

THE REVENGE OF THE SECOND BANANA:  
A FEMALE SIDEKICK'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

by

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## ABSTRACT

I returned to school to receive an MFA in Musical Theater for many reasons, but paramount was the need to further explore and develop my range as an actress. Throughout my career, I have played a variety of roles, but none as challenging or possibly as rewarding as the man-hungry secretary “Charlie” in James Valcq’s *Zombies from the Beyond*, produced by the Jester Theatre in Winter Garden, FL. Performing this role allowed me to achieve one of my objectives when entering the grad program at UCF: to transition from a classical ingénue or soubrette into a leading lady or character actress; making *Zombies from the Beyond* the perfect capstone to my graduate experience.

During the 1950s, American cinema was filled with sci-fi movies such as *Forbidden Planet*, *The Thing from Another World*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Each movie depicted an otherworldly creature as the villain (a metaphor for the relationship between the United States and the USSR) who had only one purpose: total domination. *Zombies from the Beyond* aptly reveals the absurdity of the hysteria and paranoia surrounding the “cold war” and the “space race” that dominated America in the 1950s. The play makes comic use of the “double-red agent” and presents the belief that the space race and cold war inevitably were tied together, while examining Russia’s dirty tactics in the struggle for power.

In addition to the historical ramifications of *Zombies from the Beyond*, post WWII America saw an explosive growth in female empowerment. Through each female

character's thoughts and actions on stage, Valcq's musical tackles the struggle many women faced between the new feminist ideals and old-fashioned morals. My character, Charlene "Charlie" Osmanski, is the iconic man-hungry, working girl with a big heart (aka "The Sidekick"). She is a woman very much caught between the traditional values of the 1950s and the progressive, more feminist attitudes starting to take hold in the country.

After accepting the role in *Zombies from the Beyond*, I realized my responsibility was to breathe new life into the role of the comedic sidekick while remaining true to the original vision and traditions that had been set forth by such brave comic pioneers as Rose-Marie, Thelma Ritter, and Vivian Vance. Faced with this daunting task and the enormity of creating a role with such a prominent historical and societal lineage, I asked myself, "What does an actor need to know in order to become the perfect sidekick?"

To answer this compelling question and to ensure I did not fail in my task, I researched actresses who play a similar archetype; studied the evolution of the female comedienne; examined the audience's relationship to the sidekick; and discussed the character's future as an integral force in contemporary theatre, all in a convenient survival guide.

Ultimately, the evolution of the mainstream audience and their shifting requirements for entertainment impact the sidekick's portrayal on stage; however, since post-modernistic audiences no longer need one definitive stereotype or archetypal character, the ideas I set forth are not finite or absolute in nature. Instead, they create a

basic foundation that serves as a guide for the actor when creating a similar character while ensuring the sidekick's place as a relevant and sustainable character for generations to come.

"To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong." - Joseph Chilton Pearce

"I am not funny. What I am is brave." - Lucille Ball

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My mother always said I sang before I talked and danced before I walked. It probably wasn't a huge surprise to either of my parents when I decided to audition for my first play. After all, they had watched me enact mini-dramas in our living room since I was three years old.

I was cast in my first role at age nine as Betsy Ross in the Germantown Middle School production of *Let George Do It*, a thrilling and educational musical based on the life and times of George Washington. I desperately wanted to play the role of Betsy Ross; however, one of my friends had recently played the title role in *Annie* at Playhouse on the Square. She was a shoe-in for the role, but due to some strategic campaigning, I was finally cast as that flag-sewing matriarch of our country. While my performance did not go down in the history books, it solidified my profession of choice. Finally, I could enact all the characters I had dreamed of playing: Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, The Little Princess, and any role first portrayed by Shirley Temple.

However, I quickly discovered I wouldn't always get a chance to play the princess or the young heroine. Instead, I was cast as the wicked stepmother in *Cinderella*, Ursula Merckle in *Bye, Bye, Birdie!*, and Mrs. Trotsky in *All in the Timing*. Fortunately, my lack of ingénue status didn't lessen my enjoyment of acting, and, I learned a lot about pushing boundaries and taking risks. It wasn't until high school that I got to play many of the roles I had dreamed of playing. From Mary in *The Secret Garden* to Liesel in *The Sound of Music* to Marian in *The Music Man*, I finally had a chance to show the world I could play leading roles.

