

THE ACTOR'S ROLE
IN DEVELOPING NEW PLAYS

by

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ABSTRACT

The constant development of new plays is vital for theatre to stay relevant. There is a desire, a yearning, a need to see the issues we face in our lives on stage in current contexts, and to watch characters living with them. The ability, as an Actor, to be an asset to the process of creating new works is invaluable.

For my thesis, I discuss the role of the Actor in the process of developing new plays for the stage. I say “discuss” because I venture to guess that this role is constantly evolving. There may be as many ways to approach the process as there are collaborative teams. Therefore, I do not suggest there is one right way in which an Actor can play a part in the process of new play development, nor do I intend this to be a comprehensive look at all the roles an Actor can play. However, I discovered some best practices, which I put into a list and seized this opportunity to cultivate my skills in these areas.

My intent was to work and speak with Playwrights and Directors, learning from them what they value in an Actor at the various phases of new play development, and to nurture these skills within myself. I utilized my discoveries in the World Premiere of *Triangle Logic* by Debbie Lamedman.

As theatre is a collaborative art, I learned to shift and adapt my role, depending on the other collaborators. While *Triangle Logic* was the larger focus of my thesis work, I also sought additional smaller projects, such as the workshop productions of Steven Christopher Yockey’s play, *Heavier Than...*, part of Orlando Shakespeare Theater’s PlayFest 2010, and Orlando Repertory Theatre’s devised play *Writes of Spring, I thinK his NamE Was rick*. I applied

techniques I learned while working on *Triangle Logic* to the other new projects, where appropriate. I endeavored to evaluate each experience objectively, while recognizing that they were, by nature, subjective experiences.

Dedicated to Eeva Liisa Reeder.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My first exposure to a new play was when I was quite a small child; I'm not even sure how old I was. A woman at my church, Lori Hagen, wrote a play called *The Tenth Leper*, and I played one of the lepers. Even at a young age, I knew there was something really special about being in the World Premiere of a play. I don't remember very much about the process, but I do remember it was very important for me to learn about leprosy. I bandaged my hands, fingers, and toes throughout the rehearsal process so I could realistically commit to my disease.

I didn't work on a new play again for years. My next experience was *My Precious Little Lunchbox* by Louise Zamparutti. Part of Seattle's 2001 Mae West Festival, the play was about a group of girls with eating disorders, and I played 16-year-old, anorexic Christy. Much like my first experience, it was very important to me to learn all about eating disorders and create my character's connection to her disease. The Playwright was at every rehearsal, a huge part of this process, but I don't remember much about it. I felt excited to be creating the character of Christy for the first time, but I didn't really know what that meant, or what the role of the Director, Playwright, and Actor were in this process. I approached it as I would any other play.

In 2006, I worked on a reading series through the Young Playwrights Program at Rainier Valley Youth Theatre. The program was comprised of staged readings of short plays written by elementary school students in Seattle. We performed them in various Starbucks Coffee Company stores and were paid a small stipend for our work. The young Playwrights weren't a part of the process except that they came to the final performance and enjoyed the fruits of their labors. The Director, Maria Glanz, did an excellent job of explaining to the Actors that our role simply was

to bring these scripts to life as written. We were a part of celebrating the work of these children. It was a fantastic experience I will never forget.

By the time I moved to Boston, with my Bachelor of Arts in Theater Arts from the University of Washington, I knew I had a passion inside me for new plays, a fire for being a part of the thrill of new play development, but I still wasn't entirely sure what that meant.

I took a job working as the Marketing and PR Manager for New Repertory Theatre, a mid-size theatre company in Watertown, Ma, just outside Boston. I was attracted to New Rep because of the season they were producing, which had a few plays I'd seen or heard of and a few I hadn't, and a mission with a commitment to new works: "Since 1984, New Rep has produced 59 East Coast, New England, Boston, or World Premieres.... New Rep is the Boston representative in the National New Play Network (NNPN), an alliance of not-for-profit professional theatres that champions the development, production, and continued life of new plays for the American Theatre" (newrep.org). If I hadn't been excited about new works before this, I certainly would have caught the bug here.

We all worked tremendously hard in our own departments, and when we had time, we'd assist each other on big projects. I became close friends with M. Bevin O'Gara, the Artistic Associate, who is now the Associate Producer for the Huntington Theatre. Among her many responsibilities, O'Gara headed the Literary Department at New Rep, which involved coordinating interns and staff to read approximately 200 submissions of new plays per year. Shortly after beginning work at New Rep, I volunteered to help read plays. We'd read a play, fill out a form, and rank it on a scale from one to three. A score of two or higher got a second read. I felt a tremendous amount of responsibility when reading these plays, knowing the Playwright's

hard work and hopes were in my hands. I didn't want to discard something great, but I didn't want to create extra reading for the already stretched-thin departmental staff either.

From these submissions, we selected four plays for our annual New Voices @ New Rep reading series. These readings were used, in part, as an aid in season selection. In the Spring of 2007, I was the reader/other voices for our New Voices @ New Rep reading of Thomas Gibbon's play *A House with No Walls*, directed by Adam Zahler, which we produced as part of a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere in the Fall of 2007.

As I applied to graduate programs and began to narrow down my choices, The University of Central Florida (UCF) jumped quickly to the top of my list. They had a focus on Shakespeare, a well-rounded voice and movement training, dance and voice classes, personable professors and students, and they had a partnership with The Orlando Shakespeare Theater (OST). The only thing missing for me was a focus on new plays. About the time UCF made me an offer, NNPN announced the 2009 conference would be held at OST. I was still working at New Repertory Theatre, and we'd hosted the 2008 conference. So, I took a closer look at OST. I discovered Playfest, their annual 10-day festival of new play workshops and readings. I also noticed that developing new plays was a part of their mission statement (<http://orlandoshakes.org>). This solidified for me that UCF in partnership with OST was a good fit for me.

While still in Boston, I participated for two years in Boston Playwright's Theatre's Boston Theatre Marathon, a presentation of 50 new 10-minute plays produced by 50 different companies and performed as a fundraiser for the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund (<http://www.bu.edu/bpt/btm/index.html>). It was a thrilling community-building endeavor and celebration of theatre. My second year, I was cast in Gary Garrison's *Verticals and Horizontals*, directed by Bridget Kathleen O'Leary for 3 Monkey's Theatricals. Garrison and O'Leary met at

the beginning of the rehearsal process, and he was available by phone from New York after that. I never got the opportunity nor took the initiative to speak with him, but for the first time, I began to experience the exciting collaboration of Playwright, Director and Actors. The play was running around 14 minutes and had to be cut in order to fit into the allotted time constraints of the Marathon. We'd try things at rehearsal; O'Leary would discuss them with Garrison; and we'd cut the script.

This was my last performance in Boston, and it was amazingly satisfying. O'Leary directed with a creative and positive energy; my acting partner, Michael Kaye, was wonderful to work with; Garrison wrote a very funny and touching play; and the audience LOVED it. It was an amazing way to say goodbye to Boston and whet my appetite for all I would learn in graduate school.

It was during the Spring of my first year of training when UCF Professor Earl Weaver approached me about playing Claire in the World Premiere of *Triangle Logic* by Debbie Lamedman; I accepted immediately. I'd worked with Professor Weaver the previous Fall on *Jake's Women* and had a tremendously positive experience. It took me no time to decide to use *Triangle Logic* as my thesis production. I had been cultivating all the other parts of Actor training at UCF and was excited to start learning about New Works. In selecting a thesis topic, I knew I was most interested in discovering what my role would be as an Actor in working on a new play. I wanted to discover how to approach a new play differently than I had in the past, differently than I would approach a tried and true play. I also hoped to learn how I could be the best asset to the Playwright and Director throughout the process,.

Why Does this Matter?

Theatre is about a shared human experience. Really great theatre can be timeless; as history repeats itself, we find relevance in beautifully-written plays from decades and centuries ago. One challenge with a classic play can be that there is often a distancing effect due to the historical context and language. This is especially true with a younger audience, which I define as both young theatre goers by age and those who are new to the theatre.

New Work is essential to the furthering of theatre as an art form, and within that, new plays can be an excellent audience development tool. They may show timeless themes in a different light, in a language or setting that is familiar to us, or in a way that shocks or stirs us. At times, they can be the most accessible theatre today. Rick Lombardo, Artistic Director of San Jose Repertory Theatre, says, “The organizations, non-profit theatres, have a responsibility to take care of our audience and of the American Theatre. Cultivating new work is part of the job, if we fully embrace it. So, we need to make a commitment to nurturing new voices. If we don’t, there won’t be new voices. Theatre will become passé. Audiences won’t see themselves in the plays. Classics and Modern Classics are great, but people want to see themselves in the lives that they see on stage” (theActorsrole...).

In his book *Off-Off Broadway Explosion – How Provocative Playwrights of the 1960’s Ignited a New American Theater*, Playwright David A. Crespy says, “There is, and always has been, a pioneer spirit for creating exciting new theater across America... Americans have been rebelling to create their own theater since colonial times” (12). The book goes on to describe how Off-Off Broadway in the 1960’s filled a need in America to foster Playwrights in a passionate and committed environment as Broadway and Off-Broadway became more commercial. This time changed the landscape of American plays. He also discusses the value of

the many regional theatres across the country that have made it a part of their mission to foster new work. The history of play development is a fascinating study. While reading about it, one thing that inspired me was the fervor and dedication and the necessity of this work. Crespy writes, “Only by constantly trying new techniques onstage, experimenting with a script in performance with Actors, Directors, and designers interpreting dialogue can a Playwright truly understand the art and craft of theater and take advantage of its conventions, it’s techniques, and it’s magic” (14-15). This is where my research begins. I want to learn to be the best Actor I can be for the Playwright and Director in the thrilling work of developing new plays for the American Stage.

In 2009, the Theatre Development Fund (TDF) published *Outrageous Fortune: the life and times of the new american play*, a compilation of a fantastic study conducted over a six-year period. During this time they interviewed working Playwrights, 350 of them, surveyed leaders at 94 Regional theatres that have a dedication to new play development and are a part of the Theatre Communication Group (TCG) network. They facilitated roundtable discussions with Playwrights and artistic leaders, and interviewed professional Producers, Agents, Educators, Playwrights, and Artistic Directors (London, XVI).

In the introduction to the book, Executive Director Victoria Bailey says, “As we talked and traveled, it was clear to us that the new play does appear on stages all over the country. But it was also clear that the ecosystem in which the new play is produced is not healthy. Playwrights cannot make a living from their plays. Artistic Directors are deeply troubled as they work to navigate the marketing and funding pressures facing their theatre.” I have seen the struggles of new play development from a marketing standpoint first hand, and I am sympathetic to the plight of the non-profit theatre and working Playwright. However, as my chosen career is acting, not

marketing, and I believe the future of new plays is the future of theatre, I want to find what best way I can assist the process as an Actor and keep the development of new plays alive in America.

Bailey continues: “One of the clearest messages I’ve received throughout the course of this study is that language is failing us. Writers and those who produce their plays are not talking honestly with each other... None of us are listening to the entire story, but rather only the piece we like, the part that confirms what we already believe. We must learn to speak together and to listen” (XIV). So, I’ve decided I want to learn both how to be the best instrument for the Director and Playwright and also how best to communicate in the rehearsal process.

In the following chapters, you will find my approach to acting in the World Premiere of *Triangle Logic* by Debbie Lamedman. I’ve included my character and text analysis, completed primarily before rehearsals began, as an insight into my process. You also will find my rehearsal journal describing my personal process, inspirations, and the research I used along the way. Some of my guiding questions as I embark on this project are: Are there different or additional techniques that I need to apply when working on a new play? How does my role in the process change from one phase of development to the next? How do I best communicate in advance of rehearsals, in the rehearsal room, and with the different collaborators? Finally, I’ve included my personal reflections on my process and performance as well as ideas for how I can use this experience as I move forward in the fascinating field of new play development. I conclude by applying what I’ve learned to a workshop production of *Heavier Than...* at Orlando Shakespeare Theater’s Playfest and a devised theater piece, *Writes of Spring: I thinK his NamE Was rick*, at Orlando Repertory Theatre.

CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER AND TEXT ANALYSIS

One of my favorite things about acting is creating my character. I love the detailed work of fleshing out her life, her needs, desires and thoughts. This section was completed before the first rehearsal, and I have not gone back to add to it; it isn't meant to be right or wrong, but rather to get me thinking about Claire from many angles. In the first section, I answer several questions about her given circumstances; some came from the text and some I created. I also break down each scene by objectives and actions to clarify for myself what I want going into each scene and how I intend to get it. In the second section, I write a journal as Claire, directly after each scene. I did this because it helped me to evaluate each scene from her perspective and to really get inside her head and start to think like her.

