

WOMEN IN WHITE:
MY JOURNEY INTO COLOR

by

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ABSTRACT

In many religious circles white is a symbol for purity, cleanliness, and perfection. However, white is also synonymous with empty, blank, and colorless. *Women in White: My journey into color* is a project centralized around a personal study of the cultural pressures of “perfection” presented both in religious cultures and in the every-day life of a performer. Utilizing the catalyst of a cabaret-style performance, *Women in White* explores the struggles of nine different female characters in the musical theatre canon and aims to draw a personal connection from their journey. Inspired by the wise words of my own mother, this thesis celebrates the color present in our lives.

Dedication

To my mother: who inspires me to embrace every color, no matter how difficult.

To my father: for teaching me that good things in life take a long time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To give an acknowledgement of all my educational and theatrical endeavors that would accurately express the gratitude for all those who have helped me along the way cannot possibly be expressed here. With that being said, there are few select people that must be mentioned for their unwavering support throughout this process. To my thesis chair Kate Ingram who has encouraged me every day to embrace my true voice, you have become so much more than a mentor, but a dear friend. To my committee members Belinda Boyd and Jim Brown, I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for joining me on this crazy journey. To my cast members Connor, Maurie, Kody, and Joseph who sacrificed their own precious time contributing to this piece, *Women in White* would not have been half the show without your sweet spirits. To my dearest uncle Casey without whom the remount would not have been possible, I have looked up to you as long as I can remember and am so proud to be considered one of your “kids”. To my fellow graduate students, without whom I would not be the person I am today, you are truly my second family in every sense of the word and I love you with all my heart. And to my husband, whose patience and support is unwavering, you are truly my better half.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult tasks required of an actor is the engagement of profound vulnerability on stage: the shedding of all pretense to reveal a piece of one's inner working. Many describe it as "public solitude". To act is to experience our most private moments in public (Deer 9). This statement refers to both the character's private moments as well as the actor's private moments. Stanislavski's "magic if" asks us to consider what we might do if we were in our character's situation. An actor playing Hamlet is asked how he might respond to his *own* father's murder. An actress playing Medea is asked to imagine what it might be like to be pushed so far as to kill her *own* children. This consideration, however horrifying, brings about an imaginary life, bridging the gap between actor and character. The closer an actor can be to their character the more they can give a performance that is true to the story they are telling. In reality, it is unlikely that an audience would witness these private moments, but in the theatre they are on display for everyone to see. In fact, audiences beg for them. Why? They get to see and feel experiences they may never get to have. Or perhaps they recognize a piece of themselves in a character. Each time I witness an actor brave enough to share a piece of their soul on stage I am inspired, not only as an actress but also as a human being.

This vulnerability has been an integral part of my thesis work. In addition to simple imagination, however, I believe that the actors must work to discover *themselves* as much as they work to discover their characters. In doing so, they will have more at their

disposal upon which to draw in developing their craft. While there are varying opinions on acting techniques that call on an actor's personal experience in performance, my experience with emotional memory recall has been one of great success, allowing me to reach an understanding and empathy for my characters that had previously eluded me.

The performance aspect of my thesis began as an acting study of non-traditional women in theatre through a cabaret-style performance. But the further I went into the work, the more I was forced to look myself in the mirror and address aspects of my life that altered the focus of the story I was telling. I was encouraged to share my private moments in public. It was this step that changed my performance from something of a façade to an evening of theatre that evoked meaningful connection.

The thesis performance, titled *Women in White: my journey into color*, focused on our underlying cultural obsession with perfection, particularly within the religious community in which I was raised. The color white is symbolic for numerous concepts in the Mormon religion. It can often mean pure, clean, and perfect. Purity and cleanliness are highly valued in the Mormon religion. Its scriptures are filled with images of untarnished white and stainless ideals. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "Ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious... which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure" (Alma 32: 42). "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36: 25). While the teachings of the church acknowledge the unattainability of perfection, it is the striving for perfection that signifies a devout member. Additionally, there is a great deal of importance placed on the

color of attire worn in varying circumstances within the religion. White must always be worn when doing work in a Mormon temple. Men are encouraged to wear white shirts when performing church services. When members die, they are buried in their white temple clothing. There is even literature romanticizing the three significant white dresses a Mormon girl will wear throughout her life: the dress worn at her blessing as an infant, the dress worn at her baptism at the age of eight, and the dress worn on her wedding day. White is paramount.

For *Women in White*, I wanted to focus on an additional perspective of “white”. While white can mean clean and perfect, it is also synonymous with blank, empty and colorless. The origin of the thesis came to me through my mother: she has always said that even though her children took paths that she or my father may not have initially wanted, she feels so lucky, because they have filled her life with color. It was this idea that inspired me most: perfection versus color. I wanted an opportunity to celebrate the color that varying personal trials have brought into my own life and I specifically wanted to share that through song.

In the following pages, this thesis will document my experience in a practice as research based theatrical study, separated into three chapters. Chapter 2 will explore musical theatre performance conventions, the challenges they present, and possible solutions to those challenges. Chapter 3 will consist of my performance research for the following characters and musicals:

<u>Character</u>	<u>Play</u>
Genevieve	<i>The Baker's Wife</i>

Woman 1	<i>Songs For a New World</i>
Dianna	<i>Next to Normal</i>
Eliza Doolittle	<i>My Fair Lady</i>
Mrs. Lovett	<i>Sweeney Todd</i>
Lucille Frank	<i>Parade</i>
Eddie Beale	<i>Grey Gardens</i>
Clara	<i>The Light in the Piazza</i>
Mother	<i>Ragtime</i>

Chapter 4 will document my rehearsal process, emotional journey, and my current reflection on the preceding explorations. It is my hope that, through this study, I will have attained a greater knowledge and understanding of musical theatre performance, of my actor-process, and, most importantly, of myself.

CHAPTER 2

IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE – ACTING THE SONG

Introduction

I received my bachelor of arts in musical theatre from Weber State University in Utah. Having grown up in an area where musical theatre was the most produced style of theatre, it was all I knew. Prior to my attendance at the University of Central Florida, my resume consisted of experience in musical theatre alone. I never legitimately considered the non-realistic qualities of musical theatre, nor did I recognize that a musical performance might demand something more of an actor than a pretty voice. As I attended the University of Central Florida for graduate study, I received the opportunity to express myself as an actress, outside of my singing voice. Through my residency, I worked mostly on non-musical pieces enjoying tastes of such roles as Miss Julie (*Miss Julie*), Lady MacBeth (*MacBeth*), Eliza (*Pygmalion*), and Katherine (*Taming of the Shrew*). Over time I began to question the convention of breaking out into song and dance. I became painfully aware of the magnitude of theatricality in any given musical and I found this theatricality to be a kind of barrier or block for myself as an actor. Ultimately, I recognized how much more difficult it was for me to live truthfully in a song than a monologue. So, within this thesis I chose to explore the difficulties of acting in musical theatre, and how my process needed to alter when stepping into a musical role. This process began with addressing the struggles of the historically cumulative nature of musical theatre, followed by experimenting with the abnormality of expressing one's self in song while trying to maintain the state of mimesis demanded by the audience. The

“experimentation” process is not yet finished, nor do I feel it will ever be. My hope is to have addressed some challenging questions and shed light on the difficulty of this practice.

History/Influences

Through the centuries, historians have documented various influential predecessors to musical theatre. Many say it began with *Show Boat* in 1927, some cite the minstrel shows of the 1800’s, and others look to the operettas of French composer Offenbach in the 1850’s as the foundation of musical theatre; all of these being pivotal moments in the making. But if one were to look back at the earliest documented ancestor of musical theatre, they would find themselves in Ancient Greece. The dramas of ancient Greece used dialogue, song, and dance as integrated storytelling tools long before Rodgers and Hammerstein ever did. Traditionally, the ancient Greeks would come together to honor Dionysus with choral performances called dithyrambs, utilizing both song and spoken word. In his book *Musical Theatre: A History*, John Kenrick describes the incorporation of original song in ancient Greek Theatre.

Songs allowed the chorus to comment on the play and to sometimes take direct part in the dramatic action. Musical solos were rare but not unheard of. In most cases, stretches of monologue (one speaker) or dialogue (two or more) were interspersed with choral numbers. Since songs were often used to advance the plot and develop characters, it is fair to suggest that some early Greek dramas can be classified as integrated musicals. (Kenrick 22).

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes were not only playwrights; they were composers and lyricists (Kenrick 18).

One of musical theatre’s additional great founding predecessors was the Grand

Opera. The first stirrings of this traditional art form occurred in England, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and France in the Seventeenth Century (Kenrick 28). Grand Opera attained a great following, particularly within the upper class. Performances ranged in style from the Comic Opera (in which plots were primarily light and romantic to Pantomime (where acts were focused on physical comedy, acrobats, and special effects parallel to that of the *commedia dell'arte* stock characters) to the Ballad Opera (where well known arias and ballads were performed at large for public entertainment) (Kenrick 29). Over time, Grand Opera became the most popular performance art form in many European countries. A great majority of these performances consisted of large-budget productions in which great cost was spent on importing foreign composers and singers, not to mention the lavish costumes and sets designed for any given production. Music was of primary focus in the Grand Opera. Only later, as the style developed into operetta, would music *and words* play an equal part in telling lively stories.

In addition to these, Musical Theatre was significantly impacted by the American variety shows. “It may have begun as a cheap rip-off of minstrelsy’s olio, or perhaps its origins lie in school pageants, talent contests, medicine shows, or even circuses. Although variety’s beginnings are obscure, there is no question that it had a tremendous impact on American entertainment and, in particular, on the development of musical theatre.” (Kenrick 58). Variety show performances generally consisted of comedians, acrobats, clowns, jugglers, animal acts, specialties, scantily clad women, singers, and then some. With no standard bill, variety acts catered themselves to what ever their venue or audience called for. Most variety shows began in bars and taverns, resulting in their

primary audience members being men. This meant that early years were centered around underdressed women who, following their presentational performances, would go mingle amongst the crowd, encouraging them to purchase additional drinks. In later years, variety shows moved into tents and theatres, focusing on family friendly acts that would attract more women, children, and families, while maintaining the presentational style and specialties of it's performers.

While theatre of Ancient Greece, opera, and American variety span a great range of influential predecessors to the birth of musical theatre, they were clearly not the only ones. Historians cite *commedia dell'arte*, Ancient Rome, Shakespeare, operetta, melodrama, minstrelsy, and burlesque as additional components in the heritage of musical theatre. These various art forms all share one crucial performance style in common; they are all rooted in some form of non-realism. Most of them have no semblance of a fourth wall, often ask for audience participation in some capacity, and tell stories in which characters go through experiences that are highly romanticized or somewhat "larger than life". Prior to the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, this theatrical approach was commonplace. However, in the mid-late 1800's, the work of Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Constantine Stanislavski introduced the world to what is known as psychological realism and the acting methodology that swept most of western theatre from that time, forward. Actors were now being asked to analyze their characters in depth; their histories, their wants, their obstacles, their tactics. In turn, performances were no longer a mask or shallow façade, they had tangible emotional depth.

Herein lies the difficulty; the majority of musical theatre we know today incorporates some foundation of the Stanislavski system, in *addition* to the non-realism performance styles of the musical theatre forerunners. This creates conflict. I have often heard friends and acquaintances more estranged to musical theatre complain that they “just don’t understand why the characters break out into song and dance all of the sudden”. In response, we musical theatre lovers often roll our eyes thinking, they merely don’t get it, or that if they would see more musicals, they would get used to it over time. But in reality, they are presenting a crucial perception that we as performers do not address enough; it truly is astonishing that these many conflicting techniques are asked to stand side by side and work together to create what is one of the most popular forms of theatrical performance in the world. We should never underestimate the work that lies before us as we approach any musical piece.

Earning The Song: A Heightened Emotional State

There is a widely accepted view in the musical theatre community that a character only sings when simple words are no longer enough to convey the emotion. In the same way that Shakespeare utilized rhyme for emphasis, librettists utilize song. This generates stories and situations with stakes that are dramatically higher than simple dialogue. For example, it is argued that Elphaba only begins to sing “The Wizard and I” because the news that she might be special enough to meet and work with the most important man in the world has overcome her so fully that she simply *must* sing. The musical *Les Miserables* doesn’t have a spoken word in the show. This suggests that *whole* story must

live in heightened emotional state. However, I find that this tool is commonly taken for granted. I, myself, have known the concept to be true, but often did nothing to truly earn those moments of song. Instead, I assume I sang because the script said so.

So what do we do? How do we as theatre artists achieve this “heightened state”? I have experienced many situations in which a teacher would tell me to “raise the stakes”, but never give me the specific tools required to get there. So, I would wind up floundering about for a while, eventually finding something usable. Still, at the end of the day, I had no way of repeating this process in a dependable way on my own. The answer is blatant, but true; we must train. We must explore. We must push the boundaries. Finding a way to reach this heightened emotional state was a primary focus of my thesis performance. So, I went looking for tools.

In his book *Acting in Musical Theatre* Joe Deer gives a step-by-step example of how one can go from a “normal” emotional state to a heightened emotional state in just a few seconds.

“A fellow goes into a dry cleaner to pick up a suit. It isn’t ready. He unleashes a torrent of abuse on the clerk even though it clearly is not her fault. What could be happening? Here is what his inner monologue could be saying.

I need this suit for an important date tonight.
If I don’t wear this suit I wont look good enough.
If I don’t look good enough, I wont impress this girl.
If I don’t impress this girl, I’ll miss out on my one chance for happiness.
If I miss this one chance, I’ll die lonely and alone.
If that’s what I have to look forward to I might as well die right now.
So, by failing to give me that suit, you’re killing me right now. No suit = death.”

In this example, one can see how an actor might achieve an emotional state so high as to put a simple trip to the dry cleaners in the category of “life and death”; life being the greatest possible thing that could happen to a character, death being the worst.

I found this “life or death” tool to be extremely beneficial in preparing my thesis performance, specifically in the dialogue-style songs (two characters). Creating the inner-monologue that lead my character to believe this was a “life or death” situation assisted me in not only earning my moments of song, but also in propelling myself and the action through those songs to the end of the scene. Some pieces like “Do It Alone” from *Parade* were easier to access the heightened emotional state, because they truly were life and death situations. Others like “Show Me” from *My Fair Lady* were a little more challenging due to their light hearted nature. But it was this homework that those specific pieces needed for me to live more truthfully in their heightened state.

However, *Women in White* did not only consist of several dialogue-style songs, but also a number of soliloquy-style songs. As I tried to apply this technique to any of the soliloquys, I found myself getting frustrated. Something didn’t quite line up. Then I realized it was because the work was already done for me. Soliloquy is defined as “the act of speaking one’s thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play” (dictionary.com). A soliloquy *is* the inner monologue. So what then?

