsal today, and we were joined by our stage manager, Tara Kromer, whose arrival marks the finalization of the long-awaited budget decision for this show. It is wonderful that I can continue to go in for costume fittings and solidify the set drawings in my mind.

We continued our work on Act I, staging “Happy, Happy, Happy,” “Yes, It’s Love,” and the closing scene, which includes “The Little Comedy Finaletto.” Spending very little time with the first two numbers, the rehearsal focused on staging and then working through the final scene. While Haynie and I continued our work with soliloquy/operetta physical movement, Sleigh and Bryson learned a short Viennese waltz dance. Flannery worked with Haynie and me on the social dance earlier in the day, and I am green with envy that we are unable to waltz with them. According to *Shubert’s Vienna*, it was the abundance of large dance halls in the early nineteenth century and the international reports from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that helped give Vienna its reputation for creating the waltz (135). The Viennese waltz, as it is specified today, differs from the American/English waltz in that it incorporates more of a gliding step and is usually set to a much quicker tempo. This form of partner dance became popular due largely to

the world-renowned compositions of Johann Strauss I, Johann Strauss II, and Josef Lanner (Erickson 131-138).

Although not spending the evening counting triplets, I felt there was great progress made in my movement choices in how they related to Viennese operetta. We seemed to move more easily through the movement and dialogue while incorporating the masks as well. The reprise of “The Little Comedy” went smoothly and I was surprised at how fast we were able to work through that scene. Since we had some extra time, we spent the remainder of the rehearsal reviewing the choreography and staging of “The Little Comedy” and “I’ll Always Remember the Song.”

Tonight after rehearsal, since being introduced to the Viennese waltz, I felt inclined to learn more about the historical origins of the polka in hopes of better understanding its popularity in Vienna at the time. According to the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, the polka developed in the middle of the nineteenth century in Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, which is Austria’s northern neighbor. It is still a popular genre in Slovakian folk music today (“Polka”). I have always enjoyed the American version of the polka; and perhaps though not as romantic in nature as the waltz, it was fun to end the evening on a historical and lively high note.

Tuesday, Sept. 11 (Staging –Act I, Scene #6B, 8, & 9, pp. 38-40, 42-49): Completing the final staging of Act I this morning, it seems an unimaginable feat to switch my attention to Lake Winnepesaukee by the end of the week. I am nervous about leaving Josefine behind for a week. Still in the early exploratory stages, I fear I will lose steam with my development of that character. However, I do need to start exploring Monica in order for her to be fully developed in time for opening night.

We finished the staging of the act by working on scenes that support the songs of “Women of Vienna,” “A Rustic Country Inn,” and “The Night It Had to End.” In scene 6, I am staged to be the angelic dream version of Josefine that Alfred has envisioned. I started to play with different movement choices and softening my voice when delivering the dialogue; yet, I need to spend more time in sorting out who I am to Alfred at this stage in the play. Closer observation to Haynie’s process of character development will be necessary in order to inform my acting choices in this scene.

The country scene began rather rocky as we had to improvise working with a chaise lounge as opposed to an actual bed. We seemed to overcome this obstacle with some time, but this scene will definitely take some outside rehearsal time for me to have it under control fully. I’m not sure why it was such a difficult scene to work on today. Perhaps it was because it was another patter song or that this is the first time the couple is outside of Vienna and in such an intimate setting. Whatever the reasoning behind the challenge of this scene, it is intriguing that Josefine despises the country living and Monica embraces it. When working as Monica, I will explore this notion further.

We concluded our staging session with blocking the train scene through Act I’s “eleven o’clock” number, “The Night It Had to End.” This may prove to be the most challenging scene for me in Act I. It is the climax of the show where the stakes are incredibly high for both characters. Within the course of just a few minutes, I have to make weighty, believable choices in order for the final scene of the act to have a great pay off. With pressure already building on my shoulders for this scene, it did not go as well as I had hoped. Haynie and I need to rehearse this scene with the aid of an exploratory repetition exercise session that includes “the pinch and

the ouch,” an acting technique developed by Sanford Meisner, in order for this scene to work (Meisner and Longwell 20-40). The repetition exercises can be helpful in improving active listening and attention to behavior. As of right now, this scene does not flow the way it needs to in order to build the energy up to an appropriate level for the beginning of the song.

Unfortunately, the rehearsal only got more challenging as time passed and the musical number moved itself to the top of my “to-do list” for this weekend. This song is not a challenge for me vocally like “Goodbye Emil” or Act II’s “How Did I End Up Here?” The difficulty is discovered in the interpretation of the lyrics and ultimate performance of the piece. For me, the most complex pieces to perform are the moving ballads in musical comedy. I am intrigued to see where my exploration will go and hoping to finally nail the correct rhythms in the first three measures of the song. Tomorrow I bid farewell to the world of Vienna for a time; so, I dearly wish for the stumble-through to solidify the progress I have made with my interpretation of the character of Josefine.

Wednesday, Sept. 12 (Put-Together Act I, Photo Shoot): The evening began with the publicity photo shoot where we explored different areas of the News-Journal center for the most interesting locations. We even went outside by the river for the natural light. I tried to dress in a more romantic style though I have already been rehearsing with character shoes and long flowing skirts. It should be fun to see which photo is chosen for the article in the News-Journal newspaper during opening week.

After our creative expedition to the shores of the Daytona Halifax river, we returned to the rehearsal studio to put all the scenes together in sequence. *The Little Comedy* went rather well and now that these scenes are blocked I should begin to visualize the space in a thrust stage

setting. I have to learn to play to the corners and sides of the house and not get trapped in front of the vomms (front corner entrances and exits). Having never worked on a thrust stage, I should start working on it now so that it isn't a major adjustment when we are on the set for the first time.

Once the opening number was worked through, we continued through the "Emil scene." The song was a bit of a stumble-through in trying to work without my script, incorporate the props and establish the Hagen focus. Unfortunately, the remembrance of the lyrics and the directed blocking didn't allow me to try the vocal placement discoveries I have been working on. Happily, I was able to be off-book for this monster monologue/song section, but it was difficult to make any progress on the scene as Bryson was not. The chemistry in the scene is still not sparking but hopefully the flame will ignite soon.

We began to work through the scene for a little bit, but had to move on. Intimate moments within this scene cannot develop without the full use of your limbs and the attention of your senses. I suppose I will have to wait until his eyes linger in mine and not on the lines in the script or the reflection of his hair in the mirrors on the wall. I will be patient for now as this is only our second time visiting this scene in formal rehearsal, and it is a very complicated vignette for the character of Emil.

The next scene, which included "It's Not Too Late," was a rough run to say the least. My goal for the evening was to be off-book with the musical score only having the lyrics as a cheat sheet, but I found my script to be more of a precious life line. My advice for improvement is simply to get off-book as fast I can. The rehearsal improved with our work with the "Ringstrasse" scene. I think we improved the speed of the line delivery, though our sense of

direction was still slightly askew. I am not sure why I am still literally tripping over this scene, but mark my words, I will get down to the bottom of it before it puts me on mine.

The highlight of the evening was the work accomplished on the “polka scene.” Since I was confident in the music, I was able to direct my attention toward polishing the choreography and exploring my character through the scene. We even had a great laugh about my continued mix up of the lyrics. I kept calling the accordion a “wheeze box that keeps squeezing along” (Harman et al. 35). I am not sure what a wheeze box is but it definitely lightened the mood.

The rehearsal ended before we could complete our work on Act I, but we were able to run through the end of scene 7. I know this was our first stumble-through, but I can easily say this is the largest load I have ever had for a show. I am a part of 11 musical numbers in the first act alone and speak nearly half the dialogue. I suppose that is the blessing and the curse of a four-person show, and until tonight I did not realize the weight of that. I will continue working on my own and remember to take one day at a time.

Thursday, Sept. 13 (Staging & Choreography-Act II, Prologue-Scene #2,4, &5, pp. 53-61 & 65-67): Welcome to Lake Winnepesaukee! We began to explore the new space for Act II, which includes a couch, some comfy chairs, and a bar. Unlike the first act, where most of my area of performance was on stage left, I have the full use of the space now. It is rather freeing. It is like we left the confines of the Victorian era, including the corset, to the relaxed 21st century in a matter of seconds, literally. The top of the act is staged for Alfred and Josefine to be in silhouette behind the scrim right where we left off. Suddenly, an electric guitar is to burst in and the previous story dissolves with the entrance of Monica and Sam. I confess it took me a good

ten minutes to relax, or as UCF Professor Be Boyd says in her Graduate Acting I class, to “breathe into the scene.”

The setting of this act is completely different from the first, and instead of worrying about costume and scenery changes, I can focus my attention on the development of the character of Monica and her relationship with Sam. Beginning with choreography, we grooved through Flannery’s interpretation of “Summer Share.” Although the second act is to be set in 2007, the musical score is written for its original time period and might prove to be difficult to update from its definitive 1980’s sound. The most difficult number to rise above this challenge is the opening number since it oozes with electric instrumentals. I suppose since we are moving furniture into place with the lyrics and literally setting up the scene, then the audience will be able to immediately determine the time with our movements. *On Performing* author David Craig, advises that “In the theater, you can trust a cardinal principle: an audience will always look before they listen” (78). He continues to argue that with even the smallest of movements you can take the attention away from the dialogue, “for even that will catch their eye and close their ear” (Craig 78). Of course, it is not the intention of the director to mask the music, but the reinforced focus on the incoming twenty-first-century props and furniture does aid the transition more easily.