But all good things must come to an end. After finishing a BA in Theatre at Washington State University, I moved to Seattle to pursue my acting career. However, I found myself competing for roles against other talented young actresses who also wanted to make a career in theater. I checked the audition websites daily, got new headshots taken, continued my acting training, and auditioned for everything that became available. However, my efforts were in vain, and feedback from local directors was disheartening. I was “too young”, “too old”, “too perky”, “too serious”, or “too short”. For the first time, I questioned my ingénue status. Was I meant to play the wicked stepmother or Ursula Merckle for the rest of my life? How horrible! How terrifying! How wonderful?

After moving to Orlando in 2004, I found myself cast in a series of regional productions and, more often than not, I was cast as a second lead (Logainne in *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*) or comic side-kick (Gilmer in *Godspell*). Even my ingénue roles were plucky (Little Red in *Into the Woods* and Angelique in *The Imaginary Invalid*) or slightly disingenuous (Nina in *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*). While I was thrilled to be playing such a wide variety of wonderful female roles, I felt as if something was holding me back from discovering my full potential. During the rehearsal process, I often doubted my instincts, my abilities, and myself, and felt as though I was relying on the same tactics time and time again. I wasn't getting any younger. How long was I going to be able to play Little Red Riding Hood before it just became ridiculous?

In order to enter the next phase of my career, I needed to make a few personal changes. After much soul searching, I decided to re-evaluate who I was as an actor and who I was as a human being. Then, two important incidents happened almost simultaneously, I discovered Julia Cameron's classic self-help book for artists, The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity, and was cast in Jester Theatre's production of *Zombies from the Beyond* as the man-hungry secretary, Charlie Osmanski.

I leapt at the chance to play this role knowing it would be the first time I had played a role like this. Charlie was wisecracking, spontaneous, vivacious, and sexy. She wasn't a precocious child, but a full-fledged adult who embraced life and everything in it. I saw it as the chance I needed to grow up on and off stage. So, I started The Artist's Way, wrote my three "morning pages" daily and completed every task set forth by the author (37). From my friend, Katie, I received additional inspiration from a book by acting and movement specialist Fay Simpson titled, The Lucid Body: A Guide for the Physical Actor.

The combination of these books, my friends, family, and my colleagues at UCF, and lots of patience and tenacity saw me through the run of *Zombies from the Beyond*. The rehearsal and performance journal included in this document accurately represent my thoughts, feeling, triumphs, and disappointments throughout the three-and-a-half month process. My hope is that the words I painstakingly wrote would help guide other actors, who are willing to take a leap, risk everything and discover something new in the process.

## CHAPTER TWO: ABOUT ZOMBIES FROM THE BEYOND

### The Creator: James Valcq

*Zombies from the Beyond* playwright James Valcq is still making his mark on musical theatre history. That said, Valcq has already become known as a prominent American musical theatre composer, lyricist, and librettist.

Born in Milwaukee, WI in 1963, Valcq began his varied career as a boy soprano, singing with several professional Milwaukee companies, including the Skylight Comic Opera and Milwaukee Opera Company. He first gained national recognition when he took first place in the Student Auditions sponsored by the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NAST). Although Valcq graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in vocal performance, he quickly turned his focus to composition, leading him to pursue a Master's Degree with the Graduate Musical Theatre Program at New York University.

Valcq composed the score for *The Spitfire Grill* (based on the film of the same name and written by Lee David Zlotoff), which premiered Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons in 2001. In addition to winning a Richard Rodgers Production Award, *The Spitfire Grill* also received a nomination from the Outer Critics Circle and Drama League for Best Off-Broadway Musical, as well as several Drama Desk nominations for Outstanding Actress and Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical. Valcq also composed the incidental music for productions at various regional theaters, including the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Door Shakespeare,

Milwaukee's Next Act Theatre, Idaho Theatre for Youth, and the American Folklore Theatre in Wisconsin.

His Broadway credits as a musician or conductor include the revivals of *Flower Drum Song*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, and the debut of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Other regional credits include *Candide*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *South Pacific* at the Skylight Opera Theatre, *She Loves Me* at Indiana Rep, and the national tour of Maurice Sendak's *Really Rosie*.