Breath. “Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.” (Hanh 8). While breathing has always been important in my vocal training, it has merely been for the purpose of getting through a musical phrase, not

for the necessity of authentic expression. As I came to grad school, I was introduced to a technique called Fitzmaurice Voicework© that changed my entire perception of breath. Fitzmaurice Voicework© is a training technique that encourages the actor to make breathing the central aspect of vocal production, aiming for expressive use of the human voice (Lynn, 77). Through this technique an actor explores the process of “destructuring”, in which physiological tremors are induced to assist in the release of breath and sound, followed by a period of “restructuring” in which the actor integrates the deconstructed, “unconscious” breathing with their central nervous system in a conscious breathing pattern (Lynn, 77). My experience with Fitzmaurice Voicework© has been one of substantial growth. I consider myself to be a centered, well-balanced person. However, the characters we are asked to portray usually are not so centered or balanced. They are commonly in some mode of great crisis or conflict. Finding a technique that gently encouraged me to find a state of risk and imbalance was a vital step in discovering my process. Awakening the breath and utilizing it for action set me up for great success in achieving the “heightened state” required in the acting of musical theatre.

There are a number of additional acting techniques aimed at accessing an actor’s emotional availability. Emotional memory recall is widely debated within the theatre community. The technique was initially founded by Constantine Stanislavski but was later developed into what is known as “method acting” by a number of theatre practitioners, the most famous being Lee Strasberg. In this approach, actors make use of experiences from their own lives to bring them to closer to the experience of their characters. Some see it as a more truthful connection, others see it as emotionally

dangerous. I found this approach to be one of the single most important tools for me in working on my thesis. Yes, it can be scary to share personal, vulnerable pieces of oneself with an audience of strangers, but in that sharing I have found connections more powerful than any I have ever experienced. Encouraging myself to truly join the characters I was portraying at their heightened state by re-experiencing *my* most heightened states built yet another springboard from which I could leap into musical exploration.

Stanislavski in Soliloquy

As mentioned earlier, most actors of modern musical theatre utilize some form of the Stanislavski system in their work. One of the most prominent techniques presented by Stanislavski is the concept of action and intention. In this technique, actors are instructed to ask themselves three questions; “What does my character want?” “What is in the way of my character getting what they want?” and “What does my character *do* to get what they want.” The final question is the most important, and should be applied to *every line* in order to begin playing the action of a scene (versus the emotion). “Playing an action” in Stanislavski training is usually stated in the following formula; character A does (active verb) to character B in order to achieve their objective. For example, let’s look at a line of “Show Me” from *My Fair Lady*.²

ELIZA

Don’t talk of stars burning above

If you’re in love show me.

In this scene, Eliza is sick of people talking in pretty language filled with beautiful ideas. What does she want? Action. What is in the way of getting what she wants? Freddy's lack of understanding. What does she do to get what she wants? This is where the formula comes into play. In this line Eliza might *pounce* Freddy. She might *twist* Freddy. She might *beg* Freddy. There are many possible tactics. After the character has tried one tactic, they either achieve their objective or they don't. If they don't, they must simply try a different tactic. And the cycle continues. This approach keeps scene work alive, active, and far more compelling than simply playing mood and emotion.

But what do we do when a character is alone on stage? The soliloquy is unlike any modern line delivery, whether spoken or sung. It is one of those aforementioned devices rooted in non-realism theatre styles. In the Shakespearean soliloquy, actors delivered their lines directly to the audience. But since the birth of realism, most musicals have at least some semblance of a fourth wall. So where do we deliver the action?

This was one of the biggest roadblocks for me in preparation for *Women in White*. I recalled an activity a professor had suggested during my undergraduate studies. He proposed that there were four places actors could deliver their energy in a soliloquy; to the self, to the audience, to another character (whether they are in the room or not), and to a higher power. I wanted to take it one step further than delivering "energy". I wanted to experiment with delivering *action* to one of those four places. I asked what more it could give my characters if they could *tease* the audience or *hammer* themselves. As I worked I began to gain a greater understanding and hope for musical theatre performance. I was

finally developing a clear road map for myself. The results were exciting, tangible and full of life.

Musical Exploration

Musical Theatre can be a difficult art form for the serious actor because it comes with some built in challenges. Most of these stem from an overt theatricality. If asked, most people would say that good acting should look just like life itself; it should be natural, truthful, believable, artless and unaffected. But when was the last time your real life required you to all at once perform a complicated dance step, sing in witty rhyming couplets, and fill a five thousand seat theatre with the intimate discovery that you're in love for the first time? This is part of the joy of doing musicals, and is also a job requirement. (Deer 11).

In this quote, Deer describes some of the most difficult roadblocks I have faced in musical theatre performance throughout my life. Not only is the “overt theatricality” often glaring us in the face, but many of the choices an actor would be free to make in a simple line reading are already made for them in a musical song. Actors are required to sing their lines in a certain rhythm, on specific pitches, only taking the pauses granted to them by the composers/lyricists. This can easily be seen as confining. However, if one allows themselves to take a step back and analyze the work, these “confines” can become a valuable roadmap to success.

As actors, we often look to the words of a playwright for our foundation. This is still relevant in musical theatre and a crucial observation not to be overlooked. However, the musical composer is equally as essential to the writing of any given musical as the playwright or lyricist. They provide meaningful information about our characters, their moods, and the emotional changes they experience (Deer 52). Actors often disregard musical analysis in the exploration of their work. I find this is mostly due to the

intimidation an actor feels when being asked to address the music in a critical manner. Music is another language, one in which only a small percentage of actors are fluent. I often feel intimidated by music theory and I have a more extensive background in music than most of my fellow actors. Still, this issue is widely misunderstood; one does not need to be a concert pianist to glean valuable information from the compositional aspect of musical theatre. One merely needs to develop the skill to listen to scores and melodies critically versus subconsciously.

There are numerous activities suggested to begin one's exploration of musical composition. I began with an experiment on my six fellow graduate students in which I played only the musical accompaniment of songs used for my thesis performance (songs with which they were entirely unfamiliar). This was of great benefit to me due to the fact that I had many pre-conceived notions based on my knowledge of the plays and songs. My fellow students were able to shed new light on the basic mood and emotional quality experienced in listening to the pieces for the very first time.

Additional analysis should be made in the observation of aspects like melodic shape, tempo changes, rhythmic styles, key changes, musical accents, dynamics, and the relationships between melody and accompaniment (Deer, 57). If composed well, these musical qualities are written specifically for the support of character development, and are imperative in the building of a multi-faceted performance.

Language and Lyrics

While the musical composition of a song gives us clear information on a character's emotional state or subtext, the words and lyrics are where actors will find clarity of action. Words provide a catalyst for communication, connection, and (if used well) a deeper level of understanding. Most young actors will learn a song, never taking it out of the context of the music, possibly because they do not have a grasp for literary analysis. This is when training in speech or classical verse should be sought. The parallels between musical theatre and poetic text (like Shakespeare) are indisputable. After all, songs are written in verse. Thus, approaching the text of a song should be done with careful analysis of not only the words, but the structure of the words, the sounds, the scansion, the rhymes, and the rhetoric.

My first step was to separate the words from the music and address my songs as spoken monologues. While this experiment was extremely beneficial, I found great conflict in trying to act the text as I would a prose monologue. Ignoring the presence of rhyme left me feeling as though I had skipped over pieces of phrasing altogether. At that point I was reminded of a suggestion presented in various forms by my teachers of speech and classical text; the rhymes are there on purpose. This means that they should not only be played with intention, but *enjoyed*. Once I had gained this understanding, treating the songs as I would any poetic Shakespeare text became the obvious path.

Poetry is based in repetition. Like music, it has a meter, a rhythm (Helsing 14). Shakespearean verse predominantly utilizes iambic pentameter; five pairings of a non-stressed syllable immediately followed by a stressed syllable. One of the key reasons an

actor studies the meter of Shakespearean verse is to identify when that common pattern is broken. The number of syllables can do one of three things; fill the basic meter perfectly, leave the meter wanting more, or be too much for the meter to contain. These variations are cues for the actor to begin asking questions. Why are there so many syllables in one verse line as compared to a previously shorter line? Is the character overcome with so many thoughts and images that they can no longer contain themselves? What does this short line say about the character's emotional state in this moment? The same process can be easily applied to song.

Punctuation and breath can be equally beneficial in analyzing one's musical text. Punctuation is predominantly used to delineate our thoughts, bring clarity to our writing, and tell us where to breathe. Poetic thought is separated into verse lines in which the lines can either be end-stopped (punctuation at the end of the verse line) or enjambed (no punctuation at the end of the verse line). This generates two different breathing techniques utilized by actors working with verse text; grammatical breath and verse line breath. In grammatical breath, the actor breathes only where there is delineative punctuation. In verse line breath, the actor breathes at the *end* of every verse line (only the end) whether there is punctuation or not. The writer's choice of where the punctuation lies can indicate many things about the character's emotional state. For example, if the punctuation is at the end every verse line, it might suggest that the character is clear headed, well balanced, and in control. If the lines are enjambed it might mean a character is grasping for their thoughts, out of breath, or flying by the seat of their pants. Although we may not always have a choice on where we breathe when singing, analyzing

punctuation and breath in this manner can reveal vital aspects of a character's thought process and emotional state.

In the discussion of words and text, we cannot ignore the importance of sound. Without sound there is no vocal expression, with no vocal expression there is no song to begin with. Yes, various sounds in continuity create words and clarity, but sound does not stop at the intellectual level. "The sound of a word reflects the essential nature of the idea or feeling, not just its meaning" (Deer 87). The word "light", repeated many times in the early sections of "The Light in the Piazza", has a very different feeling than the final word of the song, "love". One is airy, while the other is grounded. This tells me something crucial about Clara's journey in this number. Identifying any repetition of like sounds draws our attention to when the pattern is broken and begs us to ask, "why?". In turn, this will shed more light and give more depth in the characters we portray.

CHAPTER 3 ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Introduction

In an interview with Kenneth Plume, Ian McKellen suggested, “acting is a very personal process. It has to do with expressing your own personality, and discovering the character you're playing through your own experience” (McKellen 3). My actor-process differs from many of my friends and colleagues. I find the most benefit when I am on my feet, working with other actors in the space; *actively doing*. I am not one for *lengthy* character analyses. I do not find great benefit in knowing what my character ate for breakfast if it doesn't pertain to the given circumstances. That being said, a certain level of analysis does help me develop a further connection to my characters. I find that I profit most from addressing the following questions/ideas; *who, what, when, where, obstacle, and tactics*. Who am I? What do I want? What time is it? Where am I? What is in the way of getting what I want? What will I do to get what I want? Answering these questions assists in directing and motivating actions appropriate to the given circumstances of a play.

Many actors and directors argue that if specific answers are not in the script, actors must make them up to give their characters a full background. They will argue that I must know whether any given action occurs at 3:30 in the afternoon or 3:35, even if the script gives no indication. As for my process, I find very little benefit in knowing these “facts”. For me, the practice functions more like busy work - something simply keeping me out of the rehearsal space longer. So when it comes to the specific minute of the day

an action occurs, if it is not given to me by the playwright, making it up will most often not benefit me any further.

Presented in the following chapter will be introduction to each character portrayed in *Women in White*. This will first discuss my experience in choosing those characters, and then a basic analysis will be outlined for each. The analyses will consist of answers to the aforementioned six questions in the fashion that best assisted me in my process. Additionally included in this chapter will be the full script of *Women in White*, which consists of any used dialogue, song lyrics, and transitions.

Character Analysis

Genevieve

“Meadowlark” – The Baker’s Wife

“Meadowlark” was one of the first pieces I knew I needed to include in *Women in White*. I have always felt a strong connection to the song, but only recently had I been able to develop my personal interpretation of the metaphor presented in this little bird. To me, the story of the meadowlark is one of obligation versus choice. In my journey of self-discovery, I often felt conflicted in my obligation to the traditions presented by my family and religion (whom I dearly love), and my need to live authentically in my own skin. I have always struggled at the prospect of disappointing those I love so dearly. This parallels the meadowlark’s love and obligation to her King that ultimately hindered her potential of experiencing true sight.

1. *Who am I?*

Genevieve Castagnet is the young (“almost thirty”), beautiful wife of an older baker. She is positive, friendly, helpful, but easily embarrassed. She fears being perceived as old and cares deeply what other people think of her. She has chosen to be with the baker. She recognizes his love, kindness and devotion to her, but does not love him, and fears that she may never have another chance at true love.

2. *What time is it?*

Year: 1935. In 1935, adultery viewed as a more serious sin than it is today. Women were to serve their husbands needs and should consider themselves lucky to be taken care of.

Month: September. The weather in September in France is just beginning to cool down. The Summer is ending, and the Fall solstice is about to arrive. If looked at metaphorically, this could represent Genevieve’s fear of the loss of young love and the possibility of entering the “autumn” of her life too early.

Hour: At the point of the show in which “Meadowlark” is performed, it is late at night. Night is notorious for being the time in which people often make impulsive decisions they would perhaps not likely not make during the day. It also makes it much easier for Genevieve to slip away without being noticed.

3. *Where am I?*

Country: France. France is known for its excellent breads and pastries. The story of *The Baker’s Wife* places a good deal of emphasis on these baked goods. Additionally, France is seen as highly romantic. This metaphor is utilized throughout the show.

Town: Provence. Provence is a geographical region and historical province of

southeastern France. It is famous for its picturesque towns, beautiful fields of wildflowers, cobble stone streets and ocean views; a perfect storybook town. Much of *The Baker's Wife* feels like it belongs in a storybook.

Area: Home. First floor. Her husband is in bed on the second floor. This means one less obstacle between her and her choice of running away with her lover, Dominique. She can simply step out the door.

4. *What do I want?*

Genevieve wants to love. She wants to love with full passion without tentativeness or fear. She does not feel that kind of love for her husband. However, the opportunity for love has presented itself in a young man of the town named Dominique. She must ask herself if she should stay with the kind, loving, patient old baker, or run off with the passionate, young lover.

5. *What is in the way of getting what I want?*

The only thing getting in Genevieve's way in this moment is her own fear, impending guilt, and obligations. It is a *personal* choice she is about to make. An understanding from friends or the audience or God would be helpful in validating her choice, but at the end of the day she must make peace with only *herself*.

6. *What do I do to get what I want?*

Genevieve sees herself as the Meadowlark. She tells the audience the story of the little bird and draws parallels to her own life, as I do when performing the piece. She convinces herself that if she does not go with this young man she, like the Meadowlark, will die. Her actions consist of such verbs as: to charm, to envelope, to

coddle, to break, to challenge, to build up, to pity, to confront.