Section I – Given Circumstances

1. What is a typical day for Claire like? What is the most important element to Claire: family, love, or career?

My typical day involves sleeping until 1:00pm or later, because I've been up really late the night before. When I get out of bed, I make coffee - black, with toast - dry, and head to the couch. I think to myself that I should read the paper, get caught up on the news; instead, I watch soap operas for an hour or two. Don't judge; Martin McDonagh claims it gives him a good arc to his stories. Then, I start to feel guilty that I've spent the whole day in my pajamas and decide I might as well work out before I shower. I go down to the tiny gym in my apartment building, do the elliptical machine for 40 minutes, do 20 minutes of free weights, and head back to my apartment to shower. I make myself lunch, settle down at the computer and start to browse for

jobs. I might fill out an online application or two, or I might follow up on an application.

Tuesday evenings, I go to my writing workshop. Other evenings, I head to the Daily Grind, my favorite coffee shop, and write. Sometimes my best friend, Jack, or my new friend, Ben, join me for awhile. Jack and I talk, or Ben and I write, me on my laptop, him longhand. I usually stay until the Daily Grind closes, and then I go home and write some more. I take breaks to watch my favorite shows on Tivo. I love *Grey's Anatomy*, *LOST*, *Mad Men*, *Brothers and Sisters*.

I would say I put my priorities in this order: career, love, family. However, if I'm honest, I probably want: love, career, family. My career is very important to me, but I know I procrastinate, and I do that by spending time with friends and Ben, who I'm attracted to. So, I do really long for love, but it is a love I know I can't have. Maybe someday I'll find someone I love and who loves me. For now, I really care about being a writer. It is hard, but I love it. I love to read. I think books can change the world. I like fiction. I like to write short stories, and someday I'd like to write a novel as well. I dabble in a little poetry. My first book will likely be a collection of short stories. That is what I'm working on right now. I pay to go to this weekly writing workshop, because even though I don't have a job and money is really tight, it is really important to me to keep improving as a writer. Also, it really helps me keep writing to have someone keep me accountable. It isn't that I don't care about family, but my family is spread out. My brother and his wife live in Southern California with their three kids. They are wonderful and I love them, but I probably only talk about them once every two weeks. My mother and father divorced when I was in high school. My mother remarried two years later and lives with her husband in Albuquerque. My father, a university Professor in Art History, has been remarried twice now. His second wife was a lawyer who spent too much time on her work, so they were only married for eight months. His third wife, a fellow Professor, and he live in Oregon.

2. What person or fictional character does Claire most remind me of?

I know Claire is based on the Playwright, Debbie Lamedman, but loosely. However, it does make me want to give her a full and nuanced life. Ben said Jack and Claire remind him of Will and Grace, and that probably fits; Claire is a fun, dynamic, slightly neurotic woman who is professionally driven. Some of my movements are like Grace from *Will and Grace*, but that's because they have come from the way Lamedman writes, not because of having watched the show.

3. How old is Claire?

I was born August 10, 1977, so at the start of the play I am 32. I am a Leo. Astrology is not something to live by, but I am constantly amazed at how accurate it is about me. I looked up my sign online at psychicguild.com

And this is what it said:

Your element: Fire

Your ruling planets: The Sun

Symbol: The Lion

Your stone: Peridot

Life Pursuit: To lead the way

Vibration: Radiant Energy

Leo's Secret Desire: To be a star

Description:

Love triumphs over all for this sign, which is ruled by the heart and operates from this dimension, too. Leo's are born fortunate. Charismatic and positive-thinking, they attract not only an abundance of friends and opportunities, but they manage to survive life's stormy times with style and good humour.

Once a Lion is committed to a relationship, they are totally devoted and faithful. Should a relationship break down (even a long standing one), they can disappear into the sunset without a backward look. Leos can cut ties and leave others heartbroken, but usually there is a good reason why they have broken a tryst. For a Leo, when a relationship is over, ...it is over for good.

This is one sign where the saying "flattery will get you everything" applies, but be warned -- criticism will slam the relationship door right in your face." their heart or trust will be broken, and they never forgive or forget (Starwoman).

4. Does Claire have children? How does she feel about them?

I don't have children. I'd like to have them someday, but I am nervous that I might not be a good a mother. I like my life the way it is and would have to make some pretty large changes in order to make that happen. I still feel young, but I know I can't wait forever if I want to get pregnant. However, I'm not super stressed out about it, because people are having children later in life now. This isn't something I spend too much time thinking about, but when it does come up, I kind of feel sad. I don't have a clear idea of how I can expect to start a family, when I've never had a serious boyfriend, and am not even attracted to someone who is available to me. I try

to be attracted to straight men who hit on me, but I can't make it happen. I go on dates with them, and I'm bored, uninterested. I don't know why.

5. Who lives with Claire and what are their relationships?

I live alone which I LOVE. I had roommates for years, but I decided that by the time I was 30, I wouldn't have roommates anymore. I'd really like to own a home someday, but having my own apartment for the past few years has been life changing. I still go to coffee shops to write, but having a quiet apartment to come home to has increased my ability to write at home. Sometimes it is a little lonely, especially when I want to process my day, but I love not having to deal with roommates and the drama that comes with it.

6. Who else heavily influences Claire?

I am heavily influenced by Jack and Ben. I'm very conscious of what they think of me, and I alter my behavior to impress them. It sometimes seems like Ben always thinks I'm amazing, but I'm still nervous around him and try really hard to impress him. Jack seems to always have a little criticism for me, but I really want to find ways to make him proud. He is incredibly smart and successful. It would be the ultimate accomplishment if he one day published one of my books. I'll never ask him to, but if he thought it was great, that would be cool. I let Ben read my writing all the time, and he gives me really amazing critique. I only let Jack read stuff I feel really good about, but I still tell him it's simply a draft. This is in part because I'm nervous about what he thinks. Also, I know he'll have a lot to say about it, and I want him to know that I know I'm not perfect. Lastly, honestly, I'm protecting myself from really putting it out there. I find myself making disclaimers and prefacing or justifying my work

to him, but it does prepare him to be a more open reader, and I do want him to be honest, because I know his opinion is valid.

7. What are Claire's Love Languages (Chapman)?

I receive love primarily through words of affirmation. I fell for Ben, in part, because he “believes in me more than I do” (Act One, Scene One). He believes in my writing, compliments me, and is all around positive. However, Jack can often be the opposite.: “you undermine me, you criticizes me, you judge me (Act Two, Scene Two). Sometimes it is hard to understand why he even wants to be friends by the way he talks to me. I also receive love through quality time. One of the reasons Ben and I have gotten close so fast is we go for coffee and talk about writing. We enjoy spending time together, watching movies, walking, going for a drink, our trip to Mexico, whatever, as long as we're hanging out. This is also one of the things that really works for Jack and me. He loves spending time with me, eating ice cream, doing laundry, drinking coffee and simply talking. This is part of why I am so hurt when Ben and Jack don't show up for Elise's book signing. I definitely give love with quality time too, but I also give love through gifts. I love finding the perfect gift for someone, like the leather journal I found for Ben. When I know it is perfect, I don't mind spending a little more money than I usually would. I don't mind taking him to dinner or drinks or to an event, because I know he appreciates it and it means we can spend time together. I know this sometimes gets me into trouble financially, but I'm trying to be careful not to spend too much. Either way, it's just money.

8. What kind of self-esteem does Claire have?

I have decent self-esteem. I mean, I like myself. Sometimes I'm not super-confident, which is why I love that Ben always believes in me. Deep down I do believe in myself, but I

don't want to look cocky, or be wrong, so I down play myself in hopes of lowering expectation and then beating them.

Writing is so subjective, so it is difficult for me to know how good I am. The people in my writing workshop think I'm really good, but they're all learning, and even the teacher probably wants me to pay for another class, so no wonder she is encouraging. Jack thinks I'm just an ok writer, mediocre, but I'm not sure if he is just trying not to let me get my hopes up, or if he knows because he's in publishing and he is just being honest with me. Is he hard on me because he sees potential or because he is giving me a reality check?

9. What are my most attractive or unattractive physical features? How do I exhibit them?

How do I hide them?

My eyes are my most attractive feature, and my body isn't bad. I have kept in pretty good shape for my age. My least attractive features are the bags I get under my eyes (which don't look better when I'm up all night writing) and how pale my skin is. If I can't be tan in LA, where can I be tan? Being comfortable is very important to me. I guess also not looking like I'm trying to look great. I usually dress in shorts and a shirt or jeans. I don't really spend a lot of money on clothes. If I am going to dress up, I like flowing dresses, but I do have suits for business.

10. What is your character's physical rhythm?

I have a pretty quick, radiant and staccato rhythm. It comes out especially in how I speak. I tend to allow my words to pour out even if it means repeating myself, so I can't be interrupted. Occasionally, when I'm really passionate about something, I punch with my words or speak with a more driving potency. My body tends to follow my voice. I like to move a lot; I like to be comfortable, throw myself across furniture, gesture with different body parts. I am fairly free in

expressing with my body. This may come across as unprofessional or immature, but it is more about being comfortable with myself and my friends. I tend to spend time in places where I am comfortable. When I'm in a place where I am less comfortable, and I get nervous, I notice that I hold myself in a little. I still tend to speak quickly, but my body is more bound and my body movements may be less free and more hesitant, as if I'm stifling my impulse to move.

11. What is Claire's biggest goal within the play?

My super objective is to be loved for who I am and as a writer.

12. What does Claire's want in each scene of the play? What actions will she use to get it?

Does it coincide with or conflict with other character's wants in those scenes?

Note: This part of the document is best read with a copy of the script. You're welcome to skip to number 13 if you don't have a copy.

Lists of possible actions are a place to start for rehearsals taken from my first draft of script scoring. I may not play all these or may play completely different actions in the end. For the purpose of this section, actions are most often verbs; what I want to do to the other character.

ACT ONE

[Act One, Scene One - Ben's guest house. 2 AM](#)

I want to print a hard copy of my story I just finished. I want to see Ben. I have wanted to use the key he showed me so I can see his apartment without him there. It takes the friendship to a new level. I want him to come home while I'm there. I want to make sure he isn't mad at me. I want to stay for the movie. I want him to want me to stay. I want him to convince me.

Possible Actions: Call out to make sure he isn't home; to defend; make excuses to leave; to flirt.

Act One, Scene Two - Claire's Apartment. Around 12 noon.

I want to finish my laundry. I want to brag about finishing my story and hanging out with Ben. I want Jack to say nice things about my story. I want him to ask to read it. I want him to like it. I want him to be jealous of and curious about Ben.

Possible Actions: to brag; to hint, to impress, to excuse, to defend, to tease, to contradict, to risk, to reveal, to shut him down, to invite.

Act One, Scene Three - The Daily Grind Coffeehouse/Bookstore. Evening the same day.

I want Ben to love the journal I got him. I want Jack and Ben to like each other. I want the night to go smoothly. I want to be the center of attention. I want Jack not to flirt with Ben. I want Ben to be focused on me so Jack sees I'm not making it up.

Possible Actions: to present, to compliment, to flirt, to touch his knee, to introduce, to warn, to diminish, to insist, to assure.

Act One, Scene Four - Claire's apartment. One month later.

I want to finish my thought to keep my promise about writing everything down. I want to share my news with Jack, and I want him to be really excited for me. I want to find a way to tell him about Tijuana without him freaking out. I want him to tell me I deserve the trip. I want him to "be excited for my new job, my friends, everything."

Possible Actions: to explain, to justify, to acknowledge, to reveal, to excite, to brag, to tease, to prove, to elaborate, to defend, to clarify, to confirm, to impress, to accuse, to make a point, to reason, to remind, to insult, to guilt, to beg, to stop him, to question, to interrogate, to jab, to escape, to attack, to go in for the kill, to shut him down, to contradict, to rub it in, to pursue, to accuse, to bite, to hold it in.

Act One, Scene Five - A few days later. A motel room on the U.S. side of the Mexican Border. Around 11PM.

I want to make fabulous memories with Ben. I want to seduce him. I want him to seduce me. I want to get his side of the story about what happened with Jack.

Possible Actions: to plan, to find a solution, to laugh, to flirt, to encourage, to compliment, to hint, to reveal, to draw out, to deny, to challenge, to rejoice, to prove, to point out the obvious, change the subject, to tempt, to insist, to state facts, to diminish, to pout, to encourage, to ask, to reveal, to take sides, to seduce, to prove, to justify, to affirm, to touch him, to convince, to influence, to persuade.

Act One, Scene Six – Claire’s apartment. The next day. Early evening.

I want Jack to apologize. I want to apologize. I want to tell him what happened and for him to make me feel better. I want to feel normal again.

Possible Actions: to wait, to test, to apologize, to avoid, to play dumb, to confide, to reveal, to whine, to defend, to insist, to test the waters, to joke, to describe, to be gory, to elaborate, to get him on my side, to make him feel sorry for me, to give in, to exaggerate, to doubt, to make fun, to make point, to thank, to repair, to defend, to deny, to plan, embellish, to realize, to admit, to decide, to quote, to warm, to consider, to admit, to get agreement, to tease.

Act One, Scene Seven – Claire’s apartment. Three months later.