In addition to a varied career in musical theater, Valcq has composed several song cycles and choral pieces that continue to be performed consistently throughout the United States and Europe. His music was cited by Stage West Theatre as being "particularly melodic, strikingly rhythmic, and possessing harmonic and structural subtleties that reveal the composer's classical training without affecting the accessibility of his material." (Allied Theatre Group)

### **Production History**

#### *Original Off-Broadway Run*

*Zombies from the Beyond* opened Off-Broadway to critical acclaim on October 11, 1995. First produced by Colin Cabot at the Player's Theatre in New York City, *Zombies from the Beyond* ran for 72 performances. According to Lortel Archives, James Valcq wrote the book, music, and lyrics and co-directed the Off-Broadway production with veteran regional director and choreographer Pam Kriger. Featuring a cast of seven, including Robert Boles, Jeremy Czarniak, Suzanne Graff, Matt McClanahan, Claire Morkin, and Michael Shelle, *Zombies from the Beyond* became the sleeper hit of

the season. In a 1995 New York Post article, Clive Barnes wrote, “A splendid surprise! This crazy satire is absolutely enchanting. The book is deliciously silly, while the music and lyrics are sveltely appropriate to subject matter and treatment...By all means see it - - it’s 24-carat fun!” (Barnes D5)

During the 1980s and 1990s, a series of musical revivals such as *Guys and Dolls* (1992), *Carousel* (1994), and *Showboat* (1995) filled Broadway theatres. Due to lack of money and rising production costs, as well as a drought in original material and experienced people to create the new work, few producers were willing to take a risk on an unknown quantity. In a New York Times interview, Stephen Sondheim said, “Revivals encourage more revivals. Like Kudzu, they are choking out new shows...Producers are unwilling to take a chance on new work, because so much of it doesn’t become successful. They would rather put their money into pre-sold products.” (Kantor and Maslon 399) Fewer shows were being workshopped in out-of-town tryouts; instead, producers were importing shows from other venues such as resident theatres across the country or Off-Broadway.

*Zombies from the Beyond*, with its small cast size and relatively low production budget, found cult success when it was first produced Off-Broadway in 1995. Surprisingly while *Zombies...* embraces the old-fashioned aspects of musical theatre by keeping a traditional book structure, it still resonates with a contemporary audience. The shift to more accessible themes widened the audience base for *Zombies from the Beyond* and made it marketable not only to theatergoers but also to the producers and publishing houses that would eventually pick up the production. Actor Nathan Lane said,

“People change and cultures change, and if the timing is right for something and something comes back that we used to like and we haven’t seen in a while, then it’s like welcoming back an old friend.” (Kantor and Maslon 427)

### *Regional Theatre*

Since its Off-Broadway run, *Zombies from The Beyond* has become a staple in regional theatres across the country, with productions in Chicago, Houston, St. Louis, New Orleans, Detroit, and Minneapolis. Notable professional productions include Blowing Rock Stage in North Carolina, which featured several original cast members, and the Philadelphia premiere at Society Hill Playhouse. The *Zombies from the Beyond* cast album was released on Original Cast Records.

### *Original Player*

Suzanne Graff originated the role of Charlene “Charlie” Osmanski in the Off-Broadway run of *Zombies from the Beyond*. A successful regional theatre and classically-trained actress, Graff has spent much of her career playing some of Shakespeare’s most famous women, including Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Celia in *As You Like It* (all at the National Shakespeare Company) as well as Olivia from *Twelfth Night* at the Riverside Shakespeare Company. Regional credits include Sister Mister in *The Cradle Will Rock* at Skylight Opera Theatre, Dolly Levi in *Hello Dolly!* at The Capitol Theatre, and Trickster in *Moon of the Long Nights* with the American Folklore Theatre. Graff trained with the National

Shakespeare Conservatory and received a B.A. in Acting and Directing at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN.

Graff is currently serving as Executive Director of the Door Shakespeare Theater, where she also has appeared in or directed several productions, including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

### **Historical Background**

*Zombies from the Beyond* pays homage to its theatrical predecessors even as it lovingly lampoons them. Similar to the revues of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Garrick Gaieties, *Zombies...* showcases the best and worst American musical theatre has to offer through a variety of catchy tunes, larger-than-life characters, and classic jokes. Historical and societal influences spanning more than a century and deriving from all forms of musical theatre can be found within James Valcq's script and score helping it become a musical theater cult favorite.