Woman Two

“Just One Step” – Songs for a New World

“Just One Step” was a piece I had previously worked on in undergraduate school for the purpose of learning to develop a comedic character. However, as I later came to discover, artists know that comedy is rooted only in truth. With Jason Robert Brown being one of the most exemplary composer-lyricists of modern musical theatre, in my opinion, I knew there was more substance in his words and in this character than I had previously uncovered. At the core of this piece, Woman 2 represents a section of the female population who feels as though she has nothing of her own in her life, and has become desperate in her tactics to get any kind of attention.

I find my deepest connection to Woman Two in the following lyrics:

*“You think I don't know about that
Or the things that you say
To your friends every day
I'm embarrassing
I'm fat
And demanding
And controlling
Or whatever
Perhaps it's true” (Brown 22).*

I often fear, with my bold, bright personality that I, too, can be viewed as embarrassing, demanding or controlling. Additionally, I have struggled most of my life with body image issues. But, amidst all the personal struggles, it has always been the prospect of *gossip* that leaves me feeling particularly small and insignificant. Behind closed doors, I

care far too much what people think of me. Woman Two pretends not to care, as I have often done, but by the time we reach the words “perhaps it’s true”, we are faced with a great shift of intention. She is finally looking herself in the mirror and understanding what she has turned into for the sake of getting attention. It is this moment of self-awareness that provokes in me a great empathy for this poor woman.

1. *Who am I?*

In this moment, Woman Two is a middle-aged, Jewish New York woman who remains nameless. She is a wife. She is a mother. Her husband, Murray, is extremely wealthy and seems to have full control over “their” money. She makes no money on her own. No career. No college education. She is materialistic, loud, dramatic and deeply insecure in herself and her marriage. She is at the end of her rope.

2. *What time is it?*

Year: 1995. The human race is at the end of a century. Women have a louder “voice” than in previous decades. Woman 2 is the product of a generation that did not necessarily encourage women to go out and join the work force, therefore she feels trapped. She is not in the position to make demands; she doesn’t have the skillset to go out into the world and take care of herself. She needs her husband’s money.

Time of Year: Summer. July. Her demand for the fur coat has nothing to do with need a need to stay warm in the New York winter. It is simply excess. Additionally, the heat of the summer can add to her frustration and poor decision-making skills in this moment.

3. *Where am I?*

Country/State/City: United States of America. NYC. New York has a prominent Jewish population, it is one of the largest urban cities, and its cost of living is extremely high (especially if you're living in a fancy penthouse 57 stories up).

Area: On the ledge of a New York City building, 57 stories high. This increases the stakes to a "life or death" situation and it certainly adds to Woman Two's emotional state. The amount of adrenalin pulsing through her veins is incomparable. If she were to take "Just One Step", she would fall to her death.

4. *What do I want?*

Woman Two says she wants her husband to buy her an expensive fur coat. However, I believe that coat is simply a representation of her want for attention. She truly wants to be noticed, remembered, and important. She fears that she is no longer the young, beautiful woman she once was and her husband is not only bored with her but embarrassed by her. She sees no way out.

5. *What is in the way of getting what I want?*

While her husband is the initial apparent obstacle of this scene, and she spends most of the song working to get his attention, he is not there, nor is he really listening. As the song continues we see, more and more, that it is her insecurity and lack of self-worth that is really in her way of getting what she wants in life. The song may begin as an empty threat, but it turns into significant self-discovery.

6. *What do I do to get what I want?*

Woman Two has resorted to childlike tactics. She ultimately threatens suicide if she does not get what she wants. When she realizes that her husband is calling her bluff,

she has to take it a few steps further. Some of her tactics consist of verbs like: To guilt, to blame, to punish, to patronize, to accuse, to taunt, to entice.

Dianna

“I Miss the Mountains” – *Next to Normal*

“I Miss the Mountains” was not one of my first choices for *Women in White*. In the course of the show I knew I needed songs that varied in theme, energy, and style but as the show began to come together I recognized I was missing a segment of simplicity. I had previously considered incorporating a scene from Stephen Sondheim’s “Passion”, but the complexity of such a piece was likely to overwhelm the arc of the evening. “I Miss the Mountains” instead began with a sense of sobriety and grew into the clean, clear need to alter the path Dianna was traveling.

My connection to this piece is one of great complication. As stated in the script of *Women in White*, I have only suffered from minor anxiety and depression – nothing to the extent of Dianna’s experience. However, I have so many loved ones who deal with something much more serious on a daily basis. My brother is a heroin addict. He turned to heroin to try and self-medicate his own undiagnosed mental illness, and is now a slave to that drug for the rest of his life. That is our failing as a society. We are so focused on “brushing off” the imperfections that he likely felt he had nowhere else to turn. I believe *there must be a better way*. I performed this with my brother in my heart, and was so grateful for the opportunity to take a glimpse inside his world. The empathy discovered in those moments has granted me more patience and understanding for all those who face this struggle every day.

1. *Who am I?*

Diana is a 38-year-old wife and mother suffering from extreme mental illness. She is bi-polar, manic-depressive, and still sees and has conversations with her son who died in infancy. In the character list in the script she is described as “sexy” and “sharp”. She is very emotional, but struggles to care for anyone other than her dead son.

1. *What time is it?*

Year/Century: 2000’s. In this day and age, the medical field is more advanced than it has ever been, but it still lacks answers for people who suffer from mental illness. This century also lacks a social understanding and patience with mental illness. People are still often categorized as “crazy” if they need pills to help them cope with their emotional or mental state on a daily basis.

2. *Where am I?*

Country/State/City: Diana and her family live in a suburban community in the US. The specific state and city remain unnamed. Suburbia is stereotypically notorious for having families with the “perfect” façade; Sweet, neighborly families with a dad who goes to work every day and a stay at home mom who takes care of home and the children. Mental illness must stay behind closed doors, or otherwise be gossiped about all over town. Dianna is a victim of this lack of social acknowledgement.

Area: At this moment, Diana is on the main floor of her home. Natalie (her daughter) has just come in the front door and noticed her mother spying on her. Throughout the song she moves to her bathroom where her medicine cabinet is. Here she can hide the fact that she is flushing all her pills down the toilet.

3. *What do I want?*

In this moment, Diana wants to feel alive again. She has been living in a foggy haze induced by her medication. Yes, it keeps her “sane” and “safe” and “balanced”, but under the influence of the medication, she feels and experiences nothing “real”.

4. *What is in the way of getting what I want?*

Diana’s obstacle in this moment is her dependency on the pills. She has just seen her daughter outside the window, kissing a boy she has never met. In that moment she is awoken to how little she knows her daughter while at the same time she sees a younger, livelier version of *herself* in her daughter. She is plagued with both guilt and jealousy in the same moment. She blames the pills for her lack of life. She knows that the pills help her cope with her mental illness, but she also feels that if she stays on the pills that she’s not really living, anyway.

5. *What do I do to get what I want?*

Diana must confront herself, her fears, and her past. She must decide whether to take the risk or not. She convinces herself that life with no feeling is a life not worth living. She looks to the audience and possibly God for support. Some of her actions include verbs such as: to assure, to prove, to convince, to analyze, to illustrate, to justify, to curse, to beg.

Eliza Doolittle

“Show Me” – My Fair Lady

In considering which woman of the golden age of musical theatre I wished to incorporate in *Women in White*, I arrived at two choices; Maria von Trapp (*The Sound of*

Music) or Eliza Doolittle (*My Fair Lady*). I had just spent a semester working on *Man and Superman* by George Bernard Shaw and felt as though his work supported more fully the ideas I was trying to express. While Maria is definitely a “rule breaker” in some capacity, she eventually returns to the traditional role of wife and mother at the conclusion of the play. Yes, the final moments of *My Fair Lady* envision Eliza returning to Higgins, but in the initial play of *Pygmalion* written by George Bernard Shaw in 1913, Eliza leaves Higgins to follow her own path: a perfect example of support to the central focus of *Women in White*. It was this Eliza I chose to portray.

1. *Who Am I?*

Eliza Doolittle starts the play as a young (20), uneducated, crass flower girl. She is described as a “guttersnipe”. She has no manners, and no understanding of how to express herself in a “mature” fashion. Through the course of the play, she evolves into an exquisite, well-spoken young lady. She remains fiery, passionate and outspoken.

2. *What time is it?*

Year: 1912. Barely post Edwardian England. Social class was very important, and how one spoke was representative of one’s social class. Women were to be seen and not heard. They were objects. If an unmarried woman of the lower class was seen on the street at night, chances were that she was a prostitute. However this time was also a time of great change. The suffrage movement of England was just around the corner. Eliza is trying to find her place amongst all of this.

Month: September. If Eliza leaves Higgins she will have nowhere to go and it’s

starting to get cold.

Time of Day: It is 4:00 in the morning. Eliza has had a very long night dancing followed by frustration and a fight with Higgins, and no sleep. Still, she is stubborn. She knows the sun will rise in a few hours and she will have a whole day to figure out what she needs to do.

3. *Where am I?*

Marylebone, England: Marylebone is a wealthy inner-city area of central London. During this time period and time of day, it would have been quiet and sparse; almost picturesque. The homes in the area are all examples of Edwardian, baroque architecture. They are definitely in the wealthy area of town (somewhere Eliza feels out of place).

Area: Wimpole Street. Just outside Higgins' house, on the doorstep. This means that Eliza is in earshot of anyone in the area. Higgins could probably hear her from inside. She's yelling loud enough to wake the whole street. Still, she rants.

4. *What do I want?*

In this moment, Eliza wants action. She is "sick of words". She wants tangible proof that she is loved, not fluffy ideas of spring and flowers.

5. *What is in the way of getting what I want?*

Freddy's lack of understanding is the main obstacle of this scene. Lets face it; he's not the sharpest tool in the shed. He's a dreamer. She must get through to him.

6. *What do I do to get what I want?*

Eliza rants. She doesn't give Freddy a second to explain or ask questions. She rants.

She needs to let out some pent up anger, and Freddy is the one who becomes the target. Some of her actions include verbs such as: to smack, to punch, to hit, jolt, to wring, to plea, to demand, to punish, to hurt, to beg.

Mrs. Lovett

“A Little Priest” – *Sweeney Todd*

In many ways “A Little Priest” was my greatest challenge piece. In other ways, it fell easily into place. I think this speaks to the brilliance of Stephen Sondheim. One must put in the pre-emptive work, thoroughly understanding the depth of his words and music. But once this step is complete, the rest is found by simply living truthfully in the moment. There was no other piece more difficult for which I had to *prepare*, but no other piece quite as easy to *perform*. This made “A Little Priest” my favorite component of my thesis presentation.

What is more peculiar; despite being the piece I most enjoyed, Mrs. Lovett is the one character of the show with which, at first glance, I had the least in common. I don't consider myself a malicious person, nor do I take *any* pleasure in the prospect of cutting people up and putting them into pies. So I took a step back from the specific given circumstances for a time and analyzed her over-all character traits. She is in love. That may not be a selfless love, as I would define it, but in her mind she loves Todd. And even though he can never love her back, she continues to alter herself to become anything he needs. She is even willing to live in a platonic relationship with the man, as long as it means she can be near him. *This* I have experienced. I recall it feeling like more of an

addiction than anything else. I completely comprehended the detrimental quality of the relationship, but I didn't care. I had a one-track mind. Mrs. Lovett suffers from this same addiction, she is merely willing to go farther than I ever would in order to be with a man who cannot love her.

1. Who am I?

Mrs. Nellie Lovett is a “vigorous, slatternly woman in her forties” (Wheeler 12). She is the accomplice and business partner to Sweeney Todd, and the single most evil person in this story. She is a liar. She is a murderer. She is selfish. She is the reason everyone's lives are destroyed, including her own. It is important, however, for me to find justification for her actions. She is in love with Todd. Unconditionally. She is afraid of being alone. She wants companionship. These are the things that make her human.

2. What time is it?

Year: 1846, the early years of the Victorian era. The class system is still very much in play, though there was not much of a middle class. This decade was known throughout Europe as “The Hungry Forties” (Hewet 1). People were poor and starving.

3. Where am I?

Country/City: London, England. Due to the growth in population caused by the industrial revolution, central London had become over crowded and filthier than ever. The rich got richer and the poor got poorer. Child labor was rampant, and wages were extraordinarily low. While Mrs. Lovett owns a business, and her own flat, she is still

barely making ends meet.

Area: The parlor above Mrs. Lovett's pie shop on Fleet Street. Fleet Street is one of the oldest, most prominent streets of London dating all the way back to the Roman Empire. More recently, it has become known for printing, publishing, and trading. Historically, the characters of Sweeney Todd would have probably been surrounded by writers and journalists coming to Mrs. Lovett's pie shop for a bite to eat. With Fleet Street being one of the most prominent streets of London, Lovett and Todd are not exactly in a discreet location.

4. What do I want?

Mrs. Lovett wants Sweeney. She wants him to love her, marry her, and grow old with her by the sea. She doesn't seem to care what he wants.

5. What is in the way of getting what I want?

Sweeney's need for revenge, and love for his wife and child are Mrs. Lovett's greatest obstacles.

6. What do I do to get what I want?

Mrs. Lovett does everything she can to make him love her, minus one thing. She becomes everything she thinks he needs. She has saved his razors for fifteen years. She has given him a place to stay. She has helped him set up shop. She has hidden the bodies. However, she cannot bring herself to give him the one thing he *really* needs. So she lies. She lies about the death of his wife. All of these actions are the set-up to this moment; the moment of truth. Her tactics consist of verbs like "to probe", "to coax", "to bait", "to hook", "to exalt", "to encourage", "to inflate", "to compliment",

“to connect” “to worship”.

Lucille Frank

“Do it Alone” – *Parade*

The character of Lucille Frank has inspired me from the moment I learned her story. I knew from the earliest stages that she would be included in *Women in White*. She is a woman whose view of the world is challenged due to extreme circumstances. In the script I discuss how much more potent this story has become for me as my husband and I have chosen to live apart for two years in order to complete our graduate studies.

Although this was one of the most difficult experiences of my life, it has proven to be a great gift. A challenge such as this could have either driven a marriage apart or made it stronger. For Lucille and Leo, as well for my own marriage, the latter was our journey.

1. Who am I?

Lucille Frank is the beautiful, southern wife of Leo Frank. She is in her mid-late twenties. The couple are both Jewish and were married on some sort of familial arrangement. Lucille does not know her husband as well as she would like. She was pushed into the marriage by her mother, but truly does want it to be successful.

Though they have been married for some time, they are still not comfortable with each other emotionally and sexually. At the beginning of the play she is soft-spoken and somewhat timid. Through her trials she grows to become a brave, strong, confident woman.