I want to answer the phone, but am unsure if I’m ready.

Possible Actions: to listen, to remember, to catch him, to let him in, to answer.

ACT TWO

Act Two, Scene One - Ben’s guest house. 1 month later. 11PM

I want to have a fun night. I want us to go out. When I realize Ben and Jack are going to sleep together, I want to make them change their mind. When I realize they’ve made up their minds, I leave, hurt and humiliated.

Possible Actions: to joke, to agree, to contradict, to take sides, to insist, to explain, to make points, to deny, to make fun, to acquiesce, to excite, to impress, to invite, to challenge, to lay it out, to insist, to convince, to call out, to draw out, to get to the bottom, to guilt, to tease, to preach, to joke, to compliment, to empathize, to remind, to let go, to challenge, to warn, to fight, to beg.

Scene Two - Claire’s apartment. The next day. Early evening.

I want Jack and Ben to answer the phone. I want to know they aren’t dead. I want them to feel bad about missing the signing.

Possible Actions: to threaten, to spell it out, to beg, to challenge, to yell, to pull back, convince.

Act Two, Scene Three – Claire’s apartment. Later that same evening—1:00AM

I want Jack to have a good explanation. I want to punish him. I want him to realize how his actions affect me. I want him to take responsibility for how he hurt me. I want him to admit

he was wrong. I want him to apologize. I want him to leave. I want to end it so he stops hurting me.

Possible Actions: to send away, to warn, to deny, to demand an explanation, to berate, to attack, to remind, to accuse, to take a stand, to insult, to contradict, to make a point, to prove, to lay it out, to insult, to break up, to ignore, to yell, to scream, to threaten, to scare, to escape, to decide, to test, to insist, to pressure, to lie, to insult, to question, to stand firm, to let him go, to leave him, to challenge, to give up on him, to take it.

Act Two, Scene Four- The Daily Grind Coffeehouse. Two years later.

I want people to come to my signing. I want to sell books. When I see Ben and Jack there, I want to find out if they are together. I want them to see I'm okay and successful. I want to impress them but not get emotionally involved.

Possible Actions: to state, to concede, to be the better person, to clarify, to compliment, to shed light, to ease the tension, to stop, to diminish, to conceal, to defend, to empathize, to allow in, to justify, to set the record, to deny, to concede, to pry, to avoid, to clarify, to encourage, to evade, to concede, to thank, to announce, to show enjoyment, to hesitate, to correct, to tease, to confirm, to clarify, to test, to correct, to ask, to admit, to state, to confide, to excuse, to concede, to validate.

13. What props or scenic elements could Claire relate to within the play?

I am really drawn to things in the place, like my desk, because that is where I write. I feel comfortable there. I also love my bed, because by the time I fall into it at night, it is a really wonderful place to sleep. I don't want to leave it in the mornings. About four years ago I got a nice bed. It cost \$549, but I had been having back pain and sleeping on a futon, and everyone

kept telling me to get a good bed -- it will make all the difference. It really did, so now I love it. I will never sleep on a crappy bed again.

14. How do those props/scenic elements develop Claire?

The furniture influences my movement. I'm kind of sporadic, so I tend to throw myself around on stuff, so I enjoy having lots of stuff to move around and rest on. Also, I like to stay busy, so the laundry in the show, the ice cream, typing, packing, all makes me feel productive and I like that.

15. What emotion should the audience feel toward Claire? Sympathy, hatred, friendship, lust, admiration, etc.?

The audience should be on my side, because I'm right. It's my story, and while I don't always act perfectly, I do my best to treat others well, be clear about what I need from them and live in a positive way. The way Jack talks to me would make anyone cringe. The audience will wish I could stay away from Ben, but wish I had someone straight in my life whom I could love and would love me back, because I deserve it, and it would be good for me. They will be excited I finished my book and proud of me for being productive instead of depressed and reclusive.

[Section II – Claire's Journal](#)

After you finish this, write a brief short story about each scene in the play from your character's perspective. I will do this as if each is an entry in Claire's journal, after the fact.

ACT ONE

[Act One, Scene One - Ben's guest house. 2 AM](#)

I went to Ben's house tonight, because I'd finished one of my short stories, and I wanted to print it. I called ahead, and he wasn't home. He told me once where he kept the key, so after

deliberating for like 30 minutes, I drove over and let myself in. I was pretty excited. There is something pretty intimate about being in someone's house when they aren't there. It took everything in me not to snoop too much, but I'm glad I didn't, because Ben got home not long after I arrived. At first, I thought he might be mad I was there, but he quickly assured me that he wasn't. Then, he tried to talk me into staying to watch a movie with him. I pretended I didn't want to for a little while, kind of played hard to get, because I wanted to make sure he wanted me there. He did. So, we stayed up, cuddling in his bed, watching a movie. It was amazing. I'm totally falling for him, but I'm trying not to. He is so wonderful and sweet to me. He believes in me in ways I never thought possible. I love how I feel when I'm with him. I know he is gay and that nothing probably ever will happen, but I can't help how I feel. I wish I could.

Act One, Scene Two - Claire's Apartment the next day. Around 12 noon.

So, Jack came over to talk while I finished my laundry, and I told him I have a crush on Ben. In classic Jack style, he got all bent out of shape and self-righteous. He even used his annoying whiny voice. Anyway, we agreed it is time for him to meet Ben. So, I invited him to join Ben and me tonight after our writing workshop. I hope I'm not jumping the gun. I mean, I want them to get to know each other, to like each other, but I don't want them to fall for each other. Jack would be an asshole if he did, and I really don't think Ben would do that to me. Well, I better get going, I have a little more I need to finish on one of my stories before the writing workshop, and I want to pick up a congratulatory present for Ben for finishing one of his stories.

Act One, Scene Three - The Daily Grind Coffeehouse/Bookstore. Evening the same day.

Ben and I met Jack at The Daily Grind tonight after our writing workshop. I gave Ben the leather journal I bought for him. He really seemed to like it. I always think it is kind of a romantic notion to write long hand. I've tried to do it myself, and I find I prefer my computer. I do like to print it and work from a draft once I have one, but I'm not really a journal sort of person. Even this journal, here I am, typing away.

Anyway, the Jack and Ben meeting went well. At first it was a little awkward; no one knew where they wanted to go; Ben thought Jack worked in a library. Hilarious! Oh, the look on Jack's face. Then, of course, Jack had to start showing off to save his pride. Amazing. Finally, we decided to go for a drink. I really do think Jack is a little jealous of Ben, because he was being all touchy feely and buddy-buddy all night. It kind of cracks me up.

Act One, Scene Four - Claire's apartment. One month later.

I'm so furious, I can't even think straight. Jack slept with Ben. I asked him not to and he did it anyway. I invited him over tonight to tell him about how I got this great job at Random House. I thought we'd have a really great night and he'd want to celebrate with me. I thought that since it is in publishing, he'd be really proud of me; it would be something else we would have in common. I thought maybe he knew some gossip from the inside, and we could relax and celebrate. I even got a bottle of his favorite champagne, and he never gave me the chance to open it.

As soon as he found out about my trip to Tijuana with Ben, he got all paranoid and irritated. He started making all these accusations about why my friendship with Ben is a bad

thing. He even brought up the one time I borrowed money from him 3 years ago. I was really broke, out of work, and eating top ramen and mac and cheese. Then my car broke down, and I had to pay \$350 to get it fixed. I'd already maxed out my credit cards, and I needed my car to go to job interviews. I didn't want to borrow money from him, but he offered. And I was really thankful and really grateful, and I paid him back in less than a year. I couldn't believe he brought that up tonight, but now I see he was just trying to put all the blame on me. He was feeling guilty, and he wanted me to feel badly, too.

I don't think he was even planning to tell me he'd slept with Ben...or was he? He acted like I figured it out, like it just slipped out, but he didn't apologize or anything. He knows I don't care who he sleeps with. I asked him to stay away from one guy. Then, he called me a fag hag for getting upset. Which is so unfair. I hate him so much right now. I hope he is miserable and can't sleep tonight.

I can't get the picture of the two of them out of my head. Why would they do that? What am I going to say to Ben? Will he tell me?

[Act One, Scene Five - A few days later. A motel room on the U.S. side of the Mexican Border. Around 11PM.](#)

So, Ben and I drank, a lot. The Margaritas weren't 10 cents, but for the life of me I can't do the math to figure out how much they were. I barely remember last night, maybe because I'd had too much to drink, maybe because I'm blocking it. I didn't plan to talk to Ben about Jack, but somehow it came up. I should have known that if I drank, I wouldn't keep my mouth shut. I was kind of hoping he would say it had been bad for him too, but he seemed to really wish it had gone better. I had such mixed feelings. It really scared me and hurt me when he said he wished

he could have stayed with Jack. But then he told me he is in love with me and would drive across the country for me. I'm so confused. I wasn't sure how to react. Then, he became all sad and locked himself in the bathroom, so I was saying anything to make him feel better and come out. When he did, he was all over me. I was shocked and excited and didn't really know how to respond. Then, it was over so quickly, and he just rolled over and passed out. I felt so alone. I'm not sure if he slept with me because he loved me or if it was to get back at Jack. I moved to the other bed. It was humiliating.

Act One, Scene Six – Claire's apartment. The next day. Early evening.

Jack and I made up. He brought over ice cream, like he always does, and we gossiped. It actually felt really good to vent about last night. Jack, of course, tried to make it a lesson and tried to convince me to go to therapy. I don't know, maybe I should. I will have benefits in three months. It just seems like people in therapy are paying a lot for a fake friend to whine to and rarely seem to get better. They appear to be digging deep into themselves and finding all these things about themselves but not really changing that much in their lives. It's a lot of money and a lot of pain for something I'm not sure would even work. Would you tell a gay man to go to therapy for liking straight men? Maybe this is simply the way I am. Or maybe, really maybe, you don't fall in love with a man or a woman or a straight man or a lesbian or a gay man. Instead, you fall in love with a person. I just need to fall in love with the right person, who loves me back. I don't really understand how Ben can love me but not love me. Maybe I should have asked him to clarify, but now I just need some space to heal. I can't face him. I need to focus on work right now anyway.

Act One, Scene Seven – Claire’s apartment. Three months later.

Ben and I talked on the phone for the first time in three months. To his credit, he’d been really persistent, and I guess that is why I finally answered. Also, I can’t let my embarrassment about him keep me away from improving my writing. I’ve settled in at Random House, and I have more time, so I’ll take it slow, but I guess I’m ready to let him back into my life.

ACT TWO

Act Two, Scene One - Ben’s guest house. 1 month later. 11PM

Ben, Jack and I went to see Stephen Karam’s Speech and Debate tonight and went back to Ben’s place to hang out. We debated all the way there about whether or not it should be made into a movie. I thought we should go for a drink, but they didn’t want to. I was distracted about tomorrow’s book signing for Elise Jorgensen, so at first I didn’t pick up on what was going on. It was so humiliating, because I was getting ready to leave, and I kept pressuring Jack to come with me, and he was making all these excuses why he couldn’t leave yet. Finally, I realized they’re going to sleep together again. The least he could have done was walk me out to my car and pretended to go home. AND, I can’t believe Ben. He said he never brings guys home, but Jack, who hurt him so badly a few months ago, is the one? Does he really want to have another guaranteed bad experience at his own home? Now they are going to be weird tomorrow, and I just don’t need to deal with that at the signing. I totally tried to talk Jack out of it and warn Ben with my eyes, but it’s his own damn fault now. Ugh!

Act Two, Scene Two - Claire’s apartment. The next day. Early evening.

Both Ben and Jack missed the signing today. I haven’t been able to get them on the phone, so I don’t know what to think. It can’t be a coincidence that they both didn’t make it, but

they aren't usually this inconsiderate. I'm really scared they are hurt. I considered driving over to Ben's house to see if they were there, but what will I find out? Either they aren't there and I'm still worried, or they are there, fine as can be, and I'm the obsessive friend who came by. I really don't know what to do. I hope they aren't hurt, but I hope they have a good excuse for missing it. They must. But, what could it be? Ugh! I need to go to sleep. Maybe everything will look different in the morning.

Act Two, Scene Three – Claire's apartment. Later that same evening—1:00AM

Jack and I just broke up. I told him I'm done and he left. It had taken me forever to fall asleep because I was so worried, and then just when I finally did, Jack knocks on my door – at 1:00 in the morning – with ice cream. Really!?! It was like he thought he could make it all better with a stupid thoughtless gesture. I'd been thinking about why our relationship is so fucked up. I tried to tell him what I need from him. I need him to be more positive. I need him to listen to me. I need him to support me. However, even as I said the words, "I wish you would stop criticizing me", even as I asked him to take responsibility for his actions, he just attacked me over and over again. Then, he said I'm not a good friend. And he left. I really thought he might apologize. I really hoped we might get past this, but I'd decided I wouldn't take the same shit. He would really have to take responsibility for the way he treats me, apologize and promise to try to be better. I wouldn't have expected him to be perfect right away, but I wanted him at least to acknowledge he is hurting me. He couldn't do it. I'm really sad he is gone. It is the best thing, but I'm sad. I guess it really is time to make a clean cut. I know in time I'll be okay.