The rehearsal continued with the staging through Barb and Lenny’s first duet, “Think of the Odds.” Barb and Lenny appear through this act as either Greek chorus, as in the duet mentioned, or figments of Monica and Sam’s imagination as in “Plan A & B” and “Let’s Not Talk About It.” We blocked all these musical numbers/scenes tonight and began to explore the differences in style from one act to the other. I don’t acknowledge Barb and Lenny in the duet,

but “get physical” with Lenny in the solo. This act will be a bit trickier to distinguish focus with these added conventions.

“Plan A & B” was a riot to block tonight, and I was very pleased to be able to use the brassiness and boldness of Monica throughout this musical number. The most confident and sexually brave parts of my own personality will have to be set free in order to give justice to the development of Monica.

In further developing my research on these two female characters, I have come to some conclusions or decisions on their background information. There are very few clues given about the description and essence of Josefine and Monica within the libretto or the translated original play scripts. Therefore, I have chosen to develop my own background story for each of them, which I will go into further examination in my thesis monograph.

Author and German scholar Katherine Arens writes that “The women in Schnitzler’s stories follow these realities; they are neither femmes fatales nor femmes fragile” (qtd. in Lorenz 245). I believe that both Josefine and Monica fit within this category, though with some distinctive differences. Although both characters are confident women in upper-class societies, they are products of their culture.

Josefine is an actress and “elegant demimondaine” who is rather impulsive and has just celebrated her 27th birthday (Green, The Guide to Musical Theatre). She grew up in Vienna and was the illegitimate and only daughter of a high-ranking government official. Josefine’s mother, who was her father’s long-time mistress, lives comfortably in Vienna with a yearly allowance awarded to her at the passing of Josefine’s father. Josefine saw her father once a week until she was 12 and had an affectionate relationship with him. Although she inherited some money for

her educational expenses and a small yearly allotment, she now lives comfortably on the occasional check books of her chosen lovers and the very rare theatrical production appearance.

Monica is a working girl as well but in a different sense. She lives in Boston on Beacon Hill with her husband of 5 years, Lenny. Managing her own business, she specializes in corporate party-planning. Monica grew up in upstate New York and graduated from Harvard University in Business. In her senior year of school she met Sam, who was already married, and four years later met Lenny, a lawyer, at a corporate party. She is thirty-two years old and has held off having any children yet. Sam and Barb have two children, and Barb is content to stay at home. Lenny has just made partner in his firm and has been working diligently for the last several months. Both of the couples vacation together every other weekend at the lake. It is late August during the middle of the night when this act unfolds.

As a side note: I have made the conscious decision to make Monica slightly younger than what is suggested by the author Barry Harman (6). Sam and Monica are supposed to have known each other for at least 13 years, but seeing how this is never mentioned in the script, I have chosen to portray a slightly younger character.

Friday, Sept. 14 (Staging- Act II, Scene #3, 8 & 9, pp. 61-65,72-73 & 73-76): Staging continued tonight with work on the second appearance of “It’s Not Too Late.” With some special rehearsal on this number in my vocal lesson earlier in the day, this number improved. I was having trouble hitting some of the higher notes in the Act I version of this song, so I compared the two pieces to see where my hang ups were. The Act II version is easier for me to support a chest voice placement because it incorporates more of a rock music style. I am getting a little bit frustrated with trying to incorporate the head voice placement through all of Josefine’s

songs. I discovered I am going to have to just color her songs with that voice quality as opposed to denying myself the full use of my voice.

The staging for this number is far too much fun. We are to play up the rock theme and act as if we are the featured rock singers at a concert. While using a golf club, I am definitely channeling the performance style of “the bad boys from Boston” or Aerosmith lead singer Steven Tyler’s clever use of the microphone (Morse).

The next challenge of the evening arose while staging “How Did I End Up Here?” This eleven o’clock number is the only time I am completely alone on stage. Not only is this moving ballad a difficult acting challenge, but it also has some vocal complexities. I worked with Wuehrmann on this piece earlier in the day, and although showing improvement in the performance phrasing of the piece, I am still struggling with the final section. I don’t feel secure with my vocal power and support for this piece and fear it may be beyond me. I will do my best to keep working on my vocal support exercises and breathing techniques to try and improve my confidence with this song.

The final musical number staged was “There Are Words He Doesn’t Say.” Although this song is sung by Sam, the attention is focused on me and my reactions. So the pressure is on for my listening skills to be at their peak performance capability. I also don’t want to upstage my acting partner but trust that the director will monitor this and let me know if I am going too far with my choice. Often less is more in these types of situations.

I am surprised how quickly the songs in the second act appear. The dialogue is usually less than a page between numbers and there are no set changes to wait for. Since there are little distractions that take you away from the intimacy of the scene, it is a lot easier to stay focused on

my acting objectives and staying in the moment. Although I was not instantly drawn to this story, I am beginning to truly enjoy the development of Monica's and Sam's relationship. It is a rare chance to dive deeply into an intimate scene in a musical comedy, and I am thrilled for the opportunity.

Monday, Sept. 17 (Staging and Choreography-Act II, Scene #10, 12, & 6, pp. 76-78,81-84 & 68-72): It is two weeks until opening and I am feeling my nerves starting to get the best of me. I made some definite progress this weekend with memorization and in improving my performance and interpretation of the music. I am still having difficulty with some of the musical numbers, such as understanding the style and hearing the harmony in "Romance, Romance," properly supporting the high notes in "How Did I End Up Here?" and finalizing the vocal placement for "Goodbye Emil." However, I will continue to work through these challenges.

We began the evening with adding the vaudeville number, "My Love For You." I love this number! Sleigh and Bryson are hilarious, and I can hardly wait to see them in costumes. An interesting discovery occurred while staging this scene. It was decided that our focus should not be directly on the old Lenny and Barb but on the fourth wall. I will trust this works, though I am concerned about consistency of focus. This imagined scenario does not match earlier scenes with fantasy elements. We directly interact with Barb and Lenny in "Plan A & B" and "Let's Not Talk About It."

Speaking of focus difficulties, we staged the closing scene, which includes, "Romantic Notions," and once again the attention is focused on my reactions. I have been comfortable in my skin on stage for a long while, so it is rather odd that I dislike having the audience's attention

during this number at the end of the show. The audience has been looking at me throughout the entire play. Yet, I suddenly doubt myself. I now understand why there are those out there who strongly dislike being the center of attention. In staging this song, I discovered it was the first time my physicality did not come naturally. My thoughts would shift to how I was standing and then I would constantly adjust my hands as though I no longer knew how to be present. I believe I am uncomfortable in these scenes because I have to rely completely on the other person for my reactions, and that is incredibly troubling, yet thrilling. I like being in control of my surroundings, as does Monica. I will try harnessing these natural fears to aid the scene. For the first time in her relationship with Sam, she is confronted with not being in control of the situation or her feelings. This is an opportunity for me to tap into the vulnerability of Monica and to finally make her seem more human.

The evening finished with learning the choreography to “So Glad I Married Her/Him.” So, we came full circle by incorporating another social dance number. This comes about the same time as the polka number in Act I, only Monica discovers she might actually long for Sam. The close of this number is crucial for the journey Monica must go on before she begins her personal lament in “How Did I End Up Here?” The close of this song also signals the rise of the climax; therefore, the sexual tension must elevate as well. Overall, it was a great rehearsal that allowed me to really analyze the conflict Monica must go through to make this act work.

Tuesday, Sept. 18 (Staging-Act II, Scene #11, Selected Scene Work-Through, pp.78-80):

The blocking is now complete! We staged the final climatic scene from the end of “My Love For You” through “Moonlight Passing Through A Window” to the end of “Now.”

Since this was our only piece of the puzzle left, we spent a great deal of time working through the scene organically and trying different blocking patterns. This is the most difficult scene not only to stage, but also to go along with for the audience. The action happens very quickly, though each moment in the relationship is crucial in building this intense journey. We are working more with this scene tomorrow so that we have a chance to solidify the patterns and memorize the lines.

As a side note: “Now” is coming along, though I can’t let myself get comfortable with the rhythms yet. I thought I had them down, but now that staging has been added, I realize I need to re-dissect this piece. What has really benefited my progress with this song in particular is my incorporation of the Estill Voice Training System. I was introduced to creator Jo Estill’s method by Dr. Steve Chicurel in UCF’s Musical Theatre Voice I and II class last year. For this song, incorporating the rules for consonants, detailed in the Diction-at-a-Distance user’s guide, assisted me with the interpretation. For example, with the word “Now,” which is spoken several times throughout the song, I made the first consonant longer and louder than the vowel and placed it before the down beat. This got rid of the diphthong problem and it helped me find new interpretations with the continued repetition of the word (Estill 11). I am not saying I completely understand this technique, nor does it always help me, but I find if I am struggling with a piece, this is a good place to begin my search to find the source of my problem.

Wednesday, Sept. 19 (Selected Scene Work-Through): This was my favorite rehearsal thus far in the process! We put the music aside and just worked intensely with the text in scene work in Act II. First, I was nearly all off-book for the act’s dialogue, and this really helped the process. I loved that we took the time to shape the scenes so they flow more naturally. We took

the time to discuss our back stories and what events have brought us to this point as the characters. Basically, we verbalized the who, what, where, when and why. I discovered that Haynie and I have completely different histories in mind; however, after some discussion, I have altered some of my original background information.