2. What time is it?

Year: 1914. Though the world was slowly working its way the suffrage movement in

England, women were traditionally still mothers and housewives. They were not to get involved in political affairs. There were social expectations that would have been placed on Lucille keeping her a “quiet little girl” forcing her to “swallow all [she] feels”.

Day: April 26th. Spring. Confederate Memorial Day. Leo has been in jail for one year, to the date. It has been a long journey. They are reminded of exactly how long by people celebrating in the streets with the annual parade. But they have hope. They continue to work toward Leo’s release from jail.

Where am I?

Country/State: Marietta, Georgia. The south is home to Lucille. She grew up there. However, there are great tensions in varying ethnic and religious communities.

Lucille is married to a “Yankee” Jew. At this time, there were men still living who fought in the civil war, and they have not forgotten the “northern oppression”.

Area: Leo’s jail cell. It is not a pleasant place for Lucille to be, but they have made the best of it. Seeing each other in a jail cell is better than not seeing each other at all. It also functions as a way of making Leo listen to her; he can’t go anywhere else so he must stay and hear what she has to say.

3. What do I want?

In this specific scene, Lucille wants her husband to let her help him. He is used to controlling every aspect of their lives. But he can only do so much from jail. Lucille knows how strong of an advocate she can be if he will let her.

4. What is in the way of getting what I want?

Leo stubbornness in “doing everything on his own” is hindering their success. Lucille fears that if Leo does this alone, they will lose the trial, and in turn lose him.

4. What do I do to get what I want?

Lucille fights. She has finally had enough of being seen as the little housewife and fights for Leo’s trust that she can be more. Her tactics consist of verbs like “to guilt”, “to patronize”, “to shake”, “to push”, “to close off”, “to scare”, “to punish”, “to touch”, “to plead”, “to encourage”.

Edie Beale

“Revolutionary Costume” – *Grey Gardens*

There was always a piece of Edie Beale that reminded me of my grandmother; no matter how broken she was, she would never let people see anything but grace, poise, and refinement (at least her version of that). “Revolutionary Costume” has been a piece I have wanted to work on for many years. I have always been drawn to its humor and eccentricity, but more importantly the depth and despair behind the façade. I feel as though the despair is often skipped over or ignored in this specific piece, and I wanted an opportunity to show the multifaceted quality of the woman that was Edie Beale.

Edie is much like Woman Two from *Songs for a New World* in her fear of gossip, but her need to please the public is exponentially greater. My connection to Edie lies in our aspirations and fears. While I do not have much interest in widespread fame as Edie does, I do strive for a successful career. And I cannot deny that, as an actress, this success is partially dependent on audience response. I always aim to, first and foremost, develop strong connections with audience members, tell an impactful story, and then hopefully in

turn be perceived in a complimentary light. If no one liked my performances, I should probably not be pursuing a career in acting. This may not be a popular opinion but it is the nature of the business. I also, like Edie, fear rejection and judgment. I work very hard to expel the opinions of others but there are days in which I cannot help but let those opinions eat at my confidence. It is in this juxtaposition of hope and fear that I find the most empathy with Edie Beale.

1. Who am I?

Born in 1917. Edie Beale is the 57 year old daughter of Edith Bouvier Beale, and cousin to Jackie Kennedy. She was once a young, beautiful debutant with dreams of becoming a star. In her youth she modeled, pursued a singing career, and claimed to have dated several wealthy young men, including Joe Kennedy, Jr. She is now middle-aged; reclusive, eccentric, balding and depressed, always searching for validation and praise. She and her mother are hopelessly co-dependent, unable to function without the other despite their constant banter. She fears the judgment of the public and yet longs for its attention.

2. What time is it?

Year: 1973. In this decade, the nation began to develop a great mistrust for the government and recognize it's failing infrastructure. People were breaking social "rules" right and left. Women now had more freedom to express themselves both intellectually and sexually. However, Edie and her mother have remained reclusive for over 30 years and therefore hold on to the ideals of the 1940's and 50's. Time has changed, but they have not. They are still living in the era of debutant balls, cotillions,

tea parties, and other similar social constructs.

Day: Mid July. It's hot. The Maysles brothers have arrived to film a documentary focused on these women and their house. Edie wants to look her best. So she presents her overdone "revolutionary costume" despite the July heat.

3. Where Am I?

Country/State: East Hampton, Long Island, New York. East Hampton is the Eastern most town of New York State, tucked away from the noise of New York City. Since the late 19th century, it has been known as a sort of "play ground for the rich", and Edie's family was no exception. She was born into a family of the elite New England "royalty" and spent her younger days socializing within that wealthy circle.

Area: Grey Gardens Estate. The home, once a beautiful lively place for hosting extravagant parties, is now run down to the point of legal action. In 1972, Suffolk County, New York Health Commission issued an eviction order for the Beale's unless the home was cleaned up. Jackie Kennedy, who spent much of her youth visiting the estate, donated enough money to get the home back up to code and in livable condition (Petrow 86). Still, even after the assistance of the former First Lady, the home remained in a terrible state, overrun with "52 cats, fleas, and virtually no plumbing" (Wright 69).

4. What do I want?

Edie wants to be a star. She wants to be important. She wants to be remembered.

When her father abandoned the family, Edie lost all her hopes and dreams of being famous; that either took extreme talent or money, neither of which she now possesses.

She believes this documentary is her one final chance at “making it big”.

5. What is in the way of getting what I want?

Time. Money. Her mother. The reporters. Self-doubt. These are Edie’s greatest obstacles. She is too old to be a young starlet. She doesn’t have the money to buy her fame. She feels as though she can’t leave her mother. The reporters might film her at a wrong angle, or edit the cuts poorly. But mostly, it is her fear that holds her back. She is so afraid of doing the wrong thing, making the wrong move, or simply not being good enough.

6. What do I do to get what I want?

Edie does what ever it takes to raise her status and be as interesting as she can possibly be. As a child she modeled clothes. That is what she knows how to do, so she does it. She designs what she thinks will make the biggest splash; her “revolutionary costume for the day”, and parades it in front of the cameras. It is a sophisticated kind of crazy. Some of her tactics include: to instruct, to educate, to entice, to insult, to confide, to inspire, to build up, to hook, to arouse.

Clara

“The Light in the Piazza” – *The Light in the Piazza*

The theme of this piece was the most difficult concept for me to express publicly. It was deeply personal, not just for me but for my mother. It is one thing to look yourself in the mirror and address *your* struggles in front of friends and family, but it is another to make public statements about those you love. Clara and Margret are truly special. It takes a great amount of bravery step out of the path one’s parents have paved, but I believe it

takes just as much bravery, if not more, to set aside years of knowing what is “right” for one’s child, and learn from *them*. I was fortunate enough to have my own mother willing to explore these characters with me. And despite all the reasons Clara can be viewed as a child, incapable of stepping into adulthood, we came to discover that Clara’s capacity to love is all that truly matters in the end. Love makes us accountable to another human being in a way we may have never felt before. In this song, because of Clara’s love, Margaret finally sees her as an independent adult, capable of doing incredible things.

1. Who am I?

Clara Johnson is a 26-year-old southern girl, daughter of Margret and Roy Johnson. She is the epitome of childlike innocence, beautiful, and unassuming. She is experiencing Europe for the first time. She takes everything she sees at face value. She is trusting, openhearted, and kind. Much of this is due to an injury she suffered as a child. On Clara’s 12th birthday party, she was kicked in the head by a pony. She suffered brain damage that stunted in her comprehension skills, her social skills, and her ability to learn and grow into adulthood the same way her friends would. In short, her body would grow, but her mind would forever remain a child. This makes her relationship with her mother one of constant care and protection. She is on the precipice of discovering herself outside of her parent’s wants and fears about her future. She is becoming her own person.

2. What time is it?

Year: 1952. WWII ended in 1945. In a post WWII world, Americans were driven by consumerism. Women, who would have probably gone to work to fill the once male

dominated jobs, now found themselves with very little to do. Margret and Clara likely went on their trip to Italy to fill their time with something more than sitting around waiting for Roy to get home from work each day. Additionally, this is the time in our recent history when women were most expected to adhere to social constructs. There were entire pamphlets published on how to keep your husband happy.

Time: Summer. June. “They say when you marry in June, you’re a bride all your life” (Mercer 8). The Summer solstice is about to occur. It is a time of love, weddings, and celebration. It is also beautiful weather this time of year in Italy, making everything feel truly magical. The piazzas glow with warmth.

3. Where am I?

Country/State: Italy. Italy is known as one of the great centers of the European Renaissance. Renaissance means “rebirth” or “reawakening”. Clara is experiencing her personal renaissance. It is only appropriate for Florence and Rome to be the backdrop throughout this story. Clara is surrounded by art, sculpture, food and beautiful landscapes.

Area: Rome, the Forum Ruins. This area, once the great center of Roman public life, is now broken down, demolished, and crumbled; a great metaphor for what could become of Clara if she is not free to love.

4. What do I want?

Clara wants to be with Fabrizio. She has found someone who loves her for her and makes her happier than she has ever been. She is now loved, supported, and nourished in a way her parents can never achieve. She must find a way back to

Fabrizio.

5. What is in the way of getting what I want?

Clara's mother is her greatest obstacle in this moment; her fear and protective nature is keeping Clara from living the life she wants. Prior to this moment, Clara has always willingly followed her mother, trusting in her guidance. But now something in Clara has changed, and she can no longer follow.

6. What do I do to get what I want?

In the early portion of the scene, Clara plays the belligerent child; it is all she knows how to do. She sulks. She refuses to take any interest in the ruins. Eventually she provokes her mother, insults her, and forces her to face some hard truths. The situation grows so out of hand that Margret slaps Clara. In that moment, all of Clara's tactics change. She is calm. She sees everything with great clarity. And she decides to speak from her heart, putting her ideas into the simplest words. She shows her mother that she has grown up and is capable of great things.

Mother

“Back to Before” – *Ragtime*

“Back to Before” was the final piece presented in *Women in White*. Its nature was not one of a literal character exploration of Mother, but more of a catalyst for sharing my personal journey. In the lyrics I found such parallels to my own life that I felt the need to share it with people openly as myself, without a character to hide behind. Consequently, there was no analysis for Mother, and I will not be so self-indulgent as to do a character analysis of myself; my journey and assessment will be shared at length in the Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 SCRIPT

Women in White: My Journey Into Color

By Maddie Tarbox

(Sung)

Women in white, who knew what their lives held in store

Where are they now, those women who stared from the mirror?

We can never go back...

“Meadowlark” – The Baker’s Wife

When I was a girl I had a favorite story

Of the meadowlark who lived where the rivers wind.

Her voice could match the angels in it’s glory,

But she was blind, the lark was blind.

An old king came and took her to his palace

Where the walls were burnished bronze and golden braid.

And he fed her fruit and nuts from an ivory chalice.

And he prayed

Sing for me, my meadowlark,

Sing for me, of the silver morning.

Set me free, my meadowlark.

And I’ll buy you a priceless jewel,

*And cloth of brocade and crewel,
And I'll love you for life if you will
Sing for me.
Then one day as the lark sang by the water,
The god of the sun heard her in his flight,
And her singing moved him so he came and brought her
The gift of sight, he gave her sight
And she opened her eyes to the shimmer and the splendor
Of this beautiful young god so proud and strong
And he called to the lark in a voice both young and tender,
Come along
Fly with me, my meadowlark
Fly with me, on the silver morning
Past the sea, where the dolphins bark,
We will dance on the choral beaches
Make a feast of the plums and peaches,
Just as far as your vision reaches,
Fly with me.
But the meadowlark said no,
For the old king loved her so,
She couldn't bear to wound his pride.
So the sun god flew away,*

*And when the king came down that day,
He found his meadowlark had died.
Every time I heard that part I cried.*

*And now I stand here starry eyed and storming
Oh, just when I thought my heart was finally numb,
A beautiful young man appears before me
Singing come, oh wont you come?
And what can I do if finally for the first time,
The one I'm burning for returns the glow,
If love has come at last its picked the worst time,
Still I know*

*I've got to go fly away, meadowlark.
Fly away, in the silver morning.
If I stay, I'll grow to curse the dark.
So it's off where the days won't bind me,
I know I leave wounds behind me,
But I won't let tomorrow find me
Back this way,
Before my past, once again, can blind me.
Fly away.*

And we wont wait to say goodbye,

My beautiful young man and I.

Transition 1

I find this idea ‘sight’, true sight, very inspirational. The story of the meadowlark is one of a young girl who is living in a world where all of her needs are met. He has a home, someone who loves her, she has a purpose, someone to sing for. But she’s blind. Along comes someone who grants her this beautiful gift filling her life with color. But once you have seen you cannot unsee. This is my story.

As some of you may have read in the program, white is often a symbol for purity, cleanliness, and perfection. However, white is also synonymous with empty, blank, and colorless.

The basis of this thesis was inspired by my mother. She has always said how lucky she feels that, even though her children didn’t follow the path that she and my father initially hoped, they have brought so much color into her life. She describes her life as colorful.

The women explored tonight both inspire and terrify me. But they, like me, have life circumstances that have forced to see and embrace so much color. Through the night I will cry (I’m a crier) you may cry, we will all just cry together. But I invite you to come experience this journey with me.

In my first semester of grad school, I got a phone call from a number I didn’t know. I screened it, of course. Who picks up their phone from a number they don’t know? When I went to listen to the message this is what I got.

(New York Jewish dialect)

“Good afternoon Maddie, my name is Miss Diamond, as in girl’s best friend.”

I’m not exaggerating. At all. In fact, I have listened to this message so many times I may or may not have the whole thing memorized.

“I am a wedding planner slash choreographer, and I am looking for someone with a very angelic voice to sing in the church for a wedding, a small wedding we’re having in West Palm Beach. So I wanted to discuss that with you if that’s something that you do do. Umm. Please feel free to give me a call. Of course you will also need someone to accompany you when you sing. Uh, you’ll be singing basically two songs and, uh, maybe something after the bride and groom marry as they are leaving the church, but I haven’t chosen a song on that yet, maybe you could help me. So, give me a call, it’s Miss Diamond. Uhh. If you do not do this type of thing, weddings and such and you know someone I’d appreciate a return call. Also if you know someone who plays the organ, that would be fabulous. I would prefer an organist. Um. Um... I’m gonna try one of the big music academies, I think they’ll help me find an organist. But anyway, I need an angelic voice, and your picture tells me you have an angelic voice. So give me a call, and we’ll chat. Okay? Thank you, much! Bye, bye.

We laughed about Miss Diamond for weeks, quoting her here and there. She brightened up our days as grad students right in the middle of a very stressful time. What I love about this story is that it shows that not all forms of color have to be brought into our lives through trial or difficulty or pain, but sometimes through someone’s crazy, quirky energy.

So, this next piece may or may not be exactly how I picture Miss Diamond. So,
Miss Diamond, this one's for you.