Act Two, Scene Four- The Daily Grind Coffeehouse. Two years later.

Tonight was my book signing at The Daily Grind and something so crazy happened. Ben and Jack showed up. At first, I thought they were together still, but apparently it was a coincidence they came at the same time. Jack doesn't even live in LA anymore. He lives in NY and works for Viking! He was nice, but a little distant, said he came by accident. Ben thinks he was lying. I'm not sure what to think. Ben was really sweet and encouraging, just like he always was, but I'm not sure what to do. I was definitely taken aback when I saw them, and I do miss them a little. I know I've healed and grown as a person, but I don't know if that means it would be a good idea to get back together with them. Maybe that is a script that can't be rewritten. Maybe it is better left alone. I took Ben's copy of the book to sign. I guess if I don't want to see him, I can always mail it to him. I know this -- I will take as much time as I need to decide.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH, REHEARSAL, AND PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

I've included the journal of my thoughts and research throughout the rehearsal process and performances. I address my challenges, discoveries, and how my thoughts grew and changed over several months. This journal is intentionally casual as it is my thoughts-in-process and intended to help the reader understand the daily work I did in creating Claire for the first time. I most often will refer to myself the Actor as I and Claire as she, but occasionally, when addressing character development, I will reference Claire as I. This is not meant to be prescriptive in anyway, but merely a glimpse into my own personal process.

This Journal spans from May 2009 through December 2009. During this time I also was working on *Henry 4, Part 1*, playing Lady Percy. I occasionally reference that production as well.

Thursday, May 29, 2009

My first entry: yay! I am currently playing Lady Percy in Lexington Summerfest's production of *Henry 4, Part 1*. Working on this role and Shakespeare's language while researching *Triangle Logic* (and thinking about new plays) has really made me think about what makes a great play, a timeless play. Obviously, in Shakespeare's case, beautiful language doesn't hurt. I'm excited to discover what is special about Debbie's Language, specifically how Claire speaks.

Sunday, May 31, 2009

I've been reading Melissa M. Nay's thesis, *Turning Tricks and the Modern Female Protagonist: An Analysis of the Portrayal of the Role of the Demimondaine from Viennese Operetta to Modern American Musical Theatre*, to get ideas for how to structure my thesis writing, and I find I am learning about approaching the play from her as well. I remember thinking when I started debating what to write, "who will ever read this?" and "how can I write something relevant that hasn't already been written?" And here I am, reading a past thesis, learning from a colleague.

In her journal, she writes about her first rehearsal and the fact that she didn't have to attend a call-back audition. She says,

It was important for me to reconnect with our visiting Actors/colleagues from Orlando, Kelli and Colin, because I missed the opportunity of bonding with them at a formal audition. Having the privilege of assisting with the Daytona Beach/MFA season selection, I bypassed the creative possibility that arises from performing cold readings with other Actors in an audition setting. From past experiences, this usually allows me to play more freely with initial ideas and acting impulses. I tend to be more daring with choices in an audition than in the early stages of a rehearsal process. The pressure and excitement of performance drives me to take these risks"(46).

I immediately noticed some similarities in this. The group I will be working with on *Triangle Logic* is very familiar to me. This will be the third time Professor Weaver has directed me in a show, with the first two being as Sheila in *Jake's Women* in Fall 2008 and Sarah in *The Lover* in Spring 2009. Trent Fucci, who plays Jack, was in both of those two shows as well, as

Jake and Richard, respectively, and he is playing Prince Hal in the production of *Henry 4, Part 1* I am working on right now. Lastly, Mason Criswell, who plays Ben, is in my graduate class of only six at UCF, so while we've not been in a full show together (Trent and I did understudy for *Marisol*, directed by Dr. Julia Listengarten when it was remounted for the American College Theater Festival in the Spring of 2009; Mason played Lenny), we've worked together on scenes and ensemble work.

The point Ms. Nays makes about daring choices is one I want to remember for our first rehearsals. It is easy to relax into an ensemble that you are familiar with and coast at first. I do not want to do this. I want to make daring and varied choices from the beginning. I say varied as well, because I am realizing that as I do this research, especially since I am sort of researching an actual person, it would be easy to attempt to find the perfect interpretation as quickly as possible, but this is a trap. I want to keep myself focused on broadening my choices rather than narrowing them. I will save narrowing them for the rehearsal room.

[June 2, 2009](#)

I called the Playwright, Debbie Lamedman, today. She has been wonderfully open to helping me with my research as I create the character of Claire. I wanted to find out a little about her inspiration for the play, her process as a Playwright and her hopes for Claire.

She told me that *Triangle Logic* started as a short story called *Pieces* and later grew into a full play. She said she'd send me a copy of *Pieces* to read. I knew the play was in some way autobiographical and wanted to know how much of that is true. She told me that writers always write what they know, that while real life doesn't always translate neatly into a play, it is a place

to start and then comes the dramatization. I liked this answer, because it feels like it gives me the same freedom, to start from what I know and create the rest.

I asked for her advice in this process, and she gave me a few tips. She said the fights between Claire and Jack are long; they should feel long and they should feel real. We also discussed that Claire isn't a victim or a whiner; she is hopeful, constantly trying to find the positive next step in her life, fighting for a good outcome. We agreed that Claire is a little neurotic, and to find the positives and negatives in her personality. She said it is really important to her that Claire is a complete person, three-dimensional. I totally agree. I hope all my characters are, but especially one I'm creating for the first time and living with for nearly six months.

We discussed that the play is in part about Claire's trajectory as a writer and as a person. It is about her relationships and how she seeks help; sometimes her problem is that she turns to others for advice rather than turning inside to discover what she really wants. Some character things I will consider are: How does Claire respond to criticism? Does she throw it out? Crumble? Fix it? Why does she doubt herself as a writer? What does it say about her that she makes the most forward movement when the triangle finally implodes?

Debbie said she is really excited to have Professor Weaver directing this production, that she trusts him completely. I was excited about this too, because that is how I feel about Professor Weaver. He is so wonderfully positive, while still expecting excellence and professionalism. I know the process will be fun, serious, hard work, and ultimately rewarding.

Lastly, I asked her what she saw as her role in the process. She said since she is only coming into town a week before the performances, she's looking forward to what we will have rehearsed and might make some slight tweaks to the script.

I'm so lucky to be working with the Playwright. I feel inspired to jump back into the script and to read some of the other things that Debbie has written. This process is just starting, and already I'm having the time of my life.

[Saturday, June 06, 2009](#)

This morning I read *Phat Girls* by Debbie Lamedman. It was interesting to read, because I knew from my conversation with her a few days ago that it was developed out of a one-woman show, *Phat*, which she crafted in grad school at Brandeis, and continued to develop and perform after she graduated. Yesterday, I read *Pieces*, the short story that *Triangle Logic* was adapted from, as well as *That Old Brown Couch Just Ain't What It Used to Be*, a 10-minute play Debbie is working on right now. I've always believed it is important to read as much work as you can by the Playwright you're working with, because it gives a better feel for how she/he writes, the type of dialogue they use, and insight to characters. Particularly since Debbie said she always starts from what she knows, there may be bits of Claire I find in her other work, which will help me to develop her into a fully dimensional character.

Pieces was a treasure to find. It focuses on the Ben and Claire relationship from Claire's perspective. It really gave me a deeper look into how Claire loves Ben, and how she can believe that he loves her too, despite what Jack says. It gave me a truly special, almost secretive or private feel about the relationship. I will use it, in my character work, as a journal entry that Claire would have written after the trip with Ben to Mexico.

In *That Old Brown Couch...*, the character of Diane seems to be having a struggle that Clarie might have had, and like Claire, she doesn't have the perfect words to communicate it to her partner, Jerry. As an audience, we are uncomfortable. There isn't a typical happy ending. We

don't get to celebrate Jerry's romantic gesture fixing anything, or Diane finding a way to make him feel better. In fact, it almost seems they are on the verge of breaking up at the end of the short piece.

It seems communication is a theme that runs throughout Debbie's work. So, I will look at Claire's struggle to communicate in each scene as I move forward. This is exciting since part of my research involves a curiosity about the communication in a new play development process. Maybe this is one more way into the character of Claire.

Tuesday, June 09, 2009

I just reread *Pieces*. It definitely does feel like it could be a journal entry that Claire wrote after her trip to Mexico with Ben. It's making me realize how strong the attraction needs to be with Mason. Finding that connection with another Actor can be the easiest or hardest thing to find. Mason and I haven't had to do it before, so I'm a little nervous about it. I guess I will have to talk to him about it. I want to look at Act 1, Scene 5 from *Triangle Logic* that takes place in Mexico while the images from reading *Pieces* are still fresh in my mind. So I did.

It is much less sweet than the short story. It feels much more like a drunken night in Mexico, and there are no suede jackets, sterling bracelets, or sunshine tattoos like in *Pieces*. However, knowing how Claire feels about Ben made me read it with more sensitivity, jealousy, and care. I'm excited to get to work.

Friday, June 12, 2009

I walked to a coffee shop to work on *Triangle Logic*. After talking with Debbie last week, and her comment that Claire shouldn't be whiny, I wanted to read through it again, as much as

possible as Claire the optimist. I only got about two-thirds of the way through, but already, I love what I am finding.

Claire is described in the script as: “strong, sensitive writer; witty and intelligent with a lot of excess energy” (2). Even some of these descriptive words can be interpreted more than one way. Sensitive, for example, could mean that she is impressionable, that her feelings get hurt really easy, or that she is perceptive and aware of and thoughtful regarding the feelings of others. A lot of excess energy could be interpreted negatively, like she has a lot of nervous energy and is fidgety, or that she is full of life, bubbling over. I don’t know that any of these ideas are wrong, and maybe she is a combination of all of these. Claire does get her feelings hurt easily, and as an Actor I want to allow her to take things personally. However, she does really care about Ben and Jack, and we see her make sacrifices for them and do nice things for them, like when she buys Ben the journal.

One of the most exciting things I found when reading this as an optimist was that she has a zest for life. I noticed it especially in Act One, Scene 4 when she tells Jack about her new job. It’s a very long scene, and if I let her get angry at Jack too soon, it is just a fight; I hope that if we see her fighting to stay happy, fighting to make him see how great the job is, how great her relationship with Ben is, then the fall later in the scene will be harder. Still just ideas at this point. I can’t wait to get started in rehearsal!

[Wednesday, June 17, 2009](#)

I had an interesting talk with Debbie today. I’d left her a message to make sure it was alright to take a copy of *Triangle Logic* to Actor’s Theatre of Louisville with me when I go to talk with them about the role of an Actor in developing new works. I’d received an email from

Sean Daniels, their Associate Artistic Director, today saying they'd love to talk to me. Debbie was generous as ever, telling me to take whatever I needed. During our conversation, Debbie mentioned how much she values when the collaborators understand what their roles are in a particular part of the process. This discussion spurred for me some interesting thoughts about the different phases of new works and how the roles of the creative teams change.

At this point in my study, I see the possible phases as:

- 1st reading – in a room, just Actors and Playwright, possibly a Director or Dramaturg or other theatre artists. This is a chance for the Playwright to hear their words for the first time.
- 1st public reading – possibly a day or so of rehearsals with Actors and Director, Playwright might do some small rewrites, but mostly the goal is to hear feedback from the audience.
- Workshop – a week or more of Playwright, Director, Actors, and ideally a Dramaturg in a room working on the piece, heavy rewrites at night, and a possible presentation to an audience at the end of the workshop.
- Audition for Backers - rehearsals with Playwright, Directors, and Actors for a staged reading style audition for backers.
- World Premiere – possible rewrites depending on how involved the Playwright will be in this production. Director and Actors begin to really make the show their own with a finished product in mind.

The thing that struck me today is that until either the Audition for Backers or maybe even the World Premiere, every stage is done for the Playwright's benefit. Thus, the Director, Actors and Dramaturg should focus their energies on giving life to the Playwright's vision, and appropriate feedback to the Playwright. At the World Premiere, or possibly even the Audition for Backers, while the creative team should still be honoring the vision of the Playwright and serving

his/her words, the focus should be on final product, and at this point, perhaps the Playwright takes a back seat and the Director's vision takes over.

[June 26, 2009](#)

I saw the Actor's Guild of Lexington's production of the one-woman show *Bad Dates* by Theresa Rebeck tonight. I went to see it because I like some of Theresa Rebeck's other work; I'd read *Spiked Heels* last summer. Also, she writes roles for women. Mostly though, I have seen very few one-person shows for women. Acting in a one-woman show would be an amazing opportunity and an overwhelming task to take on, so I want to see as many as I can to see what works, when do we, the audience, get bored, etc. As I was watching it, I began to wonder where these one-person shows fit into the landscape of new works. Many BFA and MFA programs, as well as the apprentice program at Actor's Theater of Louisville, require the creation and performance of a one-person show for graduation. This seems to be derived from the increased need for ways for Actors to market themselves and to find ways to do that without depending on other people. Musical Theatre performers who are serious at all seem to all have a cabaret act in their back pocket. However, a show like *Bad Dates* also is useful to the theater producing it, because it allows for low overhead.