Musical theatre composers and lyricists frequently borrow from the popular music of their time in order to better relate to each new generation of theatergoers. From the contemporary pop musicals of today such as *Rent*, *Hair*, and *In the Heights* to the musical revues that first characterized American musical theatre such as *The Passing Show*, *Hands Up* or *The Ziegfeld Follies*, many musicals act as time capsules for the era in which they were written yet remain timeless in how they relate to America and its history (Bordman 353-54). The songs written for *Zombies from the Beyond* possess a distinct 1950s pop sound that mimics yet honors the music listed on the Billboard charts



of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to the Tin Pan Alley era of more than half a century before, popular music of the 1950s and early 1960s experienced a growth in commercialism and saw the emergence of teen idols such as Frankie Vallie, Paul Anka, or Neil Sedaka.

For both the Tin Pan Alley publishers and the record producers, promotion was everything and competition was fierce. In the early 1900s, almost every home in America had a piano, and many families would gather around it to sing the latest music. SMU professor Dennis M. Simon states by 1950, “over 93% of American households owned at least one radio and this medium served as the major form of entertainment.” Due to the abundance of radios, as well as the introduction of the 45-rpm record in 1948, music was once again being written purely for commercial reasons. Favored by teenagers, the new record format helped establish rock and roll as a viable music alternative and created a boom in record sales.

Record producers (like their Tin Pan Alley counterparts) found that “by exploiting various fads and sentiments, they could make the public buy sheet music” and they sought to do just that (Kantor and Maslon 11). Movie spinoffs, such as *Beach Blanket Bingo*, starring teen heartthrobs Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello, emerged to help new songs grow in popularity and reach new audiences. Producers also used the popular and innovative TV show, *American Bandstand*, as a vehicle to launch new hit songs, showcase emerging artists, or to introduce audiences to various genres of music all while bolstering sales.

Early television programming also looked to Broadway as its cultural divining rod. Borrowing heavily from vaudeville and musical revues, television successfully produced their own version of the variety show, which put together comedians, musical numbers, and celebrities with a speed that Broadway couldn't match. Broadway lyricist Sheldon Harnick said, "Weekly variety shows could do topical humor that was genuinely topical, and get the biggest stars to do it, whereas if we were creating a stage revue with topical sketches, we were lucky if the show was only six months old by the time the show opened." (Kantor and Maslon 301) The most successful variety show was Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* (later renamed *The Ed Sullivan Show*), which debuted on CBS in 1948 and single-handedly reversed the fortunes of many failing musical theatre productions overnight.

Although the songs in *Zombies from the Beyond* were written expressly for the production and act as a device to further convey the arc of the story, they share similar characteristics with the popular music of both Tin Pan Alley and the 1950s pop sound. During the Tin Pan Alley era, songs were written about almost anything: ballads of romance and broken hearts ("In the Good Old Summertime", "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage"), novelty songs ("Meet Me In St. Louis", "Take Me Out to the Ball Game"), Ragtime or the latest dance craze (Charleston or Under the Bamboo Tree), and ethnic songs ("Marie from Sunny Italy"), and technology ("In My Merry Oldsmobile" or "Bicycle Built for Two"). However, only a fraction of these songs were written for a specific Broadway production. Most were integrated loosely into the framework of a new

Broadway musical or revue in the hopes that it would filter into the populace, therefore leading to a larger audience and creating a surefire hit.

Many of the songs from *Zombies from the Beyond*, such as “Rocket Roll”, “Big Wig”, and “In the Stars”, seem to serve a similar purpose with the play. The song “Rocket Roll,” sung by leading man Rick Jones and ingenue Mary Malone, introduces the audience to a new dance sensation like the Black Bottom and is typical of the songs sung on American Bandstand. Mary’s song, “In the Stars,” is a doo-wop number the audience will leave the theatre humming. Self-deprecating in nature, “In the Stars” also works as a wistfully romantic ballad similar to Bert Williams’ “Nobody” or “Mr. Cellophane” from the Broadway musical *Chicago*.

Another song, “Big Wig”, also sung by Rick Jones, illustrates the popularity of ethnic-inspired characters and stories (similar to Irving Berlin’s first hit, “Marie from Sunny Italy”). Within the song, Valcq balances parody with a dose of sympathy for Rick’s plight as an immigrant. As a spy fighting for his native homeland, Rick’s character and the lyrics create an interesting self-mythology of Rick vs. a Russian spy who has reinvented himself into the perfect American.