“Just One Step” – *Songs for a New World*

Murray, I am out here Murray

And I am not discussing this anymore

You don't want to buy me the fur?

Well, that's just fine Murray

It's not like I'm asking for much

Since you won't buy me the dog

Or the beach house in Quogue

As if you didn't have the money

What else is new?

I'm not gonna fight for a coat

So never mind, Murray

If that's what's important to you

At least I know where I stand

So, Murray, strike up the band

Because the time has come for action

Here's what I'll do

Clearly, I'm not wanted anymore

*Now I'm not so young and beautiful
That's okay, I've faced defeat before
I'm not gonna kvetch
And I'm not gonna cry
It's not gonna get me what I wanted
So I'm simply gonna take one step
One tiny step
And Murray
Just one step, I'll be free
One small step
Just so you shouldn't worry
I'll be free
And you'll be rid of me
Isn't that easy, Murray?
Watch me
You think this is maybe a joke
Well, it's no joke, Murray
Murray
It looks like they're forming a crowd
Like eighty-five at the most
Still, front page of the Post
Ma, I think it's Maury Povich*

And Connie too

Oh, hi Connie!

Now you'll finally make your mother proud

Since she never liked me anyway

Look, she's throwing diamonds to the crowd!

Just say the word and I'll come back inside

But until then I'll be happy just to know

That I can always go and take

One step

One tiny step, and Murray

One small step, adios

Just one step,

Honey you'd better hurry

Oh, yes sir,

Better give up that fur

Take it from me, Old Murray

Here I...

Whoops, almost fell Murray

The mother of your children

Splattered across Fifth Avenue

In a bloody heap, Murray

And it's all your fault

*Yes, it's you who made the money
'Cause it's you who owns the store
So if you don't want to spend it
That's your right
But it's you who bought the penthouse
On the fifty- seventh floor
So goodnight, cheapskate, goodnight
You think I don't know about her?
Well, I do, Murray
You think I don't know about that
Or the things that you say
To your friends every day
I'm embarrassing
I'm fat
I'm demanding
And controlling
And whatever
Perhaps it's true
Here's the place where I get what I've earned
Why keep prying?
Why be miserable?
Lookit, Murray*

Somebody's concerned
Trust in the wind
And I'll land in the crowd
No more complaining
I'm trashy and loud
What a sensational fucking experience
Finally, Murray, I'm getting attention
And just one step
Look at where one step leads you
One small step takes you high
Hey, just one step
Down from the man who needs you
fuck the fur
Just send it down to her
Oh, fair thee well
And Murray, watch me fly
Murray,
Oh, I'm serious Murray
Murray!

Transition 2

For a long time, mental illness was something we weren't allowed to talk about in public. And while, we are finally reaching a point of discussion, there is still such a stigma and

lack of understanding about the topic. I have personally only suffered from minor anxiety and depression at different points in my life but I have so many loved ones who deal with much more. They deserve to be heard. In *Next to Normal* we see Dianna, trying to maintain her traditional role of wife and mother while suffering from severe mental illness. At this moment in the show she is struggling with the choice of feeling too much or feeling nothing at all.

“I Miss the Mountains” – *Next to Normal*

*There was a time when I flew higher,
Was a time the wild girl running free
Would be me.
Now I see her feel the fire,
Now I know she needs me here to share—
I'm nowhere.*

*All these blank and tranquil years—
Seems they've dried up all my tears.
And while she runs free and fast,
Seems my wild days are past.*

*But I miss the mountains.
I miss the dizzy heights.*

*All the manic, magic days
And the dark, depressing nights.*

*I miss the mountains,
I miss the highs and lows,
All the climbing all the falling,
All the while the wild wind blows,
Stinging you with snow
And soaking you with rain—
I miss the mountains,
I miss the pain.*

*Mountains make you crazy—
Here it's safe and sound.
My mind is somewhere hazy—
My feet are on the ground.*

*Everything is balanced here
And on an even keel.
Everything is perfect—
Nothing's real...
Nothing's real.*

And I miss the mountains.

I... I miss the lonely climb.

Wand'ring through the wilderness.

And spending all my time

Where the air is clear

And cuts you like a knife—

I miss the mountains...

I miss the mountains...

I miss my life.

I miss my life.

Transition 3

Last semester I had the opportunity to work on *Man and Superman* by George Bernard Shaw. “Shawvian” women are a dream to play. They are strong willed, independent, intelligent and altogether pretty colorful. I loved working on Shaw’s material so much that I just couldn’t stay away. While *My Fair Lady* doesn’t follow his script of *Pygmalion* with exactness, the fiery heart of Eliza Doolittle remains strong.

“Show Me” – *My Fair Lady*

FREDDY

Darling!

ELIZA

(In a rage he does not understand) What are you doing here?

FREDDY

Nothing. I spend most of my time here. Oh, don't laugh at me Miss Doolittle, this is the only place...

ELIZA

(She puts down suit case and grabs him by the shoulders) Freddy, you don't think I'm a heartless guttersnipe, do you?

FREDDY

Oh, no, darling. How could you imagine such a thing? You know how I feel. I've written you two and three times a day telling you. Sheets and sheets.

*Speak, and the world is full of singing
And I am winging higher than the birds
Touch and my heart begins to crumble
The heaven's tumble
Darling, and I'm...*

ELIZA

*Words, words, words!
I'm so sick of words
I get words all day through
First from him, now from you
Is that all you blighters can do?*

Don't talk of stars, burning above
If you're in love, show me!
Tell me no dreams, filled with desire
If you're on fire, show me!
Here we are together in the middle of the night
Don't talk of spring, just hold me tight
Anyone who's ever been in love will tell you that
This is no time for a chat
Haven't your lips longed for my touch?
Don't say how much, show me, show me
Don't talk of love lasting through time
Make me no undying vow
Show me now!
Sing me no song, read me no rhyme
Don't waste my time, show me!
Don't talk of June, don't talk of fall
Don't talk at all!
Show me!
Never do I ever want to hear another word
There isn't one, I haven't heard
Here we are together in what ought to be a dream
Say one more word and I'll scream

Haven't your arms, hungered for mine?

Please don't "explaine", show me, show me!

Don't wait until wrinkles and lines

Pop out all over my brow, show me now!

Transition 4

Steven Sondheim. What can we possibly say about Steven Sondheim in one evening?

When I was in my first year of undergrad I developed a deep appreciation for his work. I am so inspired by his words. I couldn't possibly go through this journey without exploring his work. Mrs. Lovett, while she may be the character farthest from me explored tonight, like, I have no interest in cutting people up and putting them into pies, I am fascinated with her story. She is a master planner. Manipulative. Sharp. Devious: all traits I don't find inherently bad. She is willing do what ever it takes to survive.

"A Little Priest" – Sweeney Todd

MRS. LOVETT

That's all very well, but what are we going to do about him?

TODD

Later on, when it's dark, we'll take him to some secret place and bury him.

MRS. LOVETT

Well, of course, we could do that. I don't suppose there's any relatives going to come

poking around looking for him.

(Pause. Chord.)

You know me. Bright ideas just pop into me head and I keep thinking...

Seems a downright shame...

TODD

Shame?

LOVETT

Seems an awful waste...

Such a nice, plump frame wot's 'is name has...

Had... Has!

Nor it can't be traced...

Bus'ness needs a lift, debts to be erased...

Think of it as thrift, as a gift, if you get my drift!

No?

Seems an awful waste...

I mean, with the price of meat what it is,

When you get it, if you get it...

TODD

HAH!

LOVETT

Good, you got it!

Take, for instance, Mrs. Mooney and her pie shop!

Bus'ness never better using only pussycats and toast!

And a pussy's good for maybe six or seven at the most!

And I'm sure they can't compare as far as taste!

TODD

Mrs. Lovett, what a charming notion

LOVETT

Well, it does seem a waste...

TODD

Eminently practical

And yet appropriate as always!

LOVETT

It's an idea...

TODD

Mrs. Lovett, how I've lived

Without you all these years, I'll never know!

How delectable!

Also undetectable!

LOVETT

Think about it! Lots of other gentlemen'll

Soon be comin' for a shave, won't they?

Think of... all them... pies!

TODD

How choice! How rare!

For what's the sound of the world out there?

LOVETT

What, Mr. Todd? What, Mr. Todd? What is that sound?

TODD

Those crunching noises pervading the air!

LOVETT

Yes, Mr. Todd! Yes, Mr. Todd! Yes, all around!

TODD

It's man devouring man, my dear!

BOTH

And [LOVETT: Then] who are we to deny it in here?

TODD

(spoken) These are desperate times,

Mrs. Lovett, and desperate measures are called for!

LOVETT

Here we are, now! Hot out of the oven!

TODD

What is that?

LOVETT

It's priest. Have a little priest.

TODD

Is it really good?

LOVETT

Sir, it's too good, at least!

Then again, they don't commit sins of the flesh,

So it's pretty fresh.

TODD

Awful lot of fat.

LOVETT

Only where it sat.

TODD

Haven't you got poet, or something like that?

LOVETT

No, y'see, the trouble with poet is

'Ow do you know it's deceased?

Try the priest!

TODD

(spoken) Heavenly! Not as hearty as bishop, perhaps, but then again, not as bland as curate, either!

LOVETT

And good for business, too -- always leaves you wantin' more! Trouble is, we only get it

on Sundays!

Lawyer's rather nice.

TODD

If it's for a price.

LOVETT

Order something else, though, to follow,

Since no one should swallow it twice!

TODD

Anything that's lean.

LOVETT

Well, then, if you're British and loyal,

You might enjoy Royal Marine!

Anyway, it's clean.

Though of course, it tastes of wherever it's been!

TODD

Is that squire, on the fire?

LOVETT

Mercy no, sir, look closer, you'll notice it's grocer!

TODD

Looks thicker, more like vicar!

LOVETT

No, it has to be grocer -- It's green!

TODD

The history of the world, my love –

LOVETT

Save a lot of graves, do a lot of relatives favors!

TODD

Is those below serving those up above!

LOVETT

Ev'rybody shaves, so there should be plenty of flavors!

TODD

How gratifying for once to know

BOTH

That those above will serve those down below!

LOVETT

(spoken) Now let's see, here... We've got tinker.

TODD

Something... pinker.

LOVETT

Tailor?

TODD

Paler.

LOVETT

Butler?

TODD

Subtler.

LOVETT

Potter?

TODD

Hotter.

LOVETT

Locksmith?

Lovely bit of clerk.

TODD

Maybe for a lark.

LOVETT

Then again there's sweep if you want it cheap and you like it dark!

Try the financier, peak of his career!

TODD

That looks pretty rank.

LOVETT

Well, he drank, it's a bank cashier.

Never really sold. Maybe it was old.

TODD

Have you any Beadle?

LOVETT

Next week, so I'm told!

Beadle isn't bad till you smell it and notice 'ow well it's been greased...

Stick to priest!

(spoken) Now then, this might be a little bit stringy,

but then of course it's... fiddle player!

TODD

No, this isn't fiddle player -- it's piccolo player!

LOVETT

'Ow can you tell?

TODD: It's piping hot!

LOVETT

Then blow on it first!

TODD

The history of the world, my sweet –

LOVETT

Oh, Mr. Todd, ooh, Mr. Todd, what does it tell?

TODD

Is who gets eaten, and who gets to eat!

LOVETT

And, Mr. Todd, too, Mr. Todd, who gets to sell!

TODD

But fortunately, it's also clear

BOTH

That [L: But] ev'rybody goes down well with beer!

LOVETT

Since marine doesn't appeal to you, 'ow about... rear admiral?

TODD

Too salty. I prefer general.

LOVETT

With, or without his privates? "With" is extra.

TODD

What is that?

LOVETT

It's fop. Finest in the shop.

And we have some shepherd's pie peppered

With actual shepherd on top!

And I've just begun -- Here's the politician, so oily

It's served with a doily, have one!

TODD

Put it on a bun.

Well, you never know if it's going to run!

LOVETT

Try the friar, fried, it's drier!

TODD

No, the clergy is really

Too coarse and too mealy!

LOVETT

Then actor, that's compacter!

TODD

Yes, and always arrives overdone!

I'll come again when you have JUDGE on the menu!

LOVETT

(spoken) Wait! True, we don't have judge yet,

but we've got something you might fancy even better.

TODD

What's that?

LOVETT

Executioner!

TODD

Have charity towards the world, my pet!

LOVETT

Yes, yes, I know, my love!

TODD

We'll take the customers that we can get!

LOVETT

High-born and low, my love!

TODD

We'll not discriminate great from small!

No, we'll serve anyone,

Meaning anyone,

BOTH

And to anyone

At all!

Transition 5

Parade is my very favorite show in all of musical theatre. It tells the true story of Leo Frank, wrongly accused for the rape and murder of 11 year old Mary Phagan in Marietta Georgia in 1906. His wife Lucille is absolutely inspirational to me. She fights tooth and nail for this husband she barely knows and through this process they learn what it is to truly love one another.

“Do it Alone” – *Parade*

LUCILLE

Do it alone, Leo - do it all by yourself.

You're the only one who matters after all.

Do it alone, Leo - why should it bother me?

I'm just good for standing in the shadows

And staring at the walls, Leo.

Fight them, strong and proud -

Pray your voice is loud,

Loud enough to make it through that door.

What on earth have I been worried for?

Soon I won't be worried anymore.

LEO

Why are you doing this?

LUCILLE

No, do it alone, Leo - now there's the right idea:

Make me feel as useless as you always have.

Do it alone, Leo - what could a woman do?

After all, so many people love you,

They're dancing in the streets, Leo.

Only you know how

To change the future now -

No one knows the pain you're going through -

No one else is suffering but you.

I could be a quiet little girl

And cook your little meal,

And swallow all I feel,

*And bow to your command;
Or I could start to scream,
Across the whole damned South
And never shut my mouth
Until they understand.
But I can't do it alone, Leo.
Look at me now, Leo.
I can be more:
I can bring you home, Leo.
We can bring you home, Leo.
I want you to come home.*

Transition 6

How many of you are familiar with *Grey Gardens*? *Grey Gardens* is the story of the eccentric, reclusive cousin of Jackie Kennedy: Edie Beale. When Edie was young she dreamed of fame and fortune before her mother took it from her due to an unhealthy level of codependency. Years later, they now live in a filthy mansion that has been taken over by cats. Jackie decides she wants to help get them and the house back on their feet and this, of course, attracts reporters. I am absolutely fascinated with Edie's story. One of my big discoveries in the development of my process as an actor is learning to embrace foolishness, and throw away the fear of looking stupid (not that I have mastered that). Edie, too, is consumed by this fear, that she is simply not enough. At this moment in the

show, the cameras have arrived and Edie thinks this is her big chance at fame. And what do famous people do to keep the public's interest? They dress in outrageous clothing.