Often these one-person shows are autobiographical, like Debbie Lamedman's first play *Phat*, which later became a multi-character play *Phat Girls*. Lamedman wrote the play as part of her MFA requirement for the acting program at Brandeis.

So, I began to wonder. Is this all about marketing? Is there a particular part of Actor training that is benefited by either working on auto-biographical material or a one-person show? What are the advantages of Actors becoming Playwrights?

July 11, 2009

We're in the run of *Henry 4, Part 1* and I'm finding I love working on *Triangle Logic* backstage. I am finding all kinds of specificity in Claire's thoughts, wants, needs, and tactics. I think it is because when I am in performance of a show, my concentration is so specific on what my character wants and how she will get it, that I simply see options opening up in other scripts. I have two half hour breaks between my scenes, and I find the time very rewarding. I may only make it through a few pages, but the possibilities are both many and specific.

July 21, 2009

I've been thinking about the differences between Claire's relationship with Bend and with Jack. If I read the play objectively just as an audience member, it seems like Jack is just as good or bad of a friend to Claire as Ben. In fact, it seems like his main fault in her eyes is he is too negative; as an objective reader, it can look like he pushes her to be her best and is simply honest with her. It seems like Ben is really sweet and positive with her, but he lets her spend money on him, get her hopes up about being with him, and still does the same things as Jack, as far as sleeping with her best friend and not showing up for her reading.

So, why does she choose Ben at the end of the play and not Jack? I think it has something to do with Claire's "love language." There is a book called *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman, and the premise is that each of us has a primary and secondary love language. The way we truly feel loved is when someone gives love to us in our love language. The five languages are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Acts of Service

- Gifts
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch

So, in thinking about Claire this way, I think she gives love in gifts. We see this by the fact that she buys Ben the journal -- “it’s perfect for you” (Act One, Scene Three) and that Jack says she spends too much money on him (Act One, Scene Four). However, the way she receives love is in words of affirmation, which explains why Ben’s positive words mean so much to her and Jack’s negative words hurt her so deeply.

What does this mean for me as the Actor? When Jack says negative things to me, and Ben positive things, I must take them incredibly personally. We have to be able to see Claire get hurt deeply by Jack’s words, and see Ben build her up, not just as a lover, but as a friend too. Realizing this has been huge for me. In my life, I receive love best through words of affirmation, so this will be an easy way for me to relate to Claire.

[Thursday, September 3, 2009](#)

We had our first read-through of *Triangle Logic* today. At the beginning of rehearsal, Professor Weaver said something about being excited to see Trent and I fight as Jack and Claire. I think his enthusiasm was catching. Also, I’ve had this script for nearly six months now; I was ready to dig in. It was the most exciting read-through. I felt like we were making choices already, being affected, taking risks. Both Trent and I cried a little in the “break-up” scene. It was thrilling. I wished Debbie could have been there. I think she would have been excited to see how we threw ourselves into it. I wish I could always have this much time with a script before the first read-through. Even though I hadn’t memorized my lines, or done heaps of research, I’d read it many times and done some research. I had options for choices written down. I was chomping

at the bit to get started, and it was fantastic! I can't wait to see what the next few rehearsals are like.

One of my goals from the beginning was to take risks and not play it safe with an ensemble that felt familiar. Today, I was proud of the risks I took. I need to continue to take more tomorrow. I can't allow myself to settle on choices. I need to keep things fresh and new.

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Today we blocked all the Claire and Ben scenes. I was nervous for this rehearsal, because Mason and I haven't worked together as much, and the scenes are fairly intimate. However, we actually were pretty comfortable with each other, and, in spite of our notebooks, managed to play with the physicality and the blocking. I did realize that proper vocal health will be a challenge for me. I was pushing a little today. I'm working on using the whole of my range, and sometimes I forced the musicality and the laughter. So, by the end of rehearsal, my throat was a little sore. I'll get there early and warm-up tomorrow.

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

Warming up has helped even more than I expected it would. Hooray! We ran the show tonight, and I yelled a lot, and at the end my voice felt fine. I think warming up reminds me to breathe for the ideas, and that helps me not to push. One of the notes I got at the end of the run was I need to score the fight scenes, because (even if my voice is fine) right now they are a lot of yelling, so I plan to do that tomorrow.

Thursday, September 17, 2009

I only had a couple of hours today to work on the script. I wanted to look over the final scene, because I knew we'd be re-blocking it tonight, and I wanted to score at least the first of

the fight scenes. The final scene is long, so looking at it took some time. When I got to scoring the first fight scene, Act 1 Scene 4, I realized I wouldn't have time to do it the way I normally would, so I decided to color code it. I knew I couldn't just yell through the whole thing, so I needed to decide on degrees of unsettledness at Jack throughout the scene. I used three colors of sticky notes: yellow for slightly, orange for fairly, and pink for very upset. I started at the end of the scene and found the place where I thought Jack was the most hurtful and put the pink there, then I worked backwards flagging all the mean things he said or did, and noting the ways in which I keep myself from flooding. Flooding is something I learned about in John Gottman's book, *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, that basically means someone has pushed your hot buttons so much that you can no longer think clearly. Your thoughts are rushing inside your head and physiologically you are emotionally out of control.

I know I will need to do more detailed scoring later, but this should at least give me something new to work with tonight.

The other thing I noticed while working with the text today is the ways in which Debbie indicates a rhythm for us. I've found two types of lines that are very prominent in the script: very short sentences as short as four or five words, often monosyllabic, and very long, even run-on sentences where the thoughts build on each other, strung together by the word "and". I brought it up in rehearsal tonight, and Professor Weaver said to be aware of the rhythm and use it when I can, but also to realize that Debbie will be looking to see what works and what doesn't, so if I find a rhythm I like better, I should try it. If she doesn't like it when she hears it, she'll tell me. It gave me a little jolt of excitement to think about the way the process will grow and change when Debbie gets here.

[Monday, September 21, 2009](#)

Trent and I met to score the second fight scene, Act 2, Scene 3, before tomorrow's rehearsal. Unlike Act 1, Scene 4, where the scene seems to build to an explosion, this scene seems to start with the explosion and get more and more calm as Claire makes the decision to break up. In fact, by the end, Claire is resolved and Jack is still fighting. There are many things I found that led to Claire's deciding to end it with Jack, but the main reason is she doesn't feel he takes complete responsibility for sleeping with Ben. Even though he apologizes seven times, most times the apologies are followed by an excuse or blame of Claire. She's spent all day to processing the way he treats her. She's also had all of her relationship with Ben to realize how differently Ben treats her and how differently she feels after being with him.

Trent and I started arguing about the motivations of the characters while we were scoring, and we realized we were arguing for our character's point of view, so we just dropped in to the characters and did the whole scene as an improv exercise. It was kind of cool, because it helped me to justify my feelings in my own words. It reminded me of the paraphrasing work we do in Jim Helsinger's Shakespeare Acting class. By putting it in our own words, we were able to return to the actual text with new fire.

I'm excited to see what Professor Weaver thinks of the work tomorrow.

[Friday, September 25, 2009](#)

What is it about the thrill of creation? It's Friday at 9:54am, I'm exhausted, I just taught Fundamentals of Acting and I have an hour break. Logic tells me I could have a 40-minute nap, but instinct says that since I have a rehearsal room for the next hour, I'll be happier if I work. I'm putting together a cabaret this semester, so out came my music and the ideas started flowing. One

of my songs has a lot of “s” and “ch” sounds, and I sometimes sort of slur those, so I sang through my song just on the sounds. I hummed the songs and I sang them. I do feel invigorated now.

I’m realizing I really like creating something for the first time. This must be why I’m drawn to new works. I’m most fulfilled when I’m working on *Triangle Logic*, *Kiss Me or Cut Off My Head* – a one-woman show I’m adapting from poetry, or this cabaret. I feel active. I feel like I’m doing something.

Tuesday, October 7, 2009

Tonight’s rehearsal was really great! We started by having a discussion about why Claire picks Ben and not Jack, when it seems to us as we read, that Jack is almost the moral compass of the play. He even tries to encourage her to stay friends with Ben when she wants to give up on the friendship. And, he doesn’t even really like Ben and has his own awkwardness with Ben. So, often Jack seems like a good guy. However, I’m beginning to believe and work with the idea that as Claire, my love language is positive words, meaning that the most helpful thing to me is when people say nice things to me, and the most hurtful thing is when they say negative things to me (Chapman). Jack says a lot of negative things to me, and that hurts me. I think he doesn’t think very highly of me as a writer and as a person. I’m not sure why he would even want me for a friend. We’ve had several fights even before the play opens, and this feeling of negativity has grown.

Professor Weaver suggested that maybe I don’t choose either of them at the end of the play. I shut the door on Jack. After all, he can’t even admit he came to see me. But, maybe I don’t let Ben in either. Professor Weaver suggested I decide for myself whether or not I will

actually let Ben in after the play or if possibly I never give him the book back or mail it back to him.

So armed with these new ideas we started to rehearse. I'd also made a personal goal for the evening to try a few scenes off-book to see where I'm at and to take my time with my lines. I say so much that I tend to rush. I think I (as Claire) do have a frenetic energy, but was worried this energy was driving me the Actor, not me the character. So, I made up my mind to take the lines slowly today, focusing on my breathing, even if it felt too slow to see what happened.

I think the rehearsal went really well. We all seemed to think so afterward. I don't think I went too slow; in fact, I can take more time in some places. Now, I'm not talking about pausing, but simply not rushing the words, enjoying the words, having the ideas. I also found I know at least 25% of the script, so that was exciting.

I tried pretending I wouldn't really ever get back to Ben, but I couldn't justify that with the script during the scene, so there is still work to be done there, discoveries to be made. All in all though - a great night!

[Tuesday, October 13, 2009](#)

I'm about to begin a serious text analysis of Triangle Logic (as opposed to the character analysis I did before rehearsals started). We have the week off from rehearsal until we hear what Trent's *The Learned Ladies* rehearsal schedule is, so I want to spend the time this week really delving into the script. I've decided to print a new copy of it to work with for this. My rehearsal script has become quite cluttered already with my action verbs, questions to myself, notes from Professor Weaver, blocking notes, etc. So, I've decided to start fresh.

I spoke with Professor Kate Ingram about this process a few days ago. She is my voice instructor here at UCF. I do text analysis for her class on a regular basis, but often analyze a short piece of text, usually less than 20 lines or so. When I do that, I usually print out 6-8 copies of the text and mark them each up for various voice things: consonants, vowels, alliteration, scansion, antithesis, y-buzz, etc. Then I include as much as 12-14 pages of explanation. It's fun to go this detailed with a small piece of text, but I wasn't sure how to begin on a whole script. Where should I start? I knew one thing. Claire often repeats herself without letting Ben or Jack get a word in. So, I asked Professor Ingram if I should start with her long monologues. She said that that would be a fine place to begin, but then suggested I start with the scene in the play where Claire is the most honest and open. So, that is what I am going to do. I'm going to start with Act 2, Scene 3 with Jack, which I've been calling the break-up scene. Here we go!

[Saturday, October 31, 2009](#)

Next Saturday, we are going to try to have a rehearsal where we are skype Debbie in. We won't have had a rehearsal in nearly two weeks because of Trent's rehearsal schedule for *The Learned Ladies*. So, we've been working on our own to get off-book. It is one of the more challenging scripts I've worked on as far as ease in getting off-book, in part because not all the transition are in the lines, they are internal. For example, I'll say or ask something, then Jack will bring up a point that may seem to change the subject or as a question, but I will continue with my first thought, which has developed a little in my mind. It is also difficult, because the characters often talk a bit before they let the other one get a word in, and Claire repeats herself a lot. One thing that is developing, that is kind of exciting, is that as we're working on our lines, one of us will say: "I don't know why I'm saying that." Then the other will either give a justification or a

suggestion for something they can do to give their partner a reason to say the line. I think we'll have some cool new blocking ideas when we get back into it. I'm really excited to see what Debbie thinks of the show so far, and I'm a little nervous too.

[Sunday, November 08, 2009](#)

Last night, I drove to Tallahassee to see Joel Waage's Directorial Thesis Production of *Waiting for Godot* at Florida State University, a nuanced and thoughtful production. Afterward, a group of us went out and discussed the play. As the evening progressed, I found out that Joel is considering spending the summer in New York working with a Playwright on developing a script. So, I asked him what he thought the Actor's role is in the development process and how it changes from reading to workshop to full production. His answer surprised me, because it was opposite of what most others' answers have been. He said he believes the Actor's role and responsibility amps up the closer we get to the premiere. As we discussed it, this idea began to make sense to me. At the reading phase, the Playwright is hearing their words out loud, likely for the first time. So, he or she is already inundated with information simply by listening. Also, the Actor has most often had a day's rehearsal, not nearly enough time to make many varied choices, so before recommending changes, she needs more time to try other actions and tactics. However, at the World Premiere, as the Actor is also responsible for a finished product, it is time to really try everything, but then to say what isn't working or suggest changes.