Monica and Lenny should have one child together, a girl named Amelia who is age four. The addition of Amelia helps me to believe that we would vacation with another family. Also, this alteration helps me further justify the change of intimacy in my marriage. I am still concerned with playing Monica's given age. With some work I can pull off 32, but I am surrounded by a very youthful looking cast. All of the characters in the second act are supposed to be middle-aged or at least have been married long enough for the newlywed glow to wear off. In order to solve this dilemma, I should keep my original age but be the eldest character in this act. Monica already takes on the role of the family patriarch and has enough of a fun-loving side to relate to a slightly younger husband. In the end, age will not be the most important component that makes up this complex world.

Author Barry Harman gives some good insight into the compatibility of the two acts. He states that "the first story deals with the early stages of romance as two people search for true love, while the second one deals with the way people strive to keep romance alive after the first bloom is over" (Green, The Guide to Musical Theatre).

Initially, I favored the characters and story of the first act more than the second. I was attracted to the vivacious personalities and the farcical nature of the plot. Josefine is closer to my actual age and I relate to her excitement over young love, whereas Monica, a mother and wife, is concerned about the condition of her marriage and contemplating adultery. At first I didn't know

how I could possibly relate to Monica, seeing how I've never experienced motherhood, wedded life or an illicit affair. However, I find I can relate to the complications in close relationships between genders and know that those tensions are amplified when the hour is late and your sobriety level is called into question. Monica is so wonderfully rich with life, and I dearly love the intimate atmosphere being created between her and Sam. I find portraying her brings out the very bold and earthy side to me which is another sensual avenue I have yet to explore.

This intense look at Act II really helped arc the piece. Being set in the middle of the night with high liquor consumption, we have to be careful not to let the energy get too sleepy. This is something I will have to fight against throughout the entire act, but luckily there are some "wake up" musical numbers placed in appropriate places to aid me in this battle.

Thursday, Sept. 20 (Put-Together Act II): Opening night is just two weeks away and we have just finished assembling the show. Whoa! A small cry of panic has just escaped from my lips only to retreat and fester in the pit of my stomach. I have not felt nervous over a show for a number of years; so, this is rather a surprising addition to my preparation concerns.

Something less worrisome is how the rehearsal went tonight. Not only did we work through the entire act, but I made some wonderful progress with my development of Monica. She is so wonderfully flawed. It is a blessing to be able to tackle a musical theatre character that is the undeniable "every woman." She is not the wholesome, sweet ingénue, nor is she the femme fatale. Monica fits somewhere in between and like most modern women has personality traits associated with both of those archetypal roles.

Tonight, I was made fully aware of how important and concise the dialogue is for this act. Sometimes there are only three or four lines between numbers, and the action of the play shifts

drastically within that short time. For example, the end of “Let’s Not Talk About It” into “So Glad I Married Him/Her” is four short lines, but must change the whole atmosphere of the show (Harman et al. 67, 68). I found this transition very difficult to propel forward. I tried different ways in delivering those couple of lines, but was not happy with any of my interpretations thus far. I will just trust that it will come out of the moment and not try and force the energy in one direction. The music will carry the audience to the new mood without me giving a line reading. I suppose there have to be some times when you have trouble getting your voice behind the author’s lines. Internalizing these sentences will take more effort on my part.

Another section of the act that will need some attention is the rise of the action beginning with “How Did I End Up Here?” into the climactic “Now.” Although it was our first work-through of these scenes and songs, it is definitely a challenge to keep the energy up and continue propelling the story forward. Overall, the beginning expository scenes ran quite smoothly, and I was pleased how easily I slipped into the lakeside world. I am feeling more at ease than I expected about this part of the show and feel all right about going back to the world of Vienna tomorrow.

Friday, Sept. 21 (Act I Work-Through): The corset was back on today and it took me a few times through the opening number for me to shift into Josefina. Although a rather rough beginning due to our week-long absence from this story, the first few scenes of the show went pretty well. I am still juggling my props in the Emil scene, but there was much improvement made in developing the relationship between Emil and Josefina. I discovered a few moments where the action of teasing could be both appropriate and relieving during this tragically serious scene. I will explore this further the next time we visit it.

Unfortunately, the rest of the evening was not as productive. Excluding our work in the polka number, we were not able to really work-through the scenes and wishy-washy memorization began to evidently show. I am among the guilty party and will pour my attention over these lines yet again until I get them right. The evening did not end well as we were only able to work through the end of scene 7, and it is during moments like this that I curse my inability to quickly learn song lyrics.

Appropriately, the playwright Noel Coward's advice on acting comes to mind. During the run of *Nude with Violin*, he advised his actors to "Just know your lines and don't bump into the furniture" (Rees 155). It seems I wasn't able to accomplish either of these tasks tonight, but hopefully tomorrow's rehearsal will be an improvement.

Saturday, Sept. 22 (Continue Work-Through-Act I through Act II): We picked up our pieces from last night and worked through the rest of the act beginning with scene 8. Time to jump into bed! Well, more like lightly sit on the blocks that were about the size of the bed. This very stiff bed is so much better than the chaise.

"Rustic Country Inn" went a great deal better, especially since I incorporated a suggestion made by music director Nate Beversluis. In reference to improving clarity and diction, he recommended putting more emphasis or weight on the verbs in certain lyric lines. It was one of those, "Wow! Why did I make that so difficult to understand and why didn't I think of that?" moments. The patter song is now starting to live up to its potential, although I don't know if I'll ever be able to control the "pine cone moment." As a joke, I am directed to sit on a pine cone during the song, and thus far I can never find it. Alas, I have ruined the play by the lack of correct prop-sitting-upon knowledge.

My inability to find small pine objects did not hinder the work accomplished in the rest of the act. We took the following scenes apart and really established when Josefine was playing the seamstress and when her true feelings were being expressed. This scene has the danger of becoming too “campy,” but as long as the real side of Josefine is not overshadowed by the style, then it should be fine. I agree with our director’s thoughts on the operetta style. It should only color the acting and the story. At the core, these characters and their circumstances should be taken seriously with as much realism involved as can exist in a musical. The transition from the train station into my final solo number went much better. It still needs a little bit of time to develop more naturally but our parting isn’t as abrupt. I discovered a new “realization moment.” In the text, just as Alfred gives her some bills for the carriage, she discovers that she must end things with him now that she knows he truly loves her (Harman et al. 47).

When you realize you have lost something that has given you so much joy, your emotional control goes out the window. Although you knew it wouldn’t last forever, you didn’t expect for it to end so abruptly. It is as if the wind was just knocked out of you and you are struggling trying to find your next breath. This incident gives me my motivation to begin the next song. The act concluded with working in some new movement with the dialogue of the final scene. I like this change for “the comedy” is revealed at this point and no longer requires the convention of the held operetta poses. Also, this helps move the scene a long.

“Summer Share” moved rather quickly; although, it seems to be a much shorter act. I could not believe how relatively smooth we ran through the staging from moment to moment. Surprisingly the second act is in far better shape than the first, even though we’ve spent more time in Vienna than at the lake. I am looking forward to my day off tomorrow so I can review

everything and really solidify what we worked on this week. It is rather difficult to do everything you want to do for this production when you are obligated to keep up with your school work at the same time. I suppose that is life and one must learn to make the most of the time you do have.

Monday, Sept. 24 (2nd Work-Through Act I, Act II): It was our first time running the whole show so I was constantly reviewing my notes before each scene. My script looks like I accidentally put it through the spin cycle of my washing machine. With the aid of my well-worn folio, there was much improvement made with my funky memorization spots. I now struggle with words only from the end of the polka number to the start of “Rustic Country Inn.” With as much time as I dedicated to studying my lines yesterday, I should be stable with the whole libretto, but I guess it’s a lot at once. I must be running out of storage closets in my mind and am now reorganizing everything else to make room. Actually, I must have gotten lax with these scenes because “Yes, It’s Love” was the first number I learned. Since I continue to mix up the order of the verses, I haven’t spent enough time on this particular piece.

On another note, I feel very confident with all the musical numbers that emphasize dance or trickier “Nickography” (simple dance steps created by Wuehrmann) to further the plot. There are still some issues with “Summer Share,” but this is due in part to the difficulty in moving the furniture on stage. I absolutely love that there are three different types of social dances that make an appearance in the show. It is fitting with the theme since couple dances are so romantic in nature.

I hope my dance confidence will maintain when we move into the Gillespy Theatre tomorrow for our only spacing rehearsal. Normally, this rehearsal has never been that much of

an adjustment for me, but then again I've never worked on a thrust stage before. Throughout the rehearsal process, I have tried to cheat my body to the three sides of the house, but it gets very comfortable to face the fourth wall especially during musical numbers.

Tuesday, Sept. 25 (3rd Work-Through and Spacing in the Gillespy): We are in the theater! I adapted quite easily to the space and know this was largely due in part to the fact that I made it a part of my rehearsal process. For tonight's to-do list, we mainly focused on getting used to the new space. Most of our real furniture was available, so we focused our energy on solidifying our movement and blocking. There was some good news as well. We no longer have to move the couch into place for the second act, and I can change my costume and wig during intermission to prepare. This takes a huge weight off my shoulders, for I am already nervous about my first act costume changes. In addition, I savor those 15 minutes of intermission, and it will aid me in getting my mind refocused.