“Revolutionary Costume” – Grey Gardens

EDIE

Oh, hi. Thank heaven you're here.

You look absolutely terrific, honestly.

(Mother wanted me to come out in a kimono so we had quite a fight...)

The best kind of clothes for a protest pose

Is this ensemble of pantyhose

Pulled over the shorts, worn under the skirt

That doubles as a cape.

To reveal you in capri pants

You fashion out of ski pants,

In a jersey knit designed to fit

The contour of your shape.

Then cinch it with a cord from the drape.

And that's the revolutionary costume for today.

To show the polo riders, in khakis and topsiders,

Just what a revolutionary costume has to say.

It can't be ordered from L.L. Bean.

There's more to living than kelly green.

And that's the revolution, I mean.

Da da da da dum...

Just listen to this: The Hamptons Bee, July, 1972: "The elderly bed-ridden aunt of former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, Mrs. Edith Bouvier Beale..."My very own mother, can you imagine?"...and her adult daughter, Miss Edie Beale, a former debutante once known as Body Beautiful Beale..." They called me Body Beautiful Beale, it's true - that was my whaddyacallit, my uh ... sobriquet. "...are living on Long Island in a garbage-ridden, filthy 28-room house with 52 cats, fleas, cobwebs, and virtually no plumbing. After vociferous complaints from neighbors, the Board of Health took legal action against the reclusive pair." Why, it's the most disgusting, atrocious thing ever to happen in America!

(Singing)

You fight City Hall with a Persian shawl

That used to hang on the bedroom wall,

Pinned under the chin, adorned with a pin

And pulled into a twist.

Reinvent the objet trouve,

Make a poncho from a duvet,

Then you can be with cousin Lee

On Mr. Blackwell's list.

The full-length velvet glove hides the fist.

And that's the revolutionary costume for today.

Subvert the CrisCraft boaters, those Nixon-Agnew voters.

Armies of conformity are headed right your way.

To make a statement you need not be

In Boston Harbor upending tea.

And that's a Revolution, to me.

Staunch!

There's nothin' worse, I tell ya,

Staunch!

S-T-A-U-N-C-H.

Staunch women, we just don't weaken.

A little known fact to the fascist pack

Who comes here for antiquin'.

Da da da da dum...

Honestly, they can get you in East Hampton for wearing red shoes on a Thursday ? and

all that sort of thing. I don't know whether you know that ? I mean, do you know that?

They can get you for almost anything, it's a mean, nasty, Republican town.

(Singing)

The best kind of shoes to express bold views

Are strapless mules in assertive hues

Like fuscina or peach, except on the beach,

In which case you wear flats.

When I stood before the nation

At Jack's inauguration,

*In a high-heeled pump, I got the jump
on Jackie's pillbox hat.
Just watch it where you step with the cat!
And that's the revolutionary costume pour du jour.
You mix 'n' match and, Presto!
A fashion manifesto.
That's why a revolutionary costume's de rigueur.
The rhododendrons are hiding spies,
The pussy willows have beady eyes.
Binoculars through the privet hedge,
They peek at you through the window ledge with guile!
We're in a Revolution!
So win the Revolution with style!
Da da da da dum.*

Transition 7

The relationship of mother and daughter is... A lot of things. A parent wants a certain path for their child because that path has made them so happy that they want that happiness for their child, as well. Sometimes the child follows the path. Sometimes they don't. *The Light in the Piazza* explores the growth experienced for both Margaret and Clara in Clara's choice to take her own path. If you have spent any great length of time with me you'll have noticed I can't stop talking about my mom. I couldn't be more excited, and scared, to share this moment with her.

“The Light in the Piazza” – *The Light in the Piazza*

MARGARET

Darling, listen to this. Please stop that, that’s illegal. “The Trimphal Arch of Septimus Severus was erected in A.D. 203 in honor of the Roman emperor, recently victorious over the Parthians –“ Please, Clara, I asked you to stop. Just imagine what that must have been like, a gold colored chariot with the sunlight hitting it, right up there, casting shadows and riding off into the sky with six horses? Clara? Are you listening to me at all? I thought you’d be interested in all the things your father and I did when we were here. I thought this was going to be you and me.

(Clara ignores *her* mother and continues to knock at the pedestal.)

All right then, let’s go back to the hotel.

CLARA

I don’t want to go back to the hotel.

MARGARET

What do you want to do?

CLARA

No. I don’t want to do what you want me to do.

MARGARET

Well, darling, that’s too bad –

CLARA

Always.

MARAGARET

You don't know what you need and I'm sorry to have to say it.

CLARA

You're not. Your'e not sorry at all. Look at you, you're happy.

MARGARET

Stop this now, how could you even think that?

CLARA

Because you are! You're happy to be the one who knows everything I need and has the final word. It's clear.

MARGARET

I am not!

CLARA

I don't care what you are honestly, mother.

MARAGARET

You cannot marry Fabrizio, and you won't say another word.

CLARA

Stop Me.

MARGARET

All right now, Clara.

CLARA

You ignore what I say, what I want. You make things up the way you want them. You lie about things.

MARGARET

I do not.

CLARA

Yes! To everyone! How we all love one another. Daddy doesn't love you! Look in his eyes for once. Look at yourself in the mirror!

(Margaret slaps Clara. Pause. Song)

I don't see a miracle shining from the sky

I'm no good at statues and stories

I try

That's not what I think about

That's not what I see

I know what the sunlight can be

The Light, the Light in the Piazza

Tiny sweet

And then it grows

And then it fills the air

Who knows what you call it?

I don't care

Out of somewhere I have something I have never had

And sad is happy

That's all I see

The Light in the Piazza

The Light in the Piazza

It's rushing up

It's pouring out

It's flying through the air

All through the air

Who knows what you call it?

But it's there

It is there

All I see is

All I want is tearing from inside

I see it

Now I see it everywhere

It's everywhere

It's everything and everywhere

Fabrizio

The Light in the Piazza

My Love

“Back to Before” – Ragtime

There was a time our happiness seemed never ending,

I was so sure that where we were heading was right.

Life was a road so certain and straight and unbending,

Our little road with never a crossroad in sight.

Back in the days when we spoke in civilized voices,

Women in white, and sturdy young men at the oar...

Back in the days when I let you make all my choices,

We can never go back to before.

There was a time my feet were so solidly planted,

You sailed away while I turned my back to the sea.

I was content, a princess asleep and enchanted,

If I had dreams then I let you dream them for me.

Back in the days when everything seemed so much clearer,

Women in white who knew what their lives held in store.

Where are they now, those women who stared from the mirror...

We can never go back to before.

There are people out there

Unafraid of revealing

That they might have a feeling

Or they might have been wrong.

There are people out there

Unafraid to feel sorrow,

Unafraid of tomorrow,

Unafraid to be weak,

Unafraid to be strong.

There was a time when you were the person in motion,

I was your wife, it never occurred to want more.

You were my sky, my moon and my stars and my ocean.

We can never go back to before.

We can never go back to before.

CHAPTER 5 IMPLEMENTATION, REFINEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

There is no single more difficult role for to portray than the raw, open version of oneself. Actors are accustomed to exploring the truth of their characters through the catalyst of their personal experiences, finding a way of putting themselves into their roles. In that situation, however, there is always a façade of a character, a script, or an imaginary world behind which to hide. My choice of performing of *Women in White* as myself was one of the most vulnerable, emotional rollercoasters I have ever experienced. Each song represented some of the most impactful moments of my personal journey; moments I had not previously shared in public. While in the midst of the creative process, this intense vulnerability was my greatest struggle and challenge, it soon became an immeasurable gift. Truthfully, I am not sure I will ever be so fortunate as to experience such tangible electricity in a performance again.

Women in White: My Journey Into Color was performed on Sunday May 1st and again on Monday May 8th of 2016. The first occasion was presented on the University of Central Florida campus in the Performing Arts Center for my thesis committee and invited audience. The second was performed in the Eccles Black Box theatre at Weber State University in Utah for friends and family. Each performance had it's own challenges, victories, and educational qualities. The following chapter will discuss my experience in the rehearsal process and individual performances. Additionally included will be any thesis journals written during the spring semester of 2016.

Rehearsal Process

While the physical rehearsal process for *Women in White* began on March 22nd, six weeks prior to the performance, there was preparation on my part from the beginning of spring semester. Initially, the thesis was to be a cabaret-style performance celebrating some of the great “non-traditional” women of theatre. This would include scene work from playwrights like Ibsen, Miller, and Shakespeare, in addition to musical pieces. However, I quickly found that this approach muddled the clear intention of the show I would come to name *Women in White*. So, as the decision was made to incorporate musical theatre pieces alone, I chose ten individual songs/characters that I felt represented some of the great “non-traditional” women of musical theatre. Initial song choices were as follows.

<u>Song</u>	<u>Play</u>
“Meadowlark”	<i>The Baker’s Wife</i>
“Just One Step”	<i>Songs For a New World</i>
“I Read”	<i>Passion</i>
“Show Me”	<i>My Fair Lady</i>
“A Little Priest”	<i>Sweeney Todd</i>
“Do It Lone”	<i>Parade</i>
“Revolutionary Costume...”	<i>Grey Gardens</i>
“Astonishing”	<i>Little Women</i>
“The Light in the Piazza”	<i>The Light in the Piazza</i>
“Back to Before”	<i>Ragtime</i>

Once the songs were chosen, all of my commuting time on the road was spent listening to/singing through the pieces for the purpose of memorization and vocal technique. From the time I entered grad school a year and a half earlier, I had devoted all of my energies to theatrical endeavors that did not utilize my singing voice. I had become vocally “out of shape”. Working to regain control over that muscle group in that way would take time and training. This leads me to one of my developmental challenges.

In addition to training my voice to be “controlled” enough to get through a song, I was also working to explore myself (and my characters) in such a way that would incorporate a *loss of control*. In Chapter 1, the theory of a “life or death situation” was discussed; to this day, I struggle to justify the notion that a character would be in total vocal control in these heightened life or death situations. And although musical theatre cannot be defined as realistic, I strive to give performances that are as realistically close to my own experience as possible.

This challenge developed into a study of balance. In rehearsals I would, at times, become too emotionally moved to continue making any sound at all. It was in these moments that the support from my thesis chair and mentor, Kate Ingram, became my saving grace. Together, we had previously worked through Fitzmaurice Voicework to unlearn the impulse of stifling a vulnerable emotion, and I had made great strides. But this material was addressing a situation even closer to my heart that I had protected for many years. It took a great amount of courage, focus, and will power to continue through the pieces no matter what kind of sound emerged from my body. And over time came the balance of emotion and intentional sound.

As I negotiated this balance, there were logistical steps that needed to be addressed. There are several pieces in *Women in White* that required a scene partner; “I Read”, “Show Me”, “A Little Priest”, “Astonishing”, and “The Light in the Piazza” all had either imperative scene work before the song, or were written to be delivered directly to another character. And while the study of soliloquy-style songs were of great focus in this thesis, it was also imperative for me investigate my theory of “earning the song” through the scene work moments before. This meant I would need to employ a few additional actors.

I initially asked fellow graduate students Kody Grasset, Blaine Edwards and Joseph D’Ambrosi to assist in addition to my husband, Connor Padilla and own mother, Maurie Tarbox. However, as the show developed it was clear that certain songs simply did not serve the thesis in ways I had originally hoped they would.

“I Read” was replaced by “I Miss the Mountains” from *Next To Normal*, not because Fosca wouldn’t have been an appropriate character to include, but because in creating a cabaret style show, one must consider the overall arc, shape, and audience perception. Additionally, “I Read” functions more as exposition than a critical turning point for Fosca. “I Miss the Mountains”, however, is one of the most prominent turning points for Dianna in *Next to Normal*.

Another song alteration was made in the cutting of “Astonishing” from *Little Women*. In the fall of 2012 I was fortunate enough to be cast as Jo March in Centerpoint Legacy Theatre’s production of *Little Women*. The character has been very dear to my heart from the time I was a young girl, and the months I spent playing the role was one of

the most special theatrical experiences of my life. However, as I spent time rehearsing for *Women in White* it became clear that my initial choice to include “Astonishing”, Jo’s Act I finale number, was not appropriate for this journey. I came to this conclusion firstly because I struggled to find a place in the song set that this overwhelming piece would fit. Secondly, because I knew, somewhere deep down, that including “Astonishing” would have been a cop-out. I needed to work on new material, or at least material that scared me more than this. And so, “Astonishing” was cut from *Women in White*.

As the script was changing, casting needed to be altered. Blaine Edwards’ schedule came into conflict with the amount of rehearsal I was requesting, and with one scene cut, we both decided that I would be better forging ahead without him. Kody Grassettt agreed to play Leo Frank in “Do It Alone” from *Parade*. Joseph D’Ambrosi donated his talents for Freddy in “Show Me” from *My Fair Lady*. Connor Padilla was kind enough to join me as Sweeney Todd in “A Little Priest”. And my sweet mother, Maurie Tarbox was the clear choice to portray the Margret to my Clara in “The Light in the Piazza”, although I knew it would be one of the more difficult emotional choices I would have to face.

From March 22nd to the performance on May 8th, rehearsals were held with members of my thesis committee twice a week. Each rehearsal focused on one song/scene, allowing time for notes, adjustments, and exploration. Dress rehearsals were held on April 29th and 30th. Some songs were easier to find my way through in rehearsals than others. “Meadowlark” has always felt like it expresses a piece of my own heart, and therefore fell into place more easily. “Revolutionary Costume” was much more difficult

to address. In fact, it took creating my transitions for me to fully wrap my brain around the personal connection between Edie Beale and myself.

Halfway through the rehearsal process I went through period of uncertainty when in reference to “Back to Before” from *Ragtime*. I had already addressed the necessity to alter the focus of the thesis from a generalized celebration of non-traditional women to a presentation of a more personal journey in discovering my own path in life. But I simply didn’t feel any kind of connection to “Back to Before”. Yes, the lyrics were beautiful, the melodies were stunning, and I could sing it well. But my heart was not in it. On April 1st I sent an email to my thesis chair asking what she thought of “Fist You Dream” from *Steel Pier* feeling inspired by the notion that every reality starts with a dream. Her response, however small and fragmented, gave my thesis the focus it needed.

Among several other thoughts, she asked me to consider the lyric “where are they now, those women who stared from the mirror”. She also asked several times, in considering both songs, to whom I would be singing. As I pondered these thoughts I went and re-listened to “Back to Before”. As I did, it was as though I finally truly heard the song for the very first time.

“Women in white who knew what their lives held in store.

Where are they now, those women who stared from the mirror?

We can never go back to before.”

Not only did these lyrics become the first words spoken in my thesis show, but they also developed into the heart, soul, and even the ultimate title of the piece; *Women in White: My journey into color*.