“Little by Little

I’m rising from pit, Till

I become so sly and so slick, a re-

markable twist of the fates

Led me to United States.” (Valcq 39)

The nemesis in *Zombies from the Beyond*, the “beauteous Zombina,” also acts as a good example of exploring different cultures onstage. An alien aviatrix on the prowl for human males, Zombina comes from a matriarchal society where women have the power. In the Act II torch song, “Last Man on Earth”, Zombina laments the fact that she hasn’t been able to find a soul mate, but she refuses to give up hope. Within a revue such as the *Ziegfeld Follies* or a variety show, this song could have acted as the specialty act. Not only does the number require a strong comedic character actress (think Zsa Zsa Gabor or Ethel Merman), but it also demands a legit soprano able to sing demanding high coloratura notes.

In the spectacle laden title song, “Zombies from the Beyond”, playwright Valcq uses Zombina and the “scintillating Zombettes” as the perfect vehicle to parody Flo Ziegfeld’s *Follies* or the Busby Berkley movie musicals of the 1930s. “Their flash, color, topicality, and brazenness caught the spirit of the age...” and Valcq uses the convention of the showgirl to lampoon not only the revues of the ‘20s and ‘30s, but also its descendants (Kantor and Maslon 77). During the song, the Zombettes enter in formation wearing lavish and revealing costumes. After forming several tableaux, the “girls” perform a series of intricate dance steps culminating in a show-stopping kick line that was typical of this era.

Valcq takes parody a step further by adding the convention of cross-dressing, similar to what is seen in Harvey Fierstein’s and Jerry Herman’s *La Cage Aux Folles*. Cross-dressing was a device or specialty act that also was typically performed during the second act of many Minstrel shows. However, in the liner notes of *Zombies from the*

*Beyond*, Valcq asks that the Zombette scene not be approached “as a ‘drag’ number per se...in one production, the actor playing Major Malone had a moustache and no attempt was made to hide it during his appearance as a Zombette.” Therefore, the cross-dressing is poorly veiled, adding to the hilarity and absurdity of the number (Valcq 8). By placing the strong male characters in drag, Valcq continues to exploit the societal norms of the 1950s and consciously attacks the patriarchal stereotypes portrayed within the show.

Up-and-coming actors of the Broadway stage often asked prominent composers such as Irving Berlin or Cole Porter to write a new song that would showcase their talents and, hopefully, make them a star. Charlene Osmanski’s show-stopping Act One song, *Blast Off Baby*, has all the earmarks of being written exactly for this reason. As a comedienne, written in a similar vein to Fanny Brice or Ethel Merman, Charlie has to exhibit comic versatility with a vulnerability that allows the audience to sympathize with her plight. While she doesn’t exactly typify the Marilyn Miller rags-to-riches archetype from *Sunny*, *Sally*, or *Rosalie*, Charlie is looking to be rescued from the single life. However, due to her self-reliance, she is able to break the mold and her arc presents a re-envisioned Cinderella story similar to the contemporary movie, *Ever After*.

With the market crash of 1929 and the onslaught of the Great Depression, a new form of musical theatre emerged that turned the patriotic ideals held by Broadway mainstays such as George M. Cohan on its head. *Of Thee I Sing*, a densely constructed bi-partisan political satire written by the Gershwin brothers and George S. Kaufman, was the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Several new shows targeting

national and global issues followed and musical satires became more prevalent as labor struggles escalated and the seemingly endless Depression continued. Audiences no longer wanted characters who fulfilled the “American Dream”; instead they sought realistic characters and storylines that often offered commentary on what was happening in the outside world. While working on the 1962 musical, *Mr. President*, Irving Berlin said, “You can’t see patriotism unless the people feel patriotic” (Kantor and Maslon 280). Valcq’s use of commentary in *Zombies from the Beyond* song, “The American Way”, similarly comments on the attitudes of post-World War II America and its military industrial complex.

“The key can be found in the song “The American Way.” The combination of blatant aggression in the lyric and confident optimism in the music is the show’s strongest expression of the dichotomy that was the 1950s: the undercurrent of fear and paranoia roiling just beneath the sunny surface of prosperity and “normalcy” (Valcq 9).

## CHAPTER THREE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS

As a modern book musical, *Zombies from the Beyond* provides the audience with an escape from the outside world while still anchoring the plot within 1950s pop culture and events of historical significance. While most theatre can be placed under two headings, realism or non-realism, one is not necessarily more truthful than the other. Instead, they both offer different ways of presenting a reality. Realism follows the predictable logic of everyday life and obeys the accepted laws of gravity, time, setting, and dress. The dictionary.com definition states, “The achievement of realism in theatre was to direct attention to the physical and philosophic problems of ordinary existence, both socially and psychologically.”