Switching mental gears from Josefine to Monica has been a little bit difficult when done instantaneously. It always takes me the first couple of lines to be in the right mind set. It truly is important to clear your mind and refocus your energy when you begin a scene, or in this case a new show. Without all the distractions, you are more perceptive of your surroundings and more likely to really listen. Now I feel confident I will be prepared for this transition.

In addition to checking our spacing, we also began to use the entrances and exits, which were trickier than I first perceived. The stage right and left entrances are up tall, narrow stairs to get to a chest-high platform. It was dark backstage, and I tripped a couple of times until Kromer was able to put some glow tape down. I am thankful we are able to address these issues now without the challenge of many layers of clothing that will soon be added. Another interesting

discovery happened with the balance of our voices in the duets and ensemble numbers. I found I had to adjust to the new acoustics, and it took all of act one to really find a nice blend of sounds. Overall, the show is coming together, and I hope we can continue to improve the work as we go into tech.

Wednesday, Sept. 26 (Haynie and Nay- specific scene work): After our adventures last night in the theatre, today we had another intensive scene work session back in the rehearsal hall. Act II benefited so greatly from last week's session that we started today's rehearsal with Act I scenes. We were able to liven up all the scenes so they didn't drag the action and tempo of the show as they once did. Also, I have finally incorporated the use of my parasol into the "Ringstrasse" scenes. It's not that I stress and stumble over props on a regular basis, but I like to spend a bit of extra time on these components in a period piece. The use of such a personal prop as the parasol can greatly further your expression as the character. I find this small umbrella is a wonderful flirting device. One of my objectives in the scene is to attract the attention of a male, and this task is more easily accomplished with some assistance.

Furthermore, we went into greater depth over the real components of these characters and their relationship. Josefine was once an actress and knows the joys and excitement that come from playing another persona. However, she learns to really care for and need Alfred. Although she never intended to fall in love with him, she is heartbroken about the thought of giving him up. The unfortunate realities are that she can no longer indulge in her juvenile fantasy of love. She has to eat and has grown accustomed to a certain way of life. Therefore, she must end this lovely adventure. When she learns Alfred is among the Viennese elite, she is elated. She is

made whole again for as mentioned at the end of the “Little Comedy” reprise, she may decide to become an honest woman at Alfred’s side (Harman et al. 96).

We worked through the second act as well and further discussed the role of alcohol in the scene. It is important for it always to be present but not overshadowing. We also asked the questions: Why did they come back and what made you stop? For Monica, she has always cared about Sam but realizes she would never be happy as his wife or friend with benefits. Sam is a wonderful confidant and friend, but is not driven or assertive enough to challenge her. After “Romantic Notions,” she rediscovers her love and need for her husband and is grateful that Sam stopped the affair. Monica, like Josefine, often times is impulsive and would have gone through with it.

This rehearsal is just what we needed to connect all the dots in the story. Our relationships are now very rich with details and wonderfully complex. There is so much to play from now.

Thursday, Sept. 27 (1st Run through in rehearsal studio): Surprise! Tonight we had a special guest visit and give us input in our rehearsal. UCF Artistic Director Kate Ingram came over from Orlando. It has been a while since I was in a show that wasn’t being directed by or constantly supervised by the artistic director or managing producer. Her sudden presence threw my creative safe zone of exploration right out the window. I have worked with Ingram before but never so late in the process. The evening ran pretty well, though I know I did not improve any of my questionable areas. It is the lack of confidence that is hindering those sections right now.

Although I did not welcome her presence initially, she had a lot of great insights at the conclusion of the rehearsal. We hadn't touched on dialect through this process until she mentioned a few tips on the improvement of the accent. She corrected me on a few pronunciations and really got me to continue to engage my support system through the dialogue between songs. I also was given a few more pointers on improving my diction, which I have been addressing throughout the process. For example, I need to be careful with my "D" consonants like in the word "body." If I get lackadaisical about the forward placement of my speech, then I tend to slip into a "cockney" accent as opposed to the standard British sound. Most definitely this is something I will try to avoid.

Ingram also addressed the proper use of the "walking stick" for Bryson. Wuehrmann went over this last week, but understandably Bryson is still having difficulty in mastering its use. I was able to apply what she said about the cane to my use of the parasol. It is an extension of yourself and should help tell your story, not be the story.

Regrettably, she also came down rather hard on Haynie and his preparation process for the show. He has been struggling with the memorization of the first act, which I can understand. She insisted he learn the lines verbatim as opposed to improvising to get through the long monologues. I agree with her, for I have always thought the author has a more concise way of telling the story than me. As an actor, I should let the playwright do his or her job and trust their ability to give me the words I need for the character. Regardless of what Haynie got out of the reprimand, I know I am going home tonight and looking over all of my lines so I can be confident in my execution of them.

On a side note: The song “Romance, Romance” is really coming together. I can’t believe it. I never thought we would be able to get it together in time, but now I am confident it will blow everything else out of the water. This song was very difficult for me to find my vocal notes and blend with the other three performers. Now, I know we will be ready in time. I can’t wait to get back to our performance space and continue this adventure.

Friday, Sept. 28 (Designer run through in the Gillespy Theatre): We had guests today in the audience. Our design team and five-man crew came to see the show. This is our last real work-through and resemblance of our creation until opening night. We go into tech madness starting Monday, and I know my concentration will be redirected toward all those other elements that make up the show.

Some exciting progress happened with the show. I finally was able to really get “Now” to performance-ready. The notes, rhythms and the shaping of the piece are all coming together in a cohesive manner. Other songs that have shown some real improvement are Act I’s “It’s Not Too Late,” “Yes, It’s Love,” and “The Night It Had to End.” These numbers took longer for me to explore and prepare than any of the others. However, with learning to apply what I have worked on in Nick Wuehrmann’s voice class, I feel more confident in my singing capabilities. Some exercises I find useful in improving your vocal support for difficult passages are the “throwing the baseball” technique, “*plié* with your breath” and my favorite exercise, “butt breathing” or the concentration of air intake in the lowest part of your lungs.

In addition to applying interesting vocal tricks, for the first time our music was coming from behind our action. Music director Nate Beversluis sat behind the scrim so we could get used to this new phenomenon. It was definitely something new, but we adjusted quite well.

Less than a week away, I feel pretty good about where we are in the process. I only wish we had an extra week of rehearsals to solidify everything.

Sunday, Sept. 30 (Orchestra Rehearsal or Sitzprobe): We joined our band for the first time today, and they are smoking hot. Having a seven-person orchestra, it really adds so much color to the show. The two acts sound completely different from one another, and the talented musicians joining our crew really up the quality of my work. It was wonderful to be able just to focus on the music without all the movement. Being able to address my libretto when I wanted, I was able to really act through the songs. This extra rehearsal was vital for me to feel ready for our impending opening night.

Monday, Oct. 1 (1st Technical Rehearsal and Radio Show with Magic 107.1): We began the day with an early morning trip to Orlando to promote the show on a local radio program. We had planned to sing live on the air, which I was nervous about. However, with time constraints playing a major factor, we were only interviewed about the show. It was interesting being asked from an outside perspective about the rehearsal process and development of my characters. Being tested on my knowledge of the show and the world we have been creating for the last month, it was nice to have to say it out loud and clarify it again for myself.

The characters of Josefine and Monica evolved much differently than I first suspected. They are much more alike than I once thought. Both characters are sassy, bold, flirtatious, and slightly rebellious; and yet are wonderfully kind and nurturing. Although I initially focused on their differences, it is their similarities that are intriguing.

The evening at the theatre, as expected, turned into a madhouse, and it seemed disaster was hiding behind every corner. I seemed to have misplaced my mind when I came to work

tonight and kept messing up the simplest tasks. However, one very important change came from tonight's rehearsal. We no longer have to make scene changes in Act I. This is a huge relief, for I felt that with only one stage hand, it took far too long to move the furniture on and off stage. We have now altered the blocking slightly, and the lighting cues are such that we can keep the Vienna/Alserstrasse set as a whole.

Another addition to the show was the sound design and personal microphones. When done well, you don't really notice it. Thus was its affect on me. I look forward to tomorrow's rehearsal and the challenges the mics will most certainly bring.

Tuesday, Oct. 2 (1st Dress Rehearsal with Orchestra): Tonight's rehearsal proved to be our worst one yet. We were in our costumes and wigs for the first time, so naturally everything went to pieces. Unfortunately, this catastrophe was not concealed from the public eye; we were joined in the audience by one of my thesis committee members, Jim Brown, and by Seaside Music Theatre's artistic director, Lester Malizia. It is certain the show can only improve from here.

Realistically the run was not as dreadful to watch as I feel it must have come across. Technical rehearsals are an essential part of the development of a show and you discover little nuggets of possibility that only come to life with the addition of these modern theatrical conventions.

One such nugget was the addition of a hand fan for the opening and closing number of Act I. I was delighted to "fan the fires of passion" with this instrument of flirtation (Deitz). The use of the hand-made fan as a communication tool between genders developed as a secret language between lovers in the Victorian era. For example, if a lady held the fan to her heart she

was saying, “You have won my love,” and when she hid her eyes behind an open fan it meant, “I Love You” (“Fans - Functional, Fashionable and Flirtatious - Hull Museums Collections”).