From this concept came the design elements. I knew I wanted to begin the evening in all white and add color to my attire with each character presented. A few ideas were tossed around until I finally settled on the final product. “Meadowlark” would open the performance. I would be dressed in only white with seven colored scarves laid out before me on the stage. Within the song I planned to discover each scarf, put it into my travel bag and take them with me on my “journey” of the evening. Throughout the show the colored scarves would re-emerge with their character’s coordinating colored accessory. The songs and colored props are as listed.

<u>Song</u>	<u>Color/Costume Piece</u>
“Just One Step”	Orange fur coat
“I Miss the Mountains”	Green cardigan
“Show Me”	Purple capelet
“A Little Priest”	Red apron
“Do It Lone”	Yellow sunflower
“Revolutionary Costume...”	Pink headwrap
“The Light in the Piazza”	Baby blue hat

In the final number, “Back to Before”, I would begin the song in all white and, one by one, pull each colored scarf through my waist-band to create a multi-colored skirt signifying my embrace of the beautiful experiences the scarves would come to represent.

Once the central concept of the piece was decided upon, songs became increasingly more poignant, hitting me deeper than ever before. The emotional memory

recall aspect was a new animal I had to learn to harness and there was only so much time left prior to opening. As the deadline grew nearer, I only continued to feel more naked.

Several full dress rehearsals were held in the presence of fellow cast members Kody Grasset and Joseph D'Ambrosi during the week prior to the performance date. Due to an extreme strain of influenza, my thesis chair could not attend rehearsals that week to give me feedback. At the time, this was daunting. In reality, it was a blessing. Accountability now fell solely on me. It also allowed the opportunity for my fellow graduate students to offer varying opinions on the piece as a whole, opinions that may have otherwise remained unvoiced.

My performance of the first dress rehearsal for Kody and Joseph was reserved, closed, and tentative. I remember being painfully aware of my fear that *Women in White* would be viewed as self-indulgent and overly emotional. In turn, I held back all the personal imagery that was previously discovered during the rehearsal process. The response from my fellow graduate students made this one of the most difficult days in developing this show. They knew I had more to give. They knew I would regret bringing anything but my whole heart and soul to this thesis. And they gave me the last painful, encouraging push I needed to make *Women in White* the show it needed to be.

Journals

January 25th, 2015

For the past week or so I have been working on several different drafts of my abstract. I thought that it was important that I first define what I mean by

“traditional” and then talk about that in reference to women. Kate suggested that I needed to add a more personal touch as to why I chose this as a topic. Yes, I chose it because I think I am somewhat non-traditional but she wanted me to define what makes me non-traditional. I grew up in a community where the majority of the population were members of Mormon church, myself included. So, yes, my upbringing was very traditional. However, I never felt discouraged from my dreams. In fact it was a steadfast rule that I would not get married until I finished my Bachelor’s degree. Education first. That was far more non-traditional in this Mormon heavy culture than anywhere else in the world. Marriage is the first thing on every high school graduate’s mind in Utah. No joke. Married at 19 is far too common. Anyway, I guess that is one of my biggest supports from my family. They always encouraged me to pursue my dreams, and be independent. Anyway... There are so many little details in what makes me “non-traditional”. But I needed to put a good summation in one sentence for the abstract. It can only be a page. Now that I’ve turned that in, Kate and I were able to meet and get a little more specific about the abstract. One more revision and I should be good! I’m well on my way. The next step will be to brain storm which pieces I want to do to support my argument. I have a few ideas I know I want to do.

“I Read” – from Passion – this character is described as one of the most ugly, pitiful women on the planet. Beauty often is included as a trait of traditional women. I think there is a lot to explore there

“Little Priest” – from Sweeney Todd – Cut people up and put them into pies to make some money while having it be a humorous scene? Yeah.

“Get Out and Stay Out” – from 9 to 5 – A musical filled with women trying to make their way in the male dominated business world. This is the anthem of overcoming the dominant male in this character’s life.

“Meadowlark” – from The Baker’s Wife – This character is faced with the decision to stay and be the simple wife of a baker because it is comfortable and easy or to leave him and follow her ‘sun god’. There is also a lot of metaphorical imagery supporting the whole idea of freeing one’s self and truly seeing the world. This one is a MUST.

Lady MacBeth – Duh.

Kate – Taming of the Shrew – Maybe. We shall see.

Fable – The Light in the Piazza – I am eager to look at non-traditional mothers.

This mother starts out very traditional and grows to break all the traditions when it comes to helping her daughter find her true happiness. Plus it is more classical vocally and I would like some more vocal variation.

Looks like I need to find some more scene work to balance out all the musical numbers... Maybe May from Fool for Love? Oh! I know I wanted to look at Eliza Doolittle, whether from the musical or from Pygmalion. I loved working on Shaw last semester and I love his feminist theories. I’d like to be able to talk about that.

Wow. Here we go!

January 29th, 2016

I'm doing some more brainstorming tonight. This time I want to put it into different sections of traditionalism and see what I'm missing.

Wife: Meadowlark

Mother: Margret – The Light in the Piazza/Mother from Ragtime

Beauty: Fosca

Timid: Get out and Stay Out, Kate – Taming of the Shrew, Liza Doolittle

Ambitious: Lady Macbeth, Little Priest, Jo

Modest: Gypsy, Life of the Party

Sexuality:

Obedient: Clara, Just one Step

As I sit here brainstorming about this I'm struggling with the feeling of 'the whole'. It feels mismatched. I have this strong urge that if I were to make it only about musical theatre it would have more continuity... I need to email Kate.

If it were just musical theatre.... Some thoughts...

Song order??

1. I Have Confidence
2. Just One Step
3. I Read
4. Little Priest
5. Get Out and Stay Out
6. The Light in the Piazza
7. Revolutionary Costume
8. Do It Alone

9. Meadowlark

February 3rd, 2016

I'm thinking about some of these women. Maybe some of them weren't traditional for their time. But are they really "non traditional". Jo brought up a great observation the other day in class. Yes, Rodgers and Hammerstein were forward thinking and revolutionary, but at the end of the day the story always revolves falling into some kind of the "status quo". So in considering Maria from *The Sound of Music*, yes she breaks out of her mold, but she winds up being simply wife and mother at the end of the day singing lyrics like "and you'll belong to him". Blech. No sir.

I don't know. I'm hanging onto this idea of "non-traditional" but Kate keeps asking me to define it further. It's clear in my head, but I guess I have to define it for a thesis committee and be able to defend it one day.

However, after chatting to Kate about making this a musical endeavor, we both agree that trying to include too much will be overwhelming. And I feel really good about keeping this show to musicals alone. I definitely want to keep some scene work leading into the songs though.

That's what I've got tonight. More later...

February 10th 2015

My voice has been struggling to get on board outside of my car. I'm great in my car. And I know everyone says that but, truly. Singing under pressure, when my

voice is out of shape is simply proving to be a challenge. I had a voice lesson with Tara earlier this week, working on “Get out and Stay Out”, and I felt like I was yelling the whole time. That is not how I want to sing this song, if it even gets included in the thesis. I need train more. On my feet. Not only in my car. I have to start rehearsals here some time soon. But I need to get a set song list. Right now I’m only singing through a million possibilities. Okay. That’s next on my list. On a positive note, we had a substitute pianist for Miss Patti who was absolutely wonderful. David was his first name. Not sure about his last... We really clicked though. I let him know I may need a pianist for my thesis and he said he would be willing if I needed him. I need to follow up on that.

February 14th, 2016

Happy Valentines day! I’m working on my thesis while Connor is in rehearsal down here in Boca. We will do dinner later. Here are my thoughts tonight. I think “Get Out and Stay Out” needs to be cut. It’s too much in the same vein as “Astonishing” and “Meadowlark”. You know, those numbers that “bring the house down”? I feel like I can realistically only do so many of those. Two at the most. And “Meadowlark” has got to stay. So here is what we are looking at right now...

Meadowlark from *The Bakers Wife*

Just One Step from *Songs for a New World*

I Read from *Passion*

Show Me from *My Fair Lady*

A Little Priest from *Sweeney Todd*

Astonishing from *Little Women*

Do It Alone from *Parade*

Revolutionary Costume For Today from *Grey Gardens*

The Light in the Piazza from *The Light in the Piazza*

Maybe Back to Before from *Ragtime?*

We'll see. That's at least what I am going to send to David to see if he is able to play all of them. I'm feeling really good about the direction this is all going. ☺

Yay!

February 21st, 2016

Gah. I haven't written in a week. Mostly because there hasn't been much to go on with the thesis this week... I emailed David to see if what pricing would be to do the show and he was wonderful. \$200 for all his rehearsal, one dress rehearsal and the performance. Very reasonable. I'm glad that step is at least taken care of.

Aside from that I need to get a hold of my actors. Obviously Connor and my mom will be willing to help. If my mom can't make it for the thesis, maybe Kate would be willing to take on Margaret for me? She would be incredible. I also need to email Kody, Blaine and Joe. I think Kody makes most sense for the Lieutenant in *Passion*. Blaine would actually make a great Leo Frank. Joe will probably be Freddy, since Freddy sings a bit in the scene work before hand. Hopefully they're all willing and available with all of their stuff they've got going on. More to come later.

March 1st, 2016

It's officially March. I've been singing through the show from beginning to end on my drives to and from Boca. With a three hour drive, there is plenty of time to rehearse. Something about the setup of the pieces doesn't quite feel right. I'm having a hard time feeling the flow. I know I want to open with "Meadowlark" and then go into "Just One Step" to lighten up the mood... add some comedy. Maybe I should add Miss Diamond into this thing... It's SUCH a funny story. We'll see. Anyway after "Just One Step" I want a feeling of simplicity. Peace. Calm. "I Read" fits that, but something about the piece makes me feel like it will either confuse or bore the audience. It's from a show that *no one* knows and I don't want people to get distracted from the point of the show. Anyway, I was reminded of *Next to Normal* the other day and listened through "I Miss the Mountains". It's so much more powerful, so much more poignant. I think I need to switch these... It feels right. Like, *really* right.

After that I'm looking at "Show Me"... It's bringing the show back to something a little lighter after such a heavy song. Also stylistically it's very different from the previous three songs. Which is great.

Then I'm thinking "A Little Priest"? Or "Astonishing"? This would be the middle of the show where we need that "act one ender" kind of feeling. The issue is, these two songs can't be used right next to each other because I plan to use Connor in both of them. I think the immediate turn around would feel odd. But if I try and put "Astonishing" later, it's such a heavy piece and the latter half of the

show will become heavy piece after heavy piece with *Parade* and *Ragtime* and *Piazza*... Ugh. It doesn't seem to fit well anywhere. I need some advice on this one. Gotta call and talk to my mama.

March 10th, 2016

I set up rehearsal times with Kate to start later this month! I've reserved the rooms and everything. This is happening! Ah! It's nerve wracking, and will be a lot of daunting work. I'm terrified. Honestly, there is a piece of me that doesn't want to do it at all. The effort and energy... and dealing with the vulnerability I know this will bring up... Gah. I need to do it. And it's settled! I'll get in two rehearsals with Kate a week in addition to the time I spend on my own. So from the time I plan to start, there is enough time to visit every song with her individually. I'll add a few more dress rehearsals the final week. Life will be good. Yay! Progress!

March 21nd, 2016

I will have my first rehearsal with Kate tomorrow. I decided I'm bringing in "I Miss the Mountains". It's a good starter piece that begins fairly simply. It feels right. It's also one of the soliloquy songs so I get to work through some of my questions. I want it to be a little prepared for an experiment/workshop we will be doing in Julia's class in the next few weeks. I've been thinking a lot about why I feel like action stops when a lot of actors start to sing. So I want to directly address actions. We had a great activity in Jim Helsinger's class last semester where we had to deliver actions at each other with one small phrase. Never had actions been broken down to something so simple and clearly imperative. So I

want to work on delivering actions in my soliloquys but I'm alone on stage. So what do I do? Who do I deliver actions at?? Ugh. The fact that this isn't taught in basic musical theatre classes makes me crazy. I think it is THE problem. More later.

March 24th, 2016

Just got done with my second rehearsal with Kate. Things are going well. We've spent quite a bit of time talking about the show and what it is that I want, which I'm still working through. I also expressed to her my nerves in singing publicly after a 2 year hiatus. I really haven't sung much while I've been here. Even to the point of botching my OST audition because I didn't think my voice could get so vocally out of shape and by the time I realized it, it was too late to really do anything about it. Anyway. My nerves are out of control about this. I've never dealt with this kind of pressure on my singing. I've always been so confident and comfortable. I don't know what's wrong with me. But I got through. It's helpful that I know Kate puts the acting first, and worries about the singing voice pretty much not at all. I also want to worry about my singing voice less. It should *not* be the primary focus of this show. The acting and emotional connection needs to come first. I choose to fight for that. My nerves aren't particularly helpful though. I need to figure out how to gain some confidence again in that area. I guess the only way to become less nervous is to do it more. So I'm trusting this gets better over time.

March 27th, 2016

Earlier this week got to do my experiment for Julia's class. I remembered an activity one of my professors had us do in undergrad. He suggested that, when singing, we could deliver our energy to one of four places: to yourself, directly to the audience, to another character (whether they are in the scene or not), and to a higher power. I think he was trying to get at the same thing I am trying to get at... But delivering *action* is so much more important than delivering energy. So I gave Kody permission to hold up 8.5 by 11 pieces of paper with 1, 2, 3, or 4 written on them and change them however he wanted throughout my performance of the song. 1 = the self. 2 = the audience. 3 = another character - in this instance, Natalie, who would be in the next room. 4 = higher power. The experiment was very successful. Questions about whether the fourth wall should be fully broken in a musical that does not traditionally break the fourth wall to that extreme. The feedback was positive for all areas of focus. They suggested that all "numbers" should be used at any given moment, because we as people change our focus from moment to moment. This helps to clarify so much for me. It seems to be becoming more and more about the who I'm talking to and what I want from them and how I'm going to get it. Basic, I know. But amateur musical theatre performers often skip over those things. I know I have. Glad to be doing this research for myself.

March 30th, 2016

Kate and I have been hashing out what it is that I really want to say with this show. She is encouraging me down the path of making the show more personal

than a simple study of non-traditional women. She says that will be difficult to define, and I agree. But I'm missing a central piece. There's this song "First You Dream" from *Steel Pier*. Audram McDonald sings it and it's lovely. I feel like that could really be a central piece of focus for the show. It's the idea that everything begins with a dream, and those dreams make us and drive us toward our goals. Also there is a facet of the song that suggests dreaming takes courage. Be courageous. All that. It really speaks to me. I'm nervous about asking David to switch songs at this point in the game, but I feel like it's not terribly hard to play. I'll email Kate and see what she thinks.