Previously, I'd thought that earlier in the process, there is more time and room for changes. I'd heard that rather than casting for type, you might cast simply really smart actors who can chew the words and talk intelligently about what is working and what is not. I think both approaches are valid and it reminds me that every production team I work with will think a

little differently. I need to keep looking for the different ways I can develop my communication skills; being able to communicate effectively seems to be the most important thing.

November 21, 2009

I finished my text analysis and am very excited to see how a new level of understanding affects Claire.

Professor Ingram came to rehearsal the other day and gave some vocal notes. I'd like to meet with her and work on some of my long bits that right now still feel like a lot of yelling. One of my notes was that I need to find more vocal variety, and I might need a little individual help with this.

Our next two rehearsals are in a few days. My goal is going to be to find new choices each day. I hope that having finished a lot of my research, it will feed my inner life and my actions.

November 24, 2009

Tonight we did our second run in two days. Yesterday, my goals were: to see how close I am to being off book and to find vocal variety in my lines, even if it means saying them differently just for the sake of breaking my habits. Professor Weaver was very pleased with where we were as far as new choices. The show did drag a little due to the lines. However, the crew was watching the show, and having them there really helped to get a sense of response. I left rehearsal pretty happy and committed to work on my lines and have new choices for today.

Tonight, I said out loud at the beginning of rehearsal that my goal was to take my time with the words. A few people laughed. I think they thought I was kidding, but I was totally serious. I'm still rushing, and I can find some vocal variety if I encourage myself to play my

structural vowels and sustainable consonants. I also wanted to try new ideas and tactics both vocally and physically. I found a lot of fun physicality. I'm finding a way to really let my body play, and having the set and props is really helping. (We started in Trailer 534 with props yesterday.) I also found I was more free to try things vocally. Professor Weaver said it was the best we've ever done, and he thinks Debbie will be pleasantly surprised. I overheard someone on crew say the writing is really good, that the dialogue is really natural. That was really cool to hear since we've been struggling with it so much as far as flowing off the tongue and memorization. Now we have almost a week off. My goal is to get off-book completely, to take another look at my character analysis, and to come up with at least 10 new ideas. I also meet with Professor Ingram tomorrow to work on vocal variety. I'm bringing my long monologue. I think I'm doing better in the happier spots, but I want her to help me find variety in the bits where I am angry.

November 25, 2009

Trent and I met with Professor Ingram to work on my vocal variety. I'd intended to work on my monologue, but since Trent was available, we chose a two-page portion from Act 2, Scene 3, pages 57 and 58. Going into this work session, most of my verbs were along the lines of attack and prove. The text implies I go into a hysterical rage, so I used these two pages to build into it.

As we worked, we found there are some other clues in the text. I use the words: "I've realized...I've let you get away with it...I've never said anything...I guess...But I'm telling you now." We found this scene is filled with discovery and the decision to change. I played with honestly having those discoveries in the moment, breathing him in, and trying to change in hopes of salvaging the relationship. I found it doesn't take more than the last two possible sentences to

build to a hysterical rage. This was very exciting for me and made me incredibly grateful for the collaborative environment at UCF. I'm very excited to see what Professor Weaver thinks of these new actions and to see where else I can find deeper, more honest attempts, questions, and discoveries throughout the script.

[November 29, 2009](#)

I read Edward Albee's *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?* today and thought about how there are elements of both Martin and Stevie, Albee's characters, in Claire. People often talk about bestiality being a metaphor for homosexuality, and what I liked about reading Martin's lines is he is trying so hard to explain something everyone thinks is wrong but doesn't feel wrong to him. Intellectually, he acknowledges it is wrong, but can't help how he feels. He wants his best friend and his wife to listen and empathize, but they only laugh at him, mock him and judge him. When he needs them most, they abandon him. This is how I (Claire) feel. Intellectually, I understand it is pointless to fall in love with gay men and straight women, that it only leads to hurt, but it isn't like I'm doing it on purpose. And, Jack seems to mock me more than take me seriously. He doesn't listen or try to empathize. I don't even know how to take myself, but it would be nice to have someone to talk to about it seriously, not someone who is judging me.

Then, as I read Stevie's lines, her intense feelings of betrayal, I related to that. Even if Jack knows there is no chance for me and Ben, I called dibs. He can sleep with anyone else. I'm not stopping him. I'm not even stopping him from sleeping with women. I only asked him not to sleep with Ben. He even admits that it didn't mean anything; that he only did it because Ben was there. But, obviously it was important to me, because I didn't even introduce him to Ben for

months. So, I have been legitimately betrayed. I confided in him, and he took advantage of my trust. Then he wasn't even gentle about telling me.

My next rehearsal is with Trent to work the Jack and Claire scenes. I will try to remember these feelings of wanting someone whom I can truly confide in and then being betrayed by that person to see how that changes the scene.

[December 1, 2009](#)

There were some really cool discoveries in the Jack and Claire scenes tonight, specifically in the "break up" scene. Making a more honest effort earlier in the scene, really asking questions and making discoveries changed the scene. I was surprised when I got chocked up in different places. Also, Jack (Trent) tried harder to win me over at the end, but it was even clearer to me that he would always disappoint me. I could feel the different rhythms and beats within the scene more specifically, and it was less about me just ranting and yelling at Jack.

On a disappointing note, Professor Weaver let us know that we are still paraphrasing quite a bit. Debbie arrives in two days, and it doesn't help her know if her writing is working if I'm not saying the lines as written. So, I am redoubling my efforts on lines and paying attention to detail in my memorization.

[December 2, 2009](#)

Debbie arrives tomorrow, and I've been pouring over my lines to be as word perfect as possible for her. It has been my goal throughout this process to cultivate the skills necessary to be a great asset to a Playwright in the new works process. So, I'm happy for the struggle with these lines. I realized today, as I was thinking about the character of Claire, that there are certain choices I'm not sure about and still keep trying new actions on, and certain choices that have

become my favorites. So, I've also been reminding myself that I want to go into the rehearsal room tomorrow ready to take any and all direction, ready to "kill my babies".

I have a friend who would use the phrase "kill my babies" in regards to being willing to cut your favorite things when you're writing, and that attitude in theatre, especially with new works, can be really useful. Being too attached to any one choice is dangerous. It closes you off to new choices and ideas from your collaborators. I hope that having this realization today will allow me to be open and excited to any and all direction and not judge it. I hope to be the most malleable Actor with whom she's ever had the pleasure to work.

[December 3, 2009](#)

Wow! It's amazing how excited and nervous I am for tonight's run. I both can't wait for Debbie to see the show, and am terrified she won't be happy with what we have created. I know I'm going into this new phase of the process open to change. I want her to feel she can ask me to change and adapt so that we can create the play she sees in her mind.

Later that night: The run went great. Debbie seemed really pleased with our work and that felt great! Professor Weaver basically sat back and let her take the reins at this point. It was really cool to see how great they work together. They would lean together chat about something and then give a note. They were both really respectful of each other's role in the production and also unafraid to give suggestions.

I received a few notes to incorporate into the show. First, the Mexico scene, Act 1, Scene 5, seems a little two-dimensional. Debbie suggested I consider what it would be like to sleep next to someone I'm really physically attracted to, knowing nothing could happen. What kind of sexual tension would that cause? Towards the end of the scene, when he locks himself in the

bathroom, she suggested I use the bathroom door as a prop to get out my sexual frustration.

Okay, these weren't her actual words, but this is how I interpreted them.

I really like working with Debbie. I can tell she used to be an Actor. She gives notes that are actable. Also, she's very approachable, and I find I really trust what she says. She will come onto the set, sit down with me, and simply talk to me about the character and then give me the freedom to see what I do with her thoughts.

It was also suggested that at the beginning of the show, when I'm knocking on Ben's door, that I do it for a really long time. During that time, I can consider asking myself what if he is home and I walk in on him with a guy. Maybe I really want to use the key, be alone in his place, but I'm nervous. That will be fun to try.

Lastly, we are going to be getting a new ending! This is exactly the kind of thing I was really looking forward to with a new play. I can't wait to read it and see what is the same, and what is different. Apparently, Claire ends up in a relationship instead of being single, so we'll see how that changes my character development.

[December 4, 2005](#)

Long day at school, doing this during finals is going to be difficult. Don't have the new ending memorized yet. It has many of the same lines, but in a slightly different order. Also, there is about six pages of new stuff. I got one of the lines back that I liked. It was so cool. I simply explained why I liked it, and why I thought Claire would say it, and Debbie put it back in!

[December 6, 2009](#)

I love having Debbie in rehearsal. She is a great Director/Playwright, meaning that she definitely is there primarily as the Playwright, but she also has a good Directorial eye, and

Professor Weaver has been completely open to her ideas. She is extremely positive and pleased with what we've brought to the script, and she has very actable notes.

I'm finding a challenge where I didn't expect it. This story is a sort of a coming of age story, but I'm not really sure what the moral is. The first few adjustments Debbie gave me were really helpful and made me feel like Claire is a real and nuanced person.

The most recent suggestion is that maybe Claire was already spending time with Elise when she "breaks up" with Jack. Maybe the words that Claire says are Elise's words, and she is realizing in the scene that Elise was right. This adjustment makes sense with the script, but is hard for me personally. If Claire is already seeing someone, then she doesn't lose both Jack and Ben knowing it may mean that while she has to be alone, it is worth it. Instead, she replaces them with Elise. It is less of a hitting bottom and rising out of it. I'm not sure why this is such a struggle for me. I'm also not sure how or if I should bring it up in rehearsal. Also, why does it have to be that she is happy at the end because she found someone, not simply because she is in a better, healthier place in her life? Then, isn't it a story about her finding the one? Is it a coming out story? Or is she bi-sexual? I don't fully understand yet. I understand the idea that we fall in love with a person, not a gender. Since the play is so heavily about her loving gay men, it seems like it ends up being that finding someone who loves her back is what makes her happy. That makes sense, but does the play tell us that? What is the message of the play? Does it matter to me as an Actor? Should it?

[December 7, 2009](#)

Professor Weaver and Debbie thought the energy of the run was off tonight. (More on that below). They also said it was time to stop playing and start setting. I felt really happy

receiving this note. One of my big goals for this was to come with something new every rehearsal: movement, actions, vocally, etc. Being told to stop bringing new things proves that I accomplished this goal. Hooray! And, it really helped me to round out Claire and not make her one-dimensional. Many of the things I like the most are things that were my fourth or fifth choice for a line or intention, so it was totally worth it to do this. Sometimes it was really hard, like vocally during the fight scenes, but now I'm soooooooooooooo happy I did it.

December 8, 2009

Adding the idea last night that Elise had talked to me (Claire) about the things about Jack worked well for me (Brooke) as an acting choice in that I was able to have the realizations during the scene that she was right. I don't like it as much as realizing I was right yet, but it works, and as I said before, I have to be willing to "kill my babies".

The run kind of fell apart at the last scene because there was still a lot of struggle with lines. I was really frustrated. I felt like I'd worked and worked on them and it still wasn't perfect. I did think before it fell apart that there was some really great stuff we were playing with. However, both Debbie and Professor Weaver said they thought the whole run was off. I guess this is one big reason why a Director is so important. Maybe we were being a little self indulgent or something and we needed that outside eye to whip us into shape.

Tonight, Professor Weaver gave us a pep talk about putting that run behind us and moving on. It was kind of difficult to process, because I didn't know if I needed to really worry about that run or not. I guess I can't. The most important thing to do tonight is to focus on the trio scenes and try to use the rehearsal to both solidify the new blocking and the lines.

December 9, 2009

Last night was tech, and we worked the three trio scenes. Basically, we totally reblocked them to make them fit better in the space. Anytime we weren't being used, Trent, Mason and I ran lines from the trio scenes. This is the rehearsal that Professor David Lee, my Committee Chair, came to observe. I was glad he was at a rehearsal that we were working rather than running, but having him there amidst tech made for a little more hectic process. He had to leave before we were done, so I didn't get to talk to him and hear his thoughts.

Working the trio scenes in the space was both cool and stressful. It really helped us to realize how we need to adjust to the Black Box Theater space. However, we didn't have enough time to work them and then run them, so it feels a little like we reblocked those scenes and now tonight is dress rehearsal. Trent, Mason and I are getting together this afternoon to run them in the space, so hopefully they don't bog us down tonight.