I browsed through many articles on the Victorian language of the fan to identify a few gestures that may be appropriate for the scenes. One interesting article found in the 1866 Harpers Weekly magazine claimed that to properly “flirt a fan” was an art form only to be acquired with dutiful practice for at least three months time (“Fans”). With just two days time, I am sure that only the Victorian era expert will notice my unskilled hand. Realistically, no one will be paying attention to my secret language, but this further connects me to the social behaviors of the nineteenth century. I am in agreement with the Greenwich Fan Museum’s belief that a fan “saves the blush of modesty by showing all we wish to see, yet hiding all that we desire to conceal” (Deitz).

Besides the added bonus of the fan, I was able to make full use of my large skirts in the production numbers of “Yes, It’s Love” and “I’ll Always Remember the Song.” It is a rather scandalous action to show any part of your legs in the Victorian society and this is very fitting for Josefine and her active past. It is very difficult to change into that many layers of costume so quickly. With the implementation of a rehearsal system much like a factory line, these changes can occur in ample time for the next entrance. I trust there will be vast improvement made in tomorrow’s efforts toward the end result.

Wednesday, Oct. 3 (Final Technical Rehearsal & Final Dress Rehearsal): Our final day of rehearsal was a double day. The early afternoon run was our final review and polish without the costumes. It gave us a chance to solidify our staging and any last minute concerns. I am

going into the run of the show with a very optimistic view that my hard work and attention to detail will pay off.

Our final dress rehearsal improved by leaps and bounds above last night's fiasco. It is my hope the old adage "a bad dress rehearsal means a good opening night" is proven wrong on the eve of the morrow. Some important changes took place during the rehearsal. My second act wig and overall look was altered slightly. Pleased with the new outcome, I feel confident and even sexy as Monica now. In addition, I am enthused to report that I made all of my costume changes on time and confidently explored the new costume accessories and their many uses including the gloves, lounging robe, and hats.

Act II hit the ball out of the park tonight. All of the detail work is paying off, and I find I am completely lost in the story. In other words, I am just enjoying the journey, and it feels great. I have not mentioned the latter act in detail over the last few entries because it has not been affected quite as much with the tech additions. One of the final pieces of the puzzle I hope will come into place for tomorrow. I nearly conquered the eleven o'clock numbers in both the acts and suppose I will just have to be patient. Both of the numbers are performance ready, but I want them to rise above the rest to an extraordinary level.

Overall, I'm ready for an audience and wonder what affects it will have on the progress of the show. It has been such a difficult but rewarding process, and now I hope I can just enjoy the ride.

Performance Journal

Thursday-Sunday Oct. 4-7 (Opening Night and Weekend): Our opening night was witnessed by a relatively small but appreciative audience that included my own fan club. The very supportive ladies of my family traveled great distances to be present for the opening weekend. I arrived very early to the theatre in order to feel like I had plenty of time to prepare. I did around a 15-minute physical and vocal warm-up and then went backstage to check the setting of my props, after which I changed into my base costume and began to apply my stage make-up. The application process is very therapeutic and works as a great focusing exercise for me. The simple, familiar action allows me to just breathe and clear my mind of all other concerns and thoughts that have developed during the day. This is my version of J.J. Ruscella's "10 minutes of nothing" exercise designed to free the mind and body of obtrusive creative energy. With corset cinched and costume zipped, I anxiously stood in the dark backstage awaiting my opening cue.

The evening surpassed what I thought was capable for an opening night performance at a university level. Everything seemed to fall into place, and I realized when we wrapped our encore number that I had really accomplished something of great magnitude and difficulty.

The rest of the week's performances only improved with each show, and I enjoyed the company of my relatives for the few days they were able to spend in Daytona Beach. My grandmother, mother and sister were beyond pleased with the show and almost shocked at how much I had changed and improved as a performer since starting this program. I was surprised by my sudden leap in progress as well and am now proudly taking ownership over my part in realizing this production.

With the conclusion of this weekend, I realized I had conquered what I thought was far beyond me. When I was first investigating this show, I fell instantly in love with the stories and characters, but knew it would be a major challenge to overcome for someone with my limited performance experience. The score is stylistically all over the place and not necessarily the easiest material to act through. I have been concentrating my efforts toward improving my vocal support and confidence in my singing abilities and believe it was made evident with my performance progress over the weekend.

The energy from one show to the next increased dramatically with positive results. I am a performer who thrives on the energy given to me by the addition of a good audience. This relationship between audience and actor is one of my favorite aspects of musical theatre. There is something wonderfully exciting and satisfying about witnessing or being involved in a live musical production. The audience seemed to increase in size with every new run of the show, and Saturday's was our best house yet. We had several students from UCF and some important faculty members in attendance. My thesis committee chair, Earl Weaver, and the department chair, Dr. Steve Chicurel, who is also my former vocal instructor, were in high spirits about the success of the show. The most valued compliment of the evening, offered by Chicurel, was his approval and reaction to my performance of the song, "The Night It Had to End." He noticed all of the details I put into this seemingly easy piece and went on the emotional journey with me. I was humbled and ecstatic that my intricate detail work on certain components of the piece had been appreciated.

I look forward to our final four performances and only wish that the run was longer. Being a part of a long run would suit me perfectly, and I hope that in the future I can revisit this

work when I am closer to the actual ages of the characters. Investing so much of my time and effort into this product, I know it will be rather difficult to leave the story and my characters behind. Softening the blow, the start of a new creative process begins this week at Seaside Music Theater. I am creating the role of the nurse or “strange woman” at the end of Act III for their production of Tennessee William’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It will be difficult to leave Vienna and Lake Winnepesaukee behind, but New Orleans will be a nice place to mourn the loss.

Thursday, Oct. 11 (Open House promotional Event and Second Week opening): With just a few short days of rest, we gather once more at the News Journal Center to create art. Seaside Music Theater is hosting an open house in the lobby in an effort to promote their upcoming season. Our director has taken advantage of this perfect marketing opportunity and got our cast a spot in their talent preview. This was a perfect way to get back into the world of the play since leaving it. We performed three of our definite crowd-pleasing numbers: “So Glad I Married Her,” “It’s Not Too Late,” and “Romance/Romance.” This was a great opportunity to perform these numbers out of context to liven things up a little. My excitement level was definitely raised, and I already felt mentally prepared for the upcoming performance.

Although the Gillespie was composed of few theatre-goers, the show’s energy picked up right where we left it. I feel more at home with each performance and am surprised that it continues to improve with each showing. I am now trying to savor each moment and enjoy the fruits of my labor.

Saturday, Oct. 13 (Performance with KCACTF adjudication): This evening’s performance was my personal best of the run. Everything seemed to progress in a very natural manner, and I was able just to enjoy the experience with seemingly little effort. Saturday’s

showing was also the determined day of our KCACTF adjudication, or review of our work by an outside academic source. Our respondent's name was C. David Frankel from the University of South Florida, and he brought to light points I agree with and some I oppose in regards to our interpretation of *Romance, Romance*. Included in "Appendix B: Outside Reports" is Frankel's production response document which was submitted to the university and region KCACTF coordinators within a couple of weeks of the production's close. This is provided as another supportive document giving observation and insight into my performance interpretation (See KCACTF Response).

I was awarded the respondent's choice for the Irene Ryan Scholarship Audition nominee and was pleased, though I know it must have been a difficult decision. Any of my fellow actors deserved equal acknowledgement for their efforts toward this show. I was most satisfied with his comments toward my listening ability as an actor. "She knows when to do little," Frankel said in his description of my ability to allow my response to develop out of the moment. I was fortunate to be working with an excellent acting partner, and our moment-to-moment work in rehearsal was what freed up my acting choices. Another element I was pleased to have been observed from an outside perspective was my attention to detail for the physical and vocal differences between the two characters. I feel comfortable "living" in the two worlds and am glad that I seemed at home.

Sunday, Oct. 14 (Final Performance with Barry Harman as surprise guest): Our final performance was this afternoon, and I began the show as if I had nothing to lose. I dared to go beyond "acceptable" or "good" and feel I ended this journey on an incredible high note. Unbeknownst to the creative team or cast was a special guest in attendance to our production.

The original librettist and Broadway director Barry Harman had seen the show and stayed after to speak to cast and crew. Wuehrmann came backstage just after the final curtain fell and told me the shocking news. I nearly fell on the floor from disbelief and quickly went over my performance to see if I had improvised any lines. Luckily, I make it a priority of mine to really learn the text and now realize you never know when the playwright can witness your work.

Harman was very complimentary of our work and even went as far to say that he enjoyed our interpretation and quality of production more than a performance he had seen earlier in the year with an equity cast at the Paper Mill playhouse in New Jersey. I have included his electronic response in “Appendix B: Outside Reports” as another reference on my work and development with this musical piece.

Harman’s visit was the perfect way to end my run with such a challenging yet rewarding piece of art. With the close of this part of the journey, I look forward to applying new techniques and discoveries on character development to my next musical theatre project.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMATION

The research perspective used to inform characterization that has been explored in previous chapters was chosen as a supplementary step in the performance preparation process. My purpose was to develop two fully plausible and distinct characters for musical performance that would incorporate characteristics of the demimonde. I believe that these methods were successful in aiding in my creative process for *Romance, Romance* and have ultimately improved my research process for all future projects. This chapter discusses and evaluates the effectiveness of these methods and reviews the overall experience.