April 3rd, 2016

Over the past few days we've had a lot of changes happening. *Good changes*. Kate wrote me back and asked me to reconsider "Back to Before". She found the lyrics "where are they now those women who stared from the mirror..." Those women... I never even thought... Those women are the women in white. Like the women in white of the Mormon culture. My brain has been exploding for the last two days over this! I emailed her back telling her about all the white present in Mormon culture and how that could be an interesting visual for my show. Where are they now? Realistically, any person who has ever been focused on the perfection and purity of white as being a metaphor for their lives are finding those ideals challenged right and left. Not by dark evil things. But simply by ideas that are different from their own. By color...

April 9th, 2016

The show is three weeks from tomorrow... THREE WEEKS. Things are going well. I feel prepared. I feel as though there is enough time. But I'm nervous. SO nervous. Ever since refocusing the thesis around white and perfection and Mormon culture I feel so... shaken in rehearsals. There have been times I have to simply stop and cry it out. It never seems to get less poignant. Maybe because I'm imagining different specific people who will be viewing it every time I rehearse. My imagination of their responses overwhelms me. I know there will be many who will be very supportive and there will also be those who will be concerned about the saving my soul. As is the case with a lot of stuff we do in theatre. I guess it's because there is risk in doing this show... Risk of offending people... Risk of loved ones being disappointed in me... My big mantra of life is, people need to live the way *they* need to live to sleep at night. I cannot impose my views on them. They have had different experiences than me and I truly try and understand why they may react the way they react. I believe all my sweet Mormon friends want me to be a member of the church simply because it brings them happiness and they want that same happiness for me. I just... ugh... I would never want my parents to leave the church because I know it is truly a part of their identity, even if I don't believe in organized religion at all and that idea has brought me peace. It would *not* bring them peace. Anyway. I'm rambling. And none of my sentence structure makes sense. All I mean to say is, I am afraid of the response I will receive. I don't know what it will be. I have done my best to

simply present my story and not prescribe anything for anyone. But you never know.

April 17th, 2016

The show is coming along! I had a transitions rehearsal with Be earlier this week. It was so wonderful. She is very encouraging. But it was definitely odd sharing such personal information with her. I don't know her well, and in this one on one situation I felt like I was gushing endless personal stuff her way. But she was very patient and very receptive. She encouraged me to find a few more personal hooks in some of my transitions. And she's right. I need to find the *personal* inspiration in some of my more comedic pieces, versus a generalized "I find this character fascinating". There are others that I am very connected to. Honestly, if I weren't tied into having given my pianist the music and that being forced to be a "set" thing, I would probably change out more of the songs here. But that might be a cop out. I need to dig deeper. Every character has a realistic, true to heart story. I need to find the connection between us. Which I can do! Off to do that now...

April 28th, 2016

Today was one of the hardest days of the whole process. I open in 3 days. Kate is sick. All I have is Joe and Kody to give me feedback. And I love them. I do. I simply don't know if I have this show in me the way I want to have it in me. I performed a dress rehearsal for them and they stopped me halfway through to tell me that it was presentational... All on the surface... like I'm guarding something... which I was. I felt incredibly awkward and naked trying to share this

whole show for two people in a big space. It's horrifying. All of the sudden I felt like they would see me as self-indulgent. Who thinks they are so important not only to turn their life into a play, but relate themselves to all of these incredible characters? So I know I held back. I chickened out. They stopped me to give notes they made me do it again, which was the last thing I wanted to do. I could barely make it through. For the first time I was forced to not stop and pull myself together, but cry *through* the pieces. *Breathe through the pieces*. My voice was all over the place. I could barely sing. But that's the point I guess. I need to go there. Maybe it really doesn't have to matter what I sound like *at all*. I think I've been working in percentages. I tell myself, "If I just sound vocally capable %80 of the time, it will be fine". Maybe I need to really, *truly*, throw it all out the window. Speak on pitch. I know that's not the point of musical theatre, and a part of it is vocal capability, but I have to *start somewhere*. It's crazy how these ideas that were drilled into me when I was younger are really this difficult to release. I know it logically. But there's something deeper in me that really doesn't want to make a fool of myself vocally. It's time to let go. My mom will be here on Saturday. We will have one more dress rehearsal. It is time to let go.

Performance Reflection and Refinement

Women in White: My journey into color had its first performance on Sunday May 1st, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in Studio One of the Performing Arts Center at the University of Central Florida. The cast consisted of Joseph D'Ambrosi, Connor Padilla, Kody Grasset,

Maurie Tarbox, and myself. Lighting was designed by Madelyn James and all songs were accompanied by David Patrick. Thesis chair Kate Ingram, and committee members James Brown and Belinda Boyd were in attendance in addition to the invited audience of approximately 15 people. Reception was overwhelmingly positive and full of encouragement.

In our first semester of grad school, acting teacher Jordan Reeves shared the term “actor brain” with the graduate students. The “actor brain” is the mental piece of an actor that will rise up in the middle of a scene and tell that actor that they are not good enough. It will take the actor out of the moment and ask questions like... *Is this the right choice? What is the audience thinking? Why aren't they laughing at that joke? How can I make this next moment land?* This is the *actor's* brain producing an internal monologue, not the *character's* brain.

My over-all assessment of the first performance of *Women in White* is this: never had my own actor brain been so silent. In all honesty, I do not remember much of the performance itself. Even in the immediate aftermath, I couldn't recall many specifics within the show. This was something I had never experienced before. To be so immersed in the characters I had worked so hard to develop was exhilarating. I left that hour of storytelling feeling as though I was returning from a dream or another world entirely. I felt complete.

One major aspect I clearly recall was my over-all emotional state. The vulnerability and tears were constant. However, they did not stop me from my ability to continue through the work. Yes, there were moments where the heightened emotional

state compromised vocal consistency but in this performance I truly didn't care. In fact, I was more excited at the fact that I finally allowed myself to release so fully into the work. I felt the full joy of completing one of the greatest hurdles of my acting career. However, there was still another, even greater feat to accomplish: the remount in Utah.

In the week between the first and second performance of *Women in White*, I became aware that what I was about to encounter would likely not be easier than the previous adventure. On the contrary, it was almost as though the performance at UCF functioned as a kind of dress rehearsal for what would be the real challenge. I was now being asked to present this deeply personal, and possibly offensive piece to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; members who watched me grow up; members with whom I had not previously shared my current religious views. I knew that I had done everything I could to write the piece in such a way that it merely shared *my* story. I had no intention of prescribing a way to live for anyone else. And even though I had made peace with the fact that there would likely be people who took my words with offense, my nerves were wrecked.

I do not, nor have I ever felt comfortable sharing my deepest beliefs on social media. It brings me sadness to recognize that this is the way many people from my past would stay updated on my life over the years, but the fact of the matter is, this is the world in which we live: a world of social media. Thus, with the lack of "sharing" my personal journey over Facebook, I was sure many people still believed that I was the same person with whom they associated in high school. Truthfully, they would likely be astounded to even hear me curse. The pressure of facing these people felt almost like a

“coming out” of sorts. Expectations were high, and as I approached the thesis performance I knew those expectations would be broken. I feared the loss of friendships. I feared the gossip. I feared hurting those I love.

In weeks earlier, I had debated the notion of making a few script alterations to fit the audience of Utah. “Just One Step” contains several moments of more extreme profanity, and there are sections of sexual humor in “A Little Priest”; two things with which Mormons do not have much patience. I didn’t want to turn anybody “off” to the over-all idea I was aiming to express for the sake of a few small phrases. I also had a number of young voice students in the state of Utah who wished to come and support me. Being a mentor to these young spirits is something I hold very sacred and I would never want to betray the trust they place in me. Most importantly, I did not want to cause my family any pain. I would have been happy and willing to cut a few words if I knew they would truly break their hearts.

Even considering these opposing factors, I could not, with good conscience, make the alterations. I would have felt like a coward, conforming to pressures of the conservative demographic I was about to face. If I had learned anything in my study for this performance, it was that these lyrics, specifically chosen by the writers, were not happenstance. Not only that, but the words were integral pieces to the color these characters brought to *Women in White*. To dull that color would have been a disservice to the characters, to the playwrights, but most importantly, to myself.

On the day of the performance I had requested some time with two local Fitzmaurice Voicework instructors; Bonnie Johnson and Andra Thorne. Being two of the

most influential mentors of my life, I had known these women for many years. However, by the time I left their care in my pursuit of higher education, they had not gone through the certification process for Fitzmaurice Voicework. Eight years later they had now spent nearly a decade sharing this life-changing work. I wanted an opportunity to reconnect with these women, and there was no better time.

In our session I was shaking long before I ever intentionally induced a single tremor. Both Bonnie and Andra were members of the LDS Church, and when they last worked with me I was the faithful little Mormon girl. Simply addressing my concerns about the nature of the piece with them was an extremely difficult step. I feared their disappointment. However, both Bonnie and Andra were more than understanding. They were supportive and encouraging. They are simply the kind of women who embrace color in their own lives and knew how important it was for me to take my own journey.

As we destructured, opening the breath, taking my body even further out of balance, I shook and cried. I began to question if I would regain enough control to go through with the performance. I wondered if destructuring was even a good idea at this point, being already sporadic enough. But slowly, the scattered energy attained a new focus. We explored a new restructuring technique consisting of the vocalization of “Back to Before” while engaging the leg and core muscles in a “wall-sit”. As I worked through this, I remembered the reasons I was sharing my story and discovered a strong clarity of purpose. I was ready.

The second performance of *Women in White: My journey into color* was held on Monday May 8th, 2016 at 5:00 pm in the Eccles Black Box Theatre at Weber Sate

University. The additional cast consisted of Jon Rose as Freddy, and Sean Bishop as Leo Frank. Both Connor Padilla and Maurie Tarbox remained in their initial casting positions. Lights were designed by Austin Hull and all songs were accompanied by Derek Myler. The performance was stage managed by Taylor Knuth.

With the attendance in Florida being somewhat lower, I did not anticipate an excessively large crowd for the evening. Chairs were set up for 50 people, with no expectation of filling them all. Five minutes prior to curtain, the stage manager came to inform me we had a full house, and late-seaters would need to be standing room only. As I walked out on stage and saw the many faces of those were there to support me, I was overwhelmed. People I hadn't seen in years were filling any available space. At least a dozen of them were dressed in white with accents of color. I was astonished. I could barely speak, let alone sing. But I pushed forward.

The evening felt like a marathon. I cried a great deal. Every few minutes I would recognize a new face in the audience and be asked to consider how my words were landing on them. I remember a few lines being far more difficult to deliver in Utah than they were in Florida. The small phrase, "I was raised Mormon" felt almost like an admittance to my leaving the church. It would have been simple to alter the words in such a way that it would become generic, but "I was raised in a conservative culture" would not have been enough. The directness of the phrase was poignant, and it *landed*. I could have heard a pin drop. They knew I was about to discuss the topic head-on and they wanted to hear what I had to say.

The night progressed beautifully. As expected, the most difficult piece to perform was “Back to Before”. It was the song in which I was most stripped of any character and had the opportunity to look the audience directly in the face, as Maddie, and say, *I have seen too much to go back to the dark*. But it was no longer difficult due to any kind of fear. It was difficult because I was so thoroughly moved by the support and willingness of this audience to join me on every step of the evening’s journey.

The performance was imperfect. To be honest, it was probably a mess. But in that imperfection I found something more complete than I had ever experienced. As I threaded each colored scarf through my waistband I was able to reflect on the people with whom I have crossed paths that brought these colors into my life. Many of those people were in the room with me, cheering me on. Friends, mentors, acquaintances, strangers, and family all rose to their feet with tears in their eyes to embrace me. I felt so fortunate. Only a select few people have the opportunity to experience the fullness I felt.

CONCLUSION

In a speech for the Human Rights Campaign in October of 2016, Denis O’Hare recalled some actor advice he had received years ago. “If something scares you, you *have to do it*.” Nothing has ever scared me more than this thesis. Nothing. The obstacles I have had to overcome in order to share this story often compelled to quit and tackle something simpler. But somewhere, deep down I knew that if I gave up I would forever regret it. What I did not know is how much fulfillment the project would bring into my world.

As I look myself in the mirror at the end of this chapter in life, I find that I probably cared a great deal more about what people thought than I would have liked to admit. Throughout the process I spoke on the importance of allowing my singing voice to be a secondary focus to the story telling. I understood how important it was for me to take that step. But the habits I learned over years of amateur musical theatre study continued to make me far too concerned with being “good”, when all I really needed to concern myself with was honesty.

A few months after the performance in Utah I had a candid conversation with a friend who was in the audience that night. I expressed my slight embarrassment for the vocal inconsistencies during the performance and my fear of the gossip that would have probably stirred in the aftermath. Her words altered my perception of performance from that time forward. She said the performance would not have been as impactful if it had been “perfect”, and that any kind of flawlessness would have distanced the audience from me. The fact that I was willing to get up in front an audience and allow myself to make mistakes was inspiring to the many people in the room who would have not been brave

enough to do the same. From this I have learned this reality: *no one wants to see a perfect performance. It is not why we go to live theatre. It doesn't even exist.* So why should I ever make that a goal? The freedom this thought process has given me is something I will cherish for the rest of my life.

As I look into my future, with the aspirations of being an authentic storyteller in the theatrical arts, I feel an immense gratitude for the clarity I have gained throughout this process. I now know that, for me, the most important step in the acting process is to find the connection, the *empathy* between my character and myself. The moment I am able to articulate our similarities I am able to bring *myself* into the work. I no longer have to fight to imagine what it would feel like to be in their shoes, I can *feel it*. No, I have not experienced every tragedy my characters have faced, but I have experienced love and I have experienced loss, and I truly believe that is enough.

For many years in my life, as I would approach auditions or roles whether with success or rejection, my sweet mother would try and tell me “Maddie, *you* are enough. Just as you are”. I found the words inspirational, but they have never truly resonated until now. The more I study acting, the more I find that it is not about “putting on a character”, but rather stripping away the walls we hide behind in our every day lives. I am enough. And I will strive to not only bring more of myself to everything I do, but also discover more of myself in each theatrical endeavor I approach in this life.

Looking back on my experience with *Women in White*, I feel as though I have merely scratched the surface of something so much greater than any words written here. And yet, the knowledge I have gained both as an actor and as a woman is incredibly

profound. On one hand I have the research and study of various acting techniques that will provide a foundation for all my future endeavors. On the other hand I have the life experience of writing a truly personal piece and sharing it publicly, despite popular opinion. It is this balance for which I am most grateful. And though I will continue to ask questions, practice, and refine the work, I feel far more prepared to face the world, with all it's challenges, than I ever thought I would be. What a gift. We truly are such stuff as dreams are made on.

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