I'm finding the process is as wonderful and amazing as I'd hoped, and also way more stressful than I expected. The stress comes from three things: finals, lack of sleep, and not quite being where I'd hoped we would be at this point. I did a really good job getting ahead in my class work, so I'd be able to dedicate my time and energy to the show during this week, but there is still a lot of time involved in last minute group meetings, and taking and giving finals. I guess this and line memorization is leading to the lack of sleep. I'm not pulling all nighters or anything, but I'm probably only getting four hours of sleep each night. Usually, I am fine on this, but the added stress of finals and how much I care about this project is making me more emotionally exhausted. Not being where I'd hoped we would be has a lot to do with the new ending. I don't like saying that though, because I wanted Debbie to feel free to make changes and want to be able to prove that we could rise to the occasion. Yet, it still feels like a struggle to be off book.

We've only gotten line notes once, they were pretty huge, and I don't like that we aren't word perfect. I'm not sure how much Debbie cares, but I would like to be line perfect for my own sake.

I have an hour now and an hour later that I can work on them. Also, Trent and I are meeting to run our scenes after the final we're giving to our Theatre Survey class. So, between those two things, and the mini-rehearsal between the three of us, I think I will have done all I can do. My goal for the rehearsal tonight is not to worry about the lines. I'm just going to go for it as if it is opening night. Professor Weaver said we need to start setting things, so I'm going to try all my favorite choices in hopes that those are the ones we want to set. I'm also going to make a goal to breathe and speak and to breathe on my partner's lines.

December 10, 2009

Last night's rehearsal was terrible. We were adding so many elements: first night without being able call for line, first night running the show in the space, first night with costumes, lights, but still no sound. It was rough in the usual ways, but also Trent and I dropped huge chunks of two scenes, Act 1, Scene 4 (our first fight scene) and Act 2, Scene 3, (our break up scene). The second one we simply got lost, and it was awful. The first Act, we jumped a huge chunk, I realized we were nearly at the end of the scene and we hadn't established that Jack slept with Ben, so I took a beat, had the realization and said "You slept with him." He responded with, "believe me you aren't missing anything." Definitely not the ideal situation, but I was happy we'd covered.

I met with Professor Be Boyd today for notes on last night's run. She wasn't as pessimistic as I had been. She said she saw a lot of good work. She said I'm still holding tension

in the mask of my face and I need to allow myself to release it. She gave me two new warm-up activities I think will really help. The first is one where I plug my nose and trill with my lips to loosen my upper lip. For the second, I put my thumbs on my temples and use the knuckles of my forefingers to pull my cheeks gently towards my eyes. Both of these feel really good, and I will really enjoy using them. This is another example of how wonderfully collaborative graduate school is here at UCF. Everyone works together to help the students succeed. I'm so lucky to be here.

Trent and I went to the space this afternoon and worked our scenes twice each. Professor Weaver had asked us to find some new blocking that would bring us more downstage. We think we found a good balance. We also realized we skipped in the first scene, because there is so much repetition throughout the scene in me telling him to leave and he'd simply skipped to a later response. So, we discussed what plot points need to happen in each section of blocking as a second way to get us back on track.

I hope tonight's run goes well. We need one good one before we open. I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. I feel like we've done EVERYTHING we can possibly do in order to prepare, but it doesn't feel like it is enough. Professor Weaver and Debbie keep telling me I need to trust myself, but I don't know how to do that. I'm going to focus on really listening and breathing tonight, and hope for the best!

Later that night: so, I thought the run went incredibly well. Mason got a new line, which was exciting. I feel like this is exactly what new play development should be like. The notes were kind of general notes about energy. I added a few words, and they wanted me to be careful about that. I'm still very nervous about tomorrow night, but I will go over my lines tomorrow

after my last final and between my evaluations, try to get a nap, and try to trust that the show is there. And breathe.

December 12, 2009

We opened last night to an incredibly supportive crowd. Most of the grad class was there, tons of my acting students, Trent's movement students, and Trent's and my Theatre Survey Students. They were generous with their laughter and reactions. The talk back afterward was nearly an hour, and lots of great question came up. It was very rewarding to have such a great audience. Professor Weaver told me I was on fire during the performance.

I'm curious, since this is a workshop production, to see if it works as a play, if a college is necessarily the best place to premiere it. After all, our friends were going to love us no matter what; they know how hard we've worked. Just a thought.

December 13, 2009

Last night's crowd was pretty responsive, too. Not quite as loud as the first night, but still really supportive. At times it felt like the show was dragging, when they weren't laughing, but I know we weren't slow. The show timed the same both nights. I was still pretty nervous about hitting all our lines, but other than some slight paraphrasing and a few skipped lines in the last scene, I think we pretty much nailed it. We were connected to each other, listening, and pursuing our objectives. I caught myself breathing more than holding, and I didn't feel a lot of unnecessary tension. I'll be curious to hear notes from Professor Ingram, Dr. Listengarten, and Professor Lee.

Today at the cast party, Debbie asked me to look at the line about going to the office casual to see if I thought she could cut it. I said I would. She said I could suggest any other cuts,

too. One of the pieces of feedback we got at both talkbacks and is the lines are so conversational and natural. It sounds like natural rhythms we speak in. It was so fantastic to hear that as feedback since it felt so unnatural to say some of them at first and was so difficult to memorize. I felt like our hard work paid off.

I'm excited to let the thoughts incubate over the next few days to see what I think about it all.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTION

I took nearly six months to reflect on this process, making notes from time to time. Overall, I am extremely pleased with the process and my part in it. I threw myself into it wholeheartedly, allowed myself to take risks, fail sometime, and, in the end, found some amount of success. It is so difficult to judge an artistic product, especially one you've been a part of, so I will say I am proud of what I brought to the project. I did my best. While I hope my best continues to improve, I am pleased with what we accomplished and the time and energy I put into it.

I wanted to really know Claire as I worked on her, and by doing a thorough character analysis, text analysis, and discussions with the Playwright, Director, and other Actors, I think I lived as her. Perhaps the time that Trent Fucci and I improvised our big fight as Jack and Claire was the point at which I realized I knew Claire inside and out. I could fight like her!

When I looked through the production photos, a month or so after we closed the show, I noticed something really exciting. I found that in most of the pictures, I had a released, forward facial posture. This was fulfilling to see, since I'd been doing the facial exercises that Be Boyd taught me before each performance to loosen the mask of my face. I think it really did help me to allow myself to be more vulnerable and available to my scene partners. I remember noticing the summer before I came to UCF that I held a lot of tension in my forehead in photos, almost a furrowed brow, so I began working on that as I didn't want to always look a little serious or unhappy in photos. Since then, I've been working to release in the mask of my face and upper lip

as well. I know these habits are deeply ingrained, and I need to continue to work to release them. The photo proof was exciting and evidence that I can do it!

I also was pleased to see in the photos that I seemed “at home” in my stage apartment. I saw that I sat in my chairs, couch, and bed in varied and relaxed ways. I’d made it a goal to make sure I found many ways to use furniture. I had tried during the rehearsal process to find many different ways I could relate to the furniture (a la Anne Bogart’s *Viewpoints*), and in looking at the photos, I was pleased to see I seemed successful.

I like coming into rehearsal with script in hand and waiting to memorize until I’ve played a bit with my partners. It helps me to resist unconsciously solidifying choices or allowing myself to unknowingly settle into a rhythm, especially vocally. However, if I could do one thing differently approaching this project, I would have spent the summer trying to get off-book. I was not expecting it to be such a challenge. This is the most difficult time I’ve ever had getting off book. I don’t think it is due to the size of the role, because when I played Rachel in *Reckless* the role was very large too, and I was memorized within the first few rehearsals. The only other time I’ve even felt a challenge at getting lines memorized was during rehearsals for *The Lover*. So, this left me wondering -- is it an age thing or something else? In considering this, I don’t think it is due to age, because I’ve had no trouble at all with the many Shakespeare scenes and monologues I’ve had this semester, as well as other roles throughout the year. The one commonality I have found in *The Lover* and *Triangle Logic* is that both have dialogue that is naturalistic and repetitive. The words aren’t exact repetition, but instead very slight changes, which mean that as the Actor, I’m working to memorize very slight changes which must be justified by Claire’s thought process.

I've learned I cannot guarantee that I can memorize a new work easily. So, that should be one of the first things I start to work on after my text and character analysis. If I am not "off book" early in the rehearsal process, it might make the Director and Playwright more nervous about making changes in the script. As this is likely the last opportunity for the Playwright to make changes and see them before publication, my job is to make it as easy as possible for him or her.

Finally, the audience reaction blew me away. They laughed – hard. They said they thought the dialogue was very realistic, that it sounded like them. I know this was one of Debbie's goals. However, at times, the language was a little challenging, and it was cool to hear she had succeeded in her goals and we had succeeded embodying the dialogue.

It was really important to me to be what Debbie needed. So, I will close with her thoughts post-production from her blog, *Confessions of a Cluttered Mind*, on December 23, 2009:

The *Triangle Logic* experience exceeded my expectations. I was here for a week of rehearsals before opening, and certainly there were some ups and downs...but hey...that's what rehearsal is for. I love the rehearsal process and I learned a lot...not just about the play, but about the nature of work in progress...it was very enlightening. The Actors were every Playwright's and Director's dream. Each one of them brought so much to the piece, and it was truly wonderful to see them living in the world of the play...I was very impressed, very flattered, and very grateful. Thank you Brooke, Trent and Mason...I hope our paths cross again.

Opening night...what can I say? I already said it. It exceeded my expectations. The audience was tremendously responsive, and afterwards, during the talk-back session, they were tremendously supportive of the piece. I loved the feedback...thoughtful, inspiring...really, I couldn't have asked for a better experience. It's the sort of thing I would like to bottle and take out from time to time to feel those feelings again" (thingsdebbieneedstosay.com).

CHAPTER FIVE: BEST PRACTICES FOR THE ACTOR WHEN WORKING ON A NEW PLAY

One of my goals through doing these projects, my research, and getting to know the people I was lucky enough to meet, was to come up with some best practices for an Actor when approaching a new play. I've compiled this list, which I consider a constant work-in-process, from the following: A New Play Workshop I attended conducted by Kim Peter Kovak of the Kennedy Center; the interviews published on the blog *The Actor's Role in Developing New Works*; the panel I served on at Orlando Shakespeare Theater's Playfest 2010: *The Actor's Role in Developing New Plays*; and the wonderful experiences I had and people I collaborated with during these projects.

On Communication:

- Ask. The rules will be different for different processes.
- Sometimes, you will be talking directly with the Playwright. Sometimes the Director or Dramaturg will be the liaison.
- Find a vocabulary that works effectively for this team, knowing that it might be adjusting your own definition of particular ideas.
- You may have the opportunity to have an open conversation about communication with the collaborative team. If not, observe the room, learn from more experienced Actors. If you do, here are some simple questions I have found helpful:
 - What would you like my role to be in this process?
 - Do you want feedback?

- How much feedback can I give?
- What kind of feedback are you hoping for?
- How should I give it?
- Remember that just as you are sensitive about your work, so is the Playwright. He or she is not a child, but very nervous and excited, and has the most invested in making the play work. So, express your ideas with sensitivity.
- Be unafraid to voice your thoughts.
- Discuss your ideas from the perspective of your character's arc.
- There are no small roles. The Playwright included every character for a reason. You are the advocate for your character -- take ownership.

On Making Choices:

- Make a bold choice immediately. There is rarely enough time in this process, so go big right away!
- Go for your choice full force, unafraid to fall on your face, and be flexible to change it at the drop of a hat.
- When asked to make a different choice, don't waste any energy questioning or feeling bad about your choice not being "right" -- simply throw yourself into the new choice with the same gusto.
- Make a vocal choice.
- Make a physical choice.
- Be open to different interpretations of the text.
- Play!

On Making Changes to the Script:

- A new play isn't broken; it is new.
- Try to make the words work as written.
- Then try again and again.
- The Director and Playwright will see if you are struggling with a line or a choice, and this is good information for them; however, through the struggle you may find something magical. Be open to the possibility it is difficult for you because it is a new style or a different way to write about something. Isn't that the most exciting kind of writing?

On Preparation:

- Read everything you can get your hands on by the Playwright; not simply their plays, but their blogs, their essays, their novels. Use this to understand him or her better, their voice, the individual music of their writing.
- Do a thorough character analysis. Know everything you can about your character from the script so you can discuss the play from the perspective of your character's arc.
- Pay particular attention to character descriptions and what other character's say about your character.
- Relish in your text analysis. Find the musicality of your dialogue. How is it different from other plays? How is it different from other characters in this play? Mark your script for consonants, vowels, y-buzz, alliteration, assonance, linking, etc.
- Memorize your lines early, ideally before rehearsals start. Give the Playwright their words perfectly as early as possible and be ready and excited for additions, deletions and changes.

On Training:

- Know all the things any dedicated Actor would study: acting, voice, movement, history, literature, etc.
- Have a method that works for you and use it.
- Read lots of plays. Read classics and read new plays.
- Go to new play workshops and readings whenever you get the chance.

On Technique:

- Act truthfully.
- Breathe.
- Keep up the pace.