Findings and Discussion

In order to assist in presentation and evaluation, a portion of Steven Porter's "Evaluating Dramatic Performance" guide in *The American Musical Theatre: A Manual for Performers* is used to organize the findings (66-69). It is a guide to assess a performer's command of "the elements which go into characterization and its realization in any given moment on the stage" (Porter 64). Porter continues noting director Michael Chekhov's theory on acting in that "good acting is the ability to manifest the inner psychology of a character in overt physical terms" (qtd. in Porter 64). These terms or physical realities can be explored in the "surface manifestations of characterization" section organized as follows: weight, space, and time; walk and movement; speech and voice; and the use of props. Using this as a model, I will discuss the implementation of type, style, theme, concept, movement, and vocal research on performance interpretation for *Romance*. Personal observation is further supported by outside evaluations of my work that are included for reference in APPENDIX B: OUTSIDE REPORTS AND RESPONSES.

Evaluation of Characterization

My reasoning of exploring the traits of the demimonde in relation to *Romance* was to identify the similarities and differences between Josefina and Monica and to further connect the storylines. I discovered that when viewed with the traits of the demimonde, *Romance*'s female lead characters are more alike than they first appear and that the differences are mainly found in the application of style, circumstance and the characters' romantic journey.

Josefina and Monica share many traits of a TWAH or demimondaine, only manifest them in different ways. The presentation of the two acts, one as an operetta pastiche and the other as an intimate realism piece, leads to further distinction between the two demimondes of *Romance*. However, it is the theme that ultimately connects them and propels the action of the show. While both Josefina and Monica are bold, sensuous, impulsive, charismatic, compassionate and colorful female protagonists; they each go on unique emotional journeys that require different behavioral choices and actions. Therefore, the following are my findings on the practical application of research on characterization.

Weight, Space, Time

Identification of the traits of the demimonde influenced the development of the inner psychology of Josefina and Monica, which is revealed in the physical form of weight, space and time. As Josefina, I found that I carried my weight very high in my body, mainly in my chest and upper arms. My energy was high and forward with weight distributed more on the balls of my feet. This physical choice was influenced by the use of a corset and application of "heightening" (11). Contrarily, as Monica, I carried my weight much lower to the ground in my hips and pelvis. My energy seemed connected to the earth, and I found myself bending my

knees much more in the second act. This physical reality developed from the intimate atmosphere of the cabin at the lake and the frankness of the dialogue.

A similarity of the two characters was their command of the space in that they were both demimondes. As Josefine, I fully used the space, was very animated in my face and gestures, and precise in my movements. This behavior was a reflection of the presentational style of the piece and the operetta application. I discovered that applying the heightened style worked most effectively or realistically when “playing” the seamstress and much less as the demimondaine or in delivery of the personal letters. If you apply style only when Josefine is wearing the mask or is incognito, then operetta coloring will be present but not overwhelming. As Monica, I commanded the space as well, but was much more subtle in my facial expressions and movements. Because the setting is more intimate and isolated, it seemed that my emotions were seen more clearly through smaller movements and more expressive focus in the eyes. I discovered that less movement is better in this act for the concentration should be on the words and emotions rather than the facade as in act one.

Finally, my timing was quicker as Josefine. I delivered my lines more concisely, more clearly, and with a greater degree of fluctuation in tone. Also, my movements, though grand, were very precise and controlled actions. In contradiction, as Monica, my timing was more consistent and legato in that my speech was further relaxed. My movements resembled a more earthly quality as well. It seems that Josefine and Monica are each demimondes but in different worlds and at different times.

Walk and Movement

The worlds of Josefine and Monica are further revealed through my walk and movement choices that were informed by my exploration of heightening and realism techniques. In Act One, I walked more lightly with energy propelling me forward keeping me on my toes. In line with the Viennese waltz, my movements reflected the graceful dance. I incorporated gliding steps and paid more attention to my carriage and placement of hands. I sat on the edge of all furniture and lay as lightly as one can on the bed or chaise. Also, I was conscious of my posture throughout. In Act two, my walk incorporated more hip movement, plié s and varying levels of speed. I also used the furniture, exploring many different ways you could comfortably sit, lean or lie on the set. This was meant to promote familiarity with the surroundings and solidify the set as a real space. Movement choices were directly affected by my research on style of operetta and realism. I found that it is easy to focus too much attention on heightening and lose track of your acting wants and objectives. I discovered that merely energizing your gestures or movements with touches of style like poses or prop use is the most effective way to stay true to your character's motives. The style should aid you in developing the concepts and themes within the show, not overshadow them.

Speech and Voice

Researching the evolution of the mezzo/mistress character gave much insight into the vocal and speech qualities used portraying Josefine and Monica. To further connect Josefine to traditional Viennese Operetta heroines, in general speech I spoke in a higher tone or vocal register with attention paid to the color and diction of the dialect. Vocally, I found that a belt mix with more vibrato than straight tone was the optimum general vocal placement. It opened

up possibilities to many stylistic choices. The legit voice was also appropriate and very helpful in the song, “Oh, What A Performance,” when applying the heightened style and at other various points throughout the score.

Monica’s speech was fully resonant, with very little vibrato, and darker in tone. She is far more masculine like Naomi André’s “second women,” or at least appears to be so (7). Therefore, the chest/belt voice was used more often than the head/legit voice. Although a belt placement cannot be used throughout, it did assist in adding some pop or rock nuances to the character. Still, I did not restrict myself from legit or mix sounds and found that using these placements in important moments like the last verse of “Romantic Notions” reflected a change in character. I discovered that the contemporary belt mix placement is most effective for both characters and understand why many female actresses use this placement in modern musical entertainments. It allows you to use your full vocal instrument switching less obviously between head and chest voice and allows for easier imitation of operetta or pop styles.

Use of Props

Props often help fully define your character and aid in expressing motives, emotions, and desires. They can also provide some needed detail to the world of the character. Some helpful objects used as Josefina were my parasol and fan as flirtation devices; gloves and hats as attention drawers or framing devices for the operetta poses; clothing, including skirts and robes, as extensions of my emotions; brush, mirror and vanity objects used as double-entendres; and money bills symbolizing the traditional end of an affair. As Monica, I was fortunate to have a few key props that allowed me to instantly connect to Monica’s world. For example, Monica’s wedding ring was a continual reminder of her family obligations and the presence of a wine glass

reminded me of the relaxed atmosphere being represented. The dedication to my props further connected me to the operetta and realism worlds of *Romance, Romance*. The props did not become the focus of the action, but rather helped propel it through the show.

Other Findings

Another finding from this process was the discovery and definition of tart characters, fallen women and demimondes in musical theatre. I am able to better define a personal character type, “tart with a heart,” which allows me to have more confidence in employment situations. For example, with physical and vocal traits defined, I can gear my audition material to resemble or differ from these types of characters in future casting calls. This knowledge gives me an informed advantage in the process. Also, the Selective List of Demimonde, Fallen Women and TWAH Roles (1852-2008) identifies other dramatic resources to consult for future performance or research purposes. Characterization can be developed through many different research avenues; however, I believe my methods went beyond traditional research practices and were beneficial in creating believable appropriate characters in modern musical theatre.

Conclusion

Through the course of this document, I defined and identified the characteristics of the famed nineteenth-century courtesans; traced the musical and dramatic trends of the mezzo/mistress protagonist; examined the themes, styles and concepts of fin-de-siècle and American musical theatre dramatists; and researched the significance and style of European operetta. In other words, for the purpose of developing believable and realistic characters for

musical performance, I analyzed specific research methods used to inform the performance process of developing the modern female protagonist in contemporary American musical theatre.

The demimondaine, as the female protagonist or colorful second woman, is an intriguing character in contemporary musical theatre that will continue to charm and entertain American audiences well into the twenty-first century. As societal roles and views of women continue to evolve, the fallen woman figure in musical entertainment will change as well. She will always be the daring unabashed tart, but I suspect that this character will continue to go through cycles of vogue, alternating between the roles of the protagonist and supporting female cameo. However, depending on future popular music trends, I believe she will remain traditionally scored for American theatre as the triple threat, mezzo belt/mix, character performer, allowing future performing tarts the thrill of being the belting, dancing bad girls of the stage. This should be a celebrated tradition, as memorialized by the famous silver screen tart, Mae West: “When I’m good, I’m very good. But, when I’m bad, I’m better” (“I’m No Angel (1933) - Memorable quotes”).

Many memorable female character actors, comedians, mezzos, belters and even prima donnas throughout history have had the privilege of playing tart with a heart roles. This project allowed me to embrace my typecast history and research the origins and evolution of these original “working girls” from Viennese Operetta to American musical comedy. From this experience, I developed a more research-based characterization process that can be recreated for future performance endeavors. I feel that this project not only successfully filled the final component of my MFA degree in Musical Theatre, but it also allowed me to reflect and redefine my creative process as a theatre performer. It is my hope that this document can aid other TWAH

performers or future stage demimondes in figuratively “turning tricks” as the modern female protagonist in American musical theatre.

APPENDIX A: EVOLUTION OF THE DEMIMONDAINE CHARACTER

Selective List of Demimonde, Fallen Women and TWAH Roles (1852-2008)

* Specifically written as a traditional demimondaine

Plays

Marguerite in Alexandre Dumas II's *La Dame aux Camelias* (1852) *

Suzanne in Alexandre Dumas II's *Le Demi-monde* (1855) *

Hedda in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1891)

Kitty Warren in George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893)

Paula in Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893)

Anna in Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie* (1922)

Larita in Noel Coward's *Easy Virtue* (1925)

Myra in Robert E. Sherwood's *Waterloo Bridge* (1930)

Diana in Abram Hill's *So Shall You Reap* (1938)

Blanche in Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Opera

Violetta in Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853) *

Carmen in Georges Bizet's *Carmen* (1875)

Manon in Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893)

Mimi in Giacomo Puccini's *La Boheme* (1896)

Cio-Cio San in Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904)

Magda in Giacomo Puccini's *La Rondine* (1917) *

Operetta

Helene in Jacques Offenbach's *La Belle Helene* (1864)

Boulotte in Jacques Offenbach's *Barbe-blue* (1866)

Metella in Jacques Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne* (1866) *

Duchesse in Jacques Offenbach's *La Grande-Duchesse de Gerolstein* (1867)

Perichole in Jacques Offenbach's *La Perichole* (1868)

Eva in Franz Lehár's *Eva* (1911) *

Musical Theatre (Broadway)

Claudine in Ivan Caryl and CMS McLellan's *The Pink Lady* (1911) *

Bess in George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935)

Moll in Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* (1938)

Vera in Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart's *Pal Joey* (1940)

Ado Annie in Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Oklahoma* (1943)

Carmen in Oscar Hammerstein II's *Carmen Jones* (1943)

Anna in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* (1947)

Lois Lane in Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate* (1948)

Lorelei Lee in Jule Styne and Leo Robin's *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* (1949)

Adelaide in Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls* (1950)

Jenny in Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* (1954)

Lola in Richard Adler and Jerry Ross's in *Damn Yankees* (1955)

Cunegonde in Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (1956) *

Anna in Bob Merrill's *New Girl In Town* (1957)

Gypsy Rose Lee in Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim's *Gypsy* (1959)

Irma in Marguerite Monnot's *Irma La Douce* (1960)

Nancy in Lionel Bart's *Oliver* (1963)

Aldonza in Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion's *Man of La Mancha* (1965)

Charity in Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields' *Sweet Charity* (1966)

Sally in John Kander and Fred Ebb's *Cabaret* (1966)

Mary Magdalene in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971)

Sonia in Stephen Schwartz's *Godspell* (1971)

Betty Rizzo in Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's *Grease* (1972)

Sugar Kane in Jule Styne and Bob Merrill's *Sugar* (1972)

Desiree in Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* (1973) *

Sheila/Val/Cassie in Marvin Hamlisch and Ed Kleban's *A Chorus Line* (1975)

Roxie/Velma/Mama Morton in John Kander and Fred Ebb's *Chicago* (1975)

Eva in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Evita* (1978)

Amber in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (1978)
Carla in Maury Yeston's *Nine* (1982)
Audrey in Alan Menken and Howard Ashman's *Little Shop of Horrors* (1982)
Dot in Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) *
Fantine in Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Les Miserables* (1987)
Josefine in Barry Harman and Keith Herrman's *Romance, Romance* (1988) *
Kim in Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Miss Saigon* (1991)
Mimi in Jonathan Larson's *Rent* (1996)
Lucy in Frank Wildhorn's *Jekyll and Hyde* (1997)
Mayzie LaBird in Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens' *Seussical* (2000)
Queenie in Michael John LaChusa's *Wild Party* (2000)
Ulla in Mel Brooks' *The Producers* (2001)
Lucy the Slut/Kate Monster in Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx's *Avenue Q* (2003)
Chaperone in Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison's *The Drowsy Chaperone* (2006)
Inga in Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (2007)
Marguerite in Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, Jonathan Kent, Herbert Kretzmer, Michel Legrand's *Marguerite* (2008 West End) *

APPENDIX B: OUTSIDE REPORTS AND RESPONSES

Thesis Committee Chair Performance Evaluative Report

Melissa Nay

Josefine/Monica in “Romance, Romance”

Saturday, October 6, 2007

I attended the Saturday, October 6 performance of “Romance, Romance” at the News-Journal Center in Daytona Beach. Melissa was featured in the production as “Josefine” in Act One and “Monica” in Act Two. This is my evaluation of Melissa’s work in both acts.

Act One takes place in Vienna at the turn of the century. The two main characters, Josefine and Alfred, are wealthy members of society longing for a change in their lives. The style of the piece is that of a Viennese waltz, which is represented in the music and poetry of the script’s language. On all accounts, Melissa’s work was effective and completely representative of the play’s stylistic demands.

From Melissa’s first entrance to her final exit, there was a clear sense of Josefine’s style and manner. Melissa effectively utilized the heightened language and exact physicality necessary for an audience to understand Josefine’s mood, feelings, and desires. Josefine’s physical carriage was high in the body, manifested in the chest and shoulders. Her language was clearly executed with vocal colorization and tonal shaping, utilizing a full vocal range of speaking and singing technique. Josefine’s social status and wealth were clearly demonstrated.

I was intrigued with Melissa’s interpretation of the script. She clearly had “scored” every nuance and beat change in the libretto and cultivated a character arc that was easily followed. I am extremely familiar with the script of this show, and there were moments of new discovery for

me based on Melissa's acting and singing choices. Melissa was able to uncover deeper layers of Josefine's emotions than I've witnessed in previous productions I've seen and appeared in.

Act Two takes place at a modern-day beach rental. Two married couples, Monica/Lenny and Sam/Barb, share the house, and it is revealed that Sam and Monica are best friends. Through the course of the act, we also discover that Sam and Monica have an emotional connection stronger than that of just "best friends." The second act also requires a completely different acting/singing style, and, again, Melissa was extremely successful in this transition from Act One.

Monica is a hard character to play, as she often times can be portrayed as too sarcastic and bitchy. Other traps I've witnessed in previous productions are Monica being too aggressive, demonstrative, and uncaring. Melissa fell into none of these traps and shaped a Monica that was multi-dimensional and fully-realized. From her first entrance, it was clear immediately this was a different woman. Monica had a different energy force – leading from the hips and knees. There was an earthiness to her that was firmly grounded...a sexual, driving energy from a passionate core.

Melissa easily maneuvered the emotional rollercoaster ride Monica goes through in Act Two. Scene work was clearly defined and detailed. There was a wonderful sense of strength in Melissa's acting, singing, and movement. But, mostly, there was vitality in Melissa's work that made Monica new and interesting to encounter.

It was quite rewarding seeing Melissa tackle this material. The diverse demands of these roles might cause most actresses to run the other way in fear. It was clear Melissa met the challenge head on and flourished in the experience. This definitely was the quality of work I

would expect for a graduate student in a thesis role. Congratulations to Melissa for presenting such outstanding work.

Earl D. Weaver

Thesis Committee Chair

Coordinator of Musical Theatre

University of Central Florida

Romance, Romance Director Joint Evaluative Report

Response for Melissa Nay (Josefine/Monica) and JP Haynie (Alfred/Sam)

UCF's 2007 Romance, Romance

Melissa Nay and JP Haynie performed the roles of Josefine/Monica and Alfred/Sam respectively in a production of *Romance, Romance* that I directed for the University of Central Florida in Daytona Beach, FL at the News-Journal Center in the fall of 2007.

This was my first time working with these students. The beginning of the semester saw us bonded together as teacher/student and director/student and I became their leader in a variety of situations; acting classes, voice lessons, directing class, and as director for two productions of musicals.

Romance, Romance began rehearsals at the top of our year together, so we were all unfamiliar with each other's working and rehearsal habits. This show fulfilled their need for thesis roles, and I found their choices in thesis topics to be relevant and fascinating, and was confident that their research would help to round out their performances.

Both students worked diligently to live up to what I consider to be my own high standards. I approached *Romance, Romance* from several standpoints. First was the literary standpoint, of researching the original source materials, and then dissecting the libretto for important information that would help me navigate the story-telling aspect of my direction. My extensive background in operetta was of great help in telling the story and finding the style for the first act, set in 1900 Vienna. I decided to set the second act, originally set in "the Hamptons... in the current year (1987, when the musical was written)," in the lake country of New Hampshire in 2008. I have often spent time in New Hampshire in the summers, and this

decision was made so that I could personalize my direction with a sense of time and place, making it easier for me to impart. I inserted personal images such as the backdrop for Act Two, which was a nighttime painted recreation of a photo I took of a lake at my uncle's house, and the addition of the sound of loons, an evocative and lonesome sound prevalent in lake country in August. Because I personalized the location, I was able to impart deeper meaning and attach more intense stakes to JP and Melissa in my direction. And because I set Act Two in our current year, they were able to more easily identify with their characters.

Both JP and Melissa took my direction extremely well. Though their processes are different in a rehearsal process, both cast members were assiduous in their learning of their roles, musically and dramatically. Musically, they worked with our music director, Nathaniel Beversluis, in great detail to make sure everything was musically up to par. It was convenient to be their voice teacher at the same time, to teach vocal techniques that could be applied to our rehearsal process. Dramatically, JP and Melissa worked at varying speeds. Sometimes it took a longer while to process certain ideas, while at other times, ideas would click in immediately and take off. The process was one of building, as it usually is with musical theater. It was wonderful to see ideas settle in and watch the "click" of these ideas spark on stage.