On Attitude:

- Trust the text, the Playwright, the Director, and the process.
- Choose to look at everything positively. There are at least two ways to look at everything, and you won't have time or energy to be negative, so find the positive in every moment.
- Leave your ego home. There isn't room for it. Your choice was probably a great one, but what makes you exceptional is your ability to leave it, without attitude and move to another one.
- Be excited and passionate about this kind of work or don't do it. There are enough of us who live for this, so if you get the amazing opportunity to do it, love every minute of it!

I've discovered many answers to the question: "What is the Actor's role in developing new work?" The one thing that remained consistent is everyone agreed that each process is

different. So, rather than prescribing a “right answer”, I have shared the many answers I have found. I know my journey into new plays is just beginning, that I haven’t found nearly all the possibilities, and I look forward to the many more I will discover as I continue with this work. I hope this will open your eyes to the tremendous number of possibilities when approaching the different phases of development. You will likely find contradictions in my advice. You will find other ways to do things as you work. Flexibility is key in this work. Stay open!

CHAPTER SIX: TAKING WHAT I'VE LEARNED FORWARD

Sean Daniels, the Associate Artistic Director of Actor's Theater of Louisville, said of new work: "Theatre frames it as risky, music frames it as essential... We're a culture obsessed with what is new and happening, and these are the writers of our time" (theactorsrole...). Having worked in marketing at a regional theatre, I know Mr. Daniels is right about the way we sell new plays. Sadly, it can be true as well. When a regional theatre produces a World Premiere, it is incredibly risky financially, especially if the cast size isn't small and the technical requirements minimal. It is, however, incredibly essential for the continuation of the American theatre. Since Playwrights aren't celebrities at the same level as a recording artist, their name often doesn't "sell" the play. Since I am not famous either, and can't help in that regard, I am happy to be learning as much as possible to be a good tool for the Playwright at whatever phase of new play development I am lucky enough to be a part of.

In the Spring of 2010, shortly after completing *Triagle Logic*, I was given the opportunity to participate in Orlando Shakespeare Theater's Playfest. "PlayFest is a ten-day theater event packed with dynamic new plays and new play programming for anyone who loves great theater. Readings, Workshops and a World Premiere" ("Playfest"). I was cast in Steven Christopher Yockey's (Steve Yockey), *Heavier Than...* I was so excited for the opportunity to use what I'd learned working on *Triangle Logic* in a new type of new play development, a workshop.

My role in *Heavier Than...*, as Chorus Two (of three), was filled with new challenges. I would be blindfolded, and much of my dialogue would overlap. The script thrilled me; it was

almost like a musical score. It told you when to start speaking and how quickly, based on your scene partner's speed. I knew I couldn't go into this process cold. I had work to do.

I spent a few days in Boston before beginning rehearsals. While there, I visited New Repertory Theatre, my old stomping grounds, and found they were doing another Steve Yockey play, *afterlife: a ghost story*. The new Artistic Director, Kate Warner, had worked with Yockey at Dad's Garage in Atlanta, and she and the rest of the staff spoke very highly of him. This only increased my excitement to meet him and work on his beautiful play.

While in Boston, I also had coffee with my good friend, Jim Torres, Marketing Director for SpeakEasy Stage Company in Boston's South End. Speakeasy is known for staging Boston Premieres. As I told Mr. Torres about my role in *Heavier Than...*, he told me a story that reminded me of what I learned reflecting on the process for *Triangle Logic*. He told me that when they did a production of Conor McPherson's *The Seafarer*, the character Richard Harkin, played by Bob Colonna, was blind. He said it was very difficult for the Actor to memorize his lines, because he didn't have visual cues from the other Actors to rely on. I hadn't considered the lack of visual cues as an additional challenge, but when Mr. Torres mentioned it, I knew it could be.

Hearing this, and thinking about the possibility that the overlapping dialogue would also make it difficult to memorize, I got right to work on it. I emailed Patrick Flick, the Director. He said that since it was a workshop, we need not be memorized. However, I found that without having a very good sense of the language, it was challenging to keep up the pace the wonderfully musical, overlapping dialogue deserved and demanded. So, I read the script to myself, aloud, with my very loyal and wonderfully supportive scene partner, Trent Fucci, and with Melissa Fricke (Chorus One). I also began my text analysis for the piece, marking up my consonants,

structural vowels, and y-buzz with the Aurther Lessac system. All this helped tremendously as I approached the first rehearsal.

Chantry Banks, our costume designer, brilliantly gave us black lace blindfolds. They looked fantastic to the audience, and we could mostly see out of them, making it possible to keep up the illusion of blindness while still having access to our scripts. We were given these early in the rehearsal process to play with, which was extremely beneficial.

In the end, we chose to memorize the portions of our script where the blindfolds are removed to accomplish the stage picture that Yockey was hoping for. I was so grateful to have spent time in advance preparing. It made this an easy adjustment. Already I'd taken something I'd learned from *Triangle Logic* and applied it.

A workshop is so quick. We only had six rehearsals before our first presentation. I found the ability to make a strong choice and then switch to another, made this both fun and productive. Patrick Flick had his home broken into the day of our first rehearsal, so Orlando Shakespeare Theater's Artistic Director, Jim Helsinger, ran our first rehearsal. After the read through, he had the Chorus play with the whole stage as we worked through the first couple of scenes. The script indicates the Chorus on a platform suspended above the stage. Mr. Helsinger said Mr. Flick would possibly have us honor these stage directions, but for the first night we were to play. Being able to play with the proxemics to each other as well as to Asterius (the Minotar) was fun and helped inform me about the times when I am trying to draw him in and when I am withdrawing from him.

Sure enough, at our second rehearsal, Mr. Flick made the decision to give Mr. Yockey exactly the play he'd written, which would be a theme throughout the rehearsal process. As learned earlier, without judgment, we easily adapted to the change in blocking; I found I used

what I'd learned the day before, only on a tighter scale. Mr. Flick also had the idea that for the times when the three Chorus members speak in unison, we would each speak in a different pitch resonance, creating a cool dissident chord. Knowing I use visuals well, that night I double highlighted my overlap lines as a visual reminder to go to my lower register. Mr. Flick also had our two Assistant Directors, Sarah Caitlin Martin and Nick Saldivar, create a Dramaturgical book that included pictures of Greek statues so the poses could inform our movement as the Chorus. All this and more happened in the second rehearsal, proving once again how quickly we need to make choices and adapt during the rehearsal of a new play. I felt I was able to embrace these ideas and was prepared for the quick-paced creative environment.

While in rehearsals for *Heavier Than...* I also was rehearsing Orlando Repertory Theatre's *Writes of Spring*. "Writes of Spring is a unique writing contest designed to support literacy and promote creative expression in young people. It is a collaborative effort among the Orlando Repertory Theatre, the graduate students in the UCF Theatre for Young Audiences MFA Program, and the young people from the metro Orlando community" (Writes...). Students in elementary through high school write a poem, short story or essay on a prompt, and then we developed it into a play under the leadership of Director Kathryn Brantley, and Playwright and Project Director Jennifer Adams. This year's prompt was "If a _____ could talk, it would say..."

This was my first experience working on a devised project, and I loved it. I found many of the things I'd learned so far this year applied, especially the practice of learning a vocabulary for communication. Since we started with entries and not a full script, and we were not cast for the first half of the rehearsal process, the preparation I was able to complete in advance was limited, but the training I had in making quick, bold choices was incredibly applicable. Here is

an excerpt from my journal about six weeks into the process, shortly after we'd received a first draft of the script, but before casting had taken place:

March 23, 2010

At last night's *Writes of Spring* rehearsal, we took the partial scripts of the characters that reoccur and broke into groups to work on them. I was assigned the Drippy and Hummingbird scenes with A.J. Harrett. Our task was to stage the five scenes in 25 minutes. Afterward, we would share them, get feedback, work them again, and share them again. We'd been challenged a few days before to be looking for other objects that could be puppets and think a little more creatively about them. A.J. took a blue mesh laundry bag and put it over his head and torso to become Drippy the cloud. I took a water noodle, a candle, and a pinwheel and created Hummingbird by using the candle to hold the pinwheel into the end of the water noodle. I found I could swing Hummingbird over the audience, creating depth to the audience interaction. The spin of the pinwheel gave the feel of a hummingbird's wings. I tried to utilize quick Laban Dab and occasionally Flick to try to move as a hummingbird as well. I loved working on this movement. I found it was difficult to communicate both with my face/body and my puppet, but as my awareness grew, I also improved. A.J. worked with a more sustained and heavy movement as Drippy.

A.J. and I got lots of positive feedback about our choices. In reworking them, we were encouraged to take the ideas we'd discovered with the puppets and our movement to create human versions of the characters. The Playwright, Jennifer Adams, had intended them to be actual 16-year-old kids. So, we did this. We kept the pinwheel

as a prop (minus the water noodle), which we used as part of our through-line, and we kept the physicality. Again, our feedback was positive. The cast and production team said they were more connected to the human characters.

I was excited by this process. I love that Ms. Adams didn't tell us right away that she wanted us to be human, because we discovered so many cool things in the puppets. I loved working in-depth on two different kinds of interpretations of the characters. Regardless of which way they go, I loved the process. We were also attempting to discover if the arch of the characters made sense, and we think it does. There are very obvious plot things that must happen offstage for these characters, and we believe that the audience will accept that they do. With all of our devising, I'm trying not to get too attached to any of our work, or the characters I get to play. However, I really love Hummingbird and would love to play her.

(Note: I did get cast as Hummingbird with A.J. as Drippy, and we chose to portray them as humans.)

This kind of work was common for this process. I enjoyed the positive atmosphere and felt the freedom to play with dialects; movement choices; emotional, physical, and vocal levels; and puppetry choices. The options seemed endless.

As to communication, the team used Liz Lerman's Critical Response Theory as a way for us to communicate effectively. It honored us as individual artists and utilized judgment free statements for feedback such as:

- It made me think...
- It made me feel...

- I wondered...
- I was confused by...
- I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?

This was, by far, the most structured communication I had been a part of in any of these processes, and I experienced the freedom to create without fear of failure blossom amongst the ensemble.

It wasn't until about a month before we opened that we were actually cast into specific roles for the show, which meant less time to do the text analysis work I'm used to. However, I'm finding I'm getting pretty quick at it. I didn't wait for an off-book date either; I simply started memorizing immediately. I have improved greatly from both *Heavier Than...* and *Triangle Logic*. I am able to memorize, make choices, and adapt more quickly and with greater ease.

How lucky I have been to have three vastly different new play experiences in one year, each of which could have been a thesis individually. I found that time was my biggest enemy. Attempting *Triangle Logic* during finals required a tremendous amount of planning and working ahead. The overlap of *Heavier Than...* and *Writes of Spring* meant no days off for a few weeks and forced me to miss a few early rehearsals for *Writes of Spring*. Finally, *Writes of Spring's* tech week was scheduled during my Spring finals, reducing the time I had to sleep. If I'm honest, I doubt that given the choice again, I'd have given up any of these opportunities. They were all so wonderful. However, I have learned that new plays require a level of energy, commitment and focus that benefits from being well-rested and clear-headed. If my goal is to be the best possible tool for the Director, I need to be able to think clearly, memorize quickly, change on a dime, and have some extra time in my day. Not only will I need this time to work outside of rehearsal, but for myself.

A Final Reflection:

As part of Playfest, I was given the opportunity not only to work with a fabulous Playwright and Director, but to attend many play readings, meet Playwrights and serve on a panel: *The Actor's Role in Developing New Plays*. Being in this environment is an invaluable experience for any Actor, especially one interested in new plays. The air was electric with creativity and passion. Orlando Shakespeare Theater has developed an audience that enjoys being a part of the process and speaks intelligently about new plays.

I was excited about new plays before beginning *Triangle Logic*. Now, I am in love with new play development. I am also thrilled to have a valued part of the process. Playwright Reina Hardy said: "Actors who've been involved with my plays during the writing process have often hugely shaped the plays themselves, in a way that I think is magical" (theactorsrole...). To return to Mr. Daniels thoughts, I can't imagine the world without new plays, or my career not including their development. They are essential to both! I can't wait to see where my journey leads me in the future and how the skills I've learned will continue to grow and develop.

The most exciting next step for me is that I will spend the 2010/2011 season as an Associate Company Member at Orlando Shakespeare Theater. Due to my involvement in PlayFest and my interest in new play development, I was selected as the PlayFest Intern. This means that I get the amazing opportunity to act in several shows and readings at Orlando Shakes, and I spend my office hours most weeks reading new plays and evaluating their potential for development as part of the 2011 PlayFest. I work closely with Patrick Flick, the Director of New Play Development, and David Lee, the Associate Director of New Play Development throughout the selection process. I have a sensitivity to the plight of the Playwright as I look at the nearly 150 plays we will read by January, and the over 200 that were submitted, but not selected for the

reading phase. Some days, after reading several plays I begin to wonder if I even know what makes a play good anymore. Then, I read something that makes me weep, or laugh out loud – hard, or question myself, and I feel so much joy about the magic of theatre and that I get to be a part of it's development.

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