These thesis ideas helped JP and Melissa immensely in their understanding of the styles of the piece and of their characters. An understanding of sexuality in both eras was vital, and it helped our conversations about subtext, relationships, obstacles, needs, etc. And an understanding of the "demimonde" type was vital in building character and relationships. Both students' thesis works contributed significantly to the overall success of the production.

It was a pleasure working with both JP and Melissa and I hope they are as proud of our production as I am.

Nicholas Wuehrmann

Production Director and Thesis Committee Member

Assistant Professor

University of Central Florida

KCACTF Response

Production response for: *Romance, Romance*

Produced by: University of Central Florida

Respondent First Name: C. David

Last Name Frankel

The Show's Director is: Nicholas Wuehrmann

NOMINATIONS BY RESPONDENT:

This respondent's IRENE RYAN SCHOLARSHIP AUDITION nominee is:

Melissa Nay

RESPONDENT'S NARRATIVE COMMENTS:

The respondent provided the following comments on CHOICE OF PLAY:

Romance, Romance was chosen as a production for M.F.A. in Musical Theatre program at UCF. This program is small and musicals are selected to provide students in their final year with thesis roles. As this year's class has only two students, *Romance, Romance* was a perfect choice -- it had roles that fit the musical ranges of the students and that also created acting challenges for them (not the least of which stems from the musical actually being two thematically-linked one-act musicals). This piece also provided roles for two undergraduate musical theatre majors, roles that offered them, as well, the opportunities to stretch both musically and emotionally.

The respondent provided the following comments on DIRECTING:

Nicholas Wuehrmann directed *Romance, Romance* with an attention to character relationships required by this piece. As the stage most often held only two people, there was

little need (or opportunity) for the kind of stage spectacle often expected in musicals, but Professor Wuehrmann used the stage economically to provide movement patterns that underscored the characters' shifting relationships, both with each other and with the audience.

The first act uses a much more presentational style, with the actors often talking and singing directly to the audience (the audience "playing" the roles of each character's correspondent). For this act, the stage was divided into his space and her space, the parallel structure of the plot mirrored in the parallel structure of the stage. This arrangement provide a large space down stage that could become an extension of either "room" or a separate space (such as the park) altogether. Through his work with the actors (and the designers), the location of scenes was always clear.

The respondent provided the following comments on ACTING:

The four actors involved with this production, two graduate students and two undergraduate students, are clearly (and appropriately) at different stages in the development of their craft, including their ability to access the emotional support required by the play. In general, though, all four acquitted themselves well, and the production, as a whole, was quite successful, as the small but vociferous audience made clear at the evening's end.

Melissa Nay, in the roles of Josefine and Monica, provided the most fully developed characters in both plays. Miss Nay has a command of her vocal and physical technique that appears almost effortless. As the mannered and artificial Josefine, she used the clarity of her articulation and a kind of Grande dame theatricality in gesture to good effect, but never losing sight of the psychological depth that lay behind the various masks that Josefine wore. As Monica, in the second act, Miss Nay took advantage of the relaxed modern circumstances of the

story to reveal an earthiness that made it very easy to understand Sam's attraction to her. In this act, as in the first, she offered an emotional range without hitting a false note (nor did she hit one in the singing -- all of the performers, to my ears, at any rate, sang wonderfully well). Finally, Melissa listens as well as any actor I've seen, allowing what she hears to work on without pressing or manufacturing a response. She knows when to do little.

JP Haynie, who played Alfred and Sam, is a performer with strong potential. He made his character's choices clear, and captured a certain boyish excitement in Alfred and a more painful awareness in Sam (especially in "Words He Doesn't Say"). In the first act, a period piece set in turn-of-the-century Vienna, Mr. Haynie's characterization doesn't fully capture Alfred's age or manners -- there also appears to be more of a well of sadness to the character than the actor can tap into. He plays off his partner quite well, though, and appears to execute his choices (and the director's) with vigor, without yet fully making those choices his own (in the sense that they emerge in the moment). Mr. Haynie appeared more at home in the second act, where he was able to shed the period costumes (and the moustache, which never looked natural). He seemed to have a clear understanding of Sam's character and, as mentioned above, did succeed in capturing some of the character's pain and bafflement at his own lack of feeling. The biggest challenge in this act for Mr. Haynie, though, is the full emotional release that comes when his feelings for Monica well up so strongly that he has to rush out of the room crying, "This is insanity" (or words to that effect). Overall, though, as previously noted, the two leads worked well together in both acts of the musical, and sang and acted with a clear sense of who they were and what they wanted.

Colin Bryson and Kelli Sleigh played a number of smaller roles in the first act and the husband and wife of Monica and Sam in the second. During the first act they were called upon to perform primarily as functions (maid, manservant, etc.) but also as the masked "romantic" inner selves of the main characters. As these masked characters, they were called upon to dance and interact in ways that commented upon the actions of the main characters. They performed these roles well, although there was a bit too much of the "musical theatre" performer in some of the dance sequences — that is, neither Colin nor Kelli always seemed to have a specific sense of who they were in these moments, and resorted to a kind of generic smile that indicated little personal investment in the situation. Of course, it's difficult to play an abstraction with the specificity of a person, but in this play, at any rate, I think it's necessary.

In the second act, the two "chorus" members had more to do, and, although most of their interactions were with the audience, they were still able to construct more consistent characters (without losing the sense of performative joy, which is important). They both move very well, and were able to play with physical inventiveness, especially in their old-age vaudeville. I look forward to seeing them in larger roles and watching them continue to develop.

The respondent provided the following comments on DESIGN ELEMENTS:

The design for the musical was simple, and effective. The stage is a thrust with a deep backstage and flyhouse. The flyhouse enabled the designer to use two drops, one for each act, on a billboard kind of structure. The drop for the first act featured a non-descript building in a vaguely ornate style suggestive of Europe, but without any sense of a real space. The Act Two drop, in contrast, was a vista of a lake that, through the use of curves in the shoreline, tree placement, and other details, evoked a real sense of place. The coloration of both drops,

especially the use of blues, was quite good and added to the overall coolness of the play — an interesting paradox in that the subject matter was quite hot, but both acts (the first perhaps more than the second) examine these hot passions from a cool analytic distance.

The furniture pieces in both acts were well chosen, although the wardrobe in Alfred's room, with its drape front, looked a little dowdy and out of place.

The lighting design worked well, although there were some dead spots downstage, perhaps caused by misplaced actors or by blown lamps. Nevertheless, sometimes it was darker than one would have expected.

The costumes were mostly appropriate, although I feel that Josefine's dress when in disguise did not help the actress; it was extremely unflattering and at odds with the description in the text -- a simple dress that a lower-class woman would wear — still pretty, just inexpensive.

The respondent provided the following comments on TECH ELEMENTS:

Overall, the technical elements seemed well executed. The show ran smoothly. The only technical issue I really have is with the sound – the balance between band and singers could have been better, and the quality of the sound sometimes was more harsh than I think the unamplified voices of the singers would have been (although I acknowledge that I am biased against the use of amplification, especially in small spaces). I would like to point out, though, that the sound design in Act Two worked quite well, and that some of the interjected bird calls and insect sounds made nice comments on the action and dialogue -- for instance, after the line "nothing about her I don't admire."

Barry Harman Production Response

Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2007 (Electronic message to director Nicholas Wuehrmann from BARRY HARMAN):

Forgive my taking so long to write this, and for the brevity of even this message. We took our trip to Daytona on Sunday in the midst of readying a new home, and returned back to the job with a vengeance since my return. It won't all be done for at least another week yet, but I didn't want to wait any longer to contact you.

I just wanted to reiterate how much we enjoyed your production of ROMANCE/ROMANCE. I've seen many, many productions, and so often directors and or performers miss the point entirely, so each time I am watching a new production I begin watching with some trepidation. I was delighted to see how firmly both you, as a director, and your performers grasped the material and ran with it. The two leads in the first act took us on a delightful journey, and I was especially glad to see the 2nd Act being so well-limbed, by all four of the ensemble. When ROMANCE/ROMANCE first debuted in New York, Act One used to receive all the attention. Over the past years, that balance has shifted, and I believe most people (and reviewers) come away preferring the 2nd Act (due mostly, we believe, to the sexual frankness that now exists on TV. In 1988, a musical about infidelity made a lot of the audience squirm in their seats).

Regardless, both acts stood on their own quite well, and the style of each was both well-defined but also utilized to great advantage. When I told my collaborator, composer Keith Herrmann, about your placing Barb and Lenny in the audience for THINK OF THE ODDS, he yelled into the phone, "That's a great idea!! Why didn't we think to do that?" It immediately told

the audience that the characters were outside the play, observing it, just as we in the audience were, and I think that really helped the audience to feel comfortable with the piece. Add to that strong performances all round, and I ended up feeling very moved and touched by the characters and story. (And it's not like I don't know how it turns out). My partner Jay, who now has seen only three productions (we are together only a year or so) turned to me after and said, "Now I understand what this piece is supposed to be. They really "got" it." My sister also concurred; she loved the production (and has seen quite a few herself).

So kudos to you, your performers, your designers, and again - to your musical director and his players (and the sound engineer)! The score sounded incredibly lush, much more so than the recent one at Paper Mill in New Jersey, where they augmented the size of the orchestra.

Let me say again how pleased I was to have attended your production of ROMANCE/ROMANCE. We all had a splendid time. Please do send me the info on your performers.

Best,

Barry Harman

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