### Realism/Slice of Life

Three late 19<sup>th</sup> century playwrights, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Anton Chekhov, set the standards for realism. Together they created characters who were believable and relatable to their audience. For the first time, audiences were seeing characters onstage that could be their neighbor or co-worker. Descendants of this type of work include Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, Marsha Norman’s *Night Mother*, and Eugene O’Neill’s *A Long Day’s Journey Into Night*.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a group of French playwrights took realism a step further when they sought to create an exact copy of life on stage. Through the use of naturalistic elements, such as detailed lighting, sets, and costuming, this method became known as Naturalism or “slice-of-life” drama. Due to the advent of realism and

naturalism, audiences have to accept that action onstage is not make-believe, but real and immediate.

### **The Well-Made Play**

*Zombies from the Beyond* follows a form of realistic plot-driven construction called Climactic Structure, also known as the well-made play. Based on Gustav Freytag's analysis of Greek and Shakespearean Drama, realistic playwrights used Aristotle's dramatic structure to create a more convincing representation of real life on stage. In the well-made play, the exposition and characters are introduced early in the plot quickly followed by the inciting incident. In *Zombies from the Beyond*, the characters are introduced to the audience during the prologue and opening song, *The Sky's The Limit*, after which they discover the appearance of a flying saucer, fueling speculation regarding who or what could be on board the UFO.

The well-made play also takes place within a brief span of time, typically just a few hours or within the span of a single day. In Aristotle's On the Art of Poetry, he described a disciplined structure for the well-made play stating that the action should take place in one location, take place in a 24-hour period of time, and contribute directly to the overall narrative of the play. Limited in adherence to Aristotelian unities of time and place, *Zombies from the Beyond* takes place within a 14-hour day, starting at 10 a.m. and ending at midnight, and the action occurs in a limited number of locales (Aristotle 18).

The rising action occurs when the double-crossing Red Agent Rick opens the saucer and greets Zombina and the Zombettes, who have come to Milwaukee to



enslave the men and eventually the world. Their plan is to “abduct, dominate, and subjugate all virilituous he-specimens in order to continue (their) superior race!” (Valcq 43). Mary and Charlie spring to action when the men of Probe 7 are all zombified using a curling iron. It is now up to Mary and Charlie to save the world!

At the climax of the play, Mary and Charlie steal Zombina’s curling iron, but they find she is still too powerful. Billy arrives in the “knick of time” thereby acting as the Deus Ex Machina. Mary devises a plan that will trick Zombina and distract her while Billy and Charlie attack her using Trenton’s secret weapon, an amplifcator. Zombina loses her voice and she mysteriously disappears much like the Wicked Witch of the West in OZ.

Zombina’s death brings about the falling action as the spell is broken and the men are returned to their natural state, except for Rick, who was sent plummeting to his death. They have won the first interplanetary war and saved Milwaukee! Major Malone asks the employees of Probe 7 to be vigilant and to “keep watching the skies” (Valcq 77).

### **Non-Realism: American Musical Theatre**

Non-Realistic theatre may be harder to define, as it includes almost anything that departs from realism. Created as a reaction against realism and the naturalistic movement, non-realism often conveys what cannot be communicated through a basic conversation. Some of the best examples of non-realistic theatre can be found within the American Musical Comedy or later the Book (Integrated) Musical, where actors break into song or dance when emotions can no longer be conveyed through regular

speech. While non-realistic in nature, breaking into song does not negate the message the character is telling; in fact, it highlights the heightened emotion and often allows for plot development that simple speech may not be able to convey.

However, most contemporary plays and musicals cannot be placed into a box and described as either Realism or Non-Realism. The post-modern movement of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century created many such theatrical examples, including Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, A.R. Gurney's *Sylvia*, and many musicals including Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* and Jason Robert Brown's *Parade*. All of the aforementioned plays include elements of both methodologies and are intrinsically realistic and non-realistic in nature.

The purpose of realistic and non-realistic plays can differ greatly. Is the play's sole purpose to entertain or does it carry a socially significant message? Does the playwright want the audience to sit back and enjoy the show or leave the theatre wanting to change the world? The goal of many playwrights simply is to give the audience an escape from reality through absorption in an imaginative and entertaining situation. In the musical, *Zombies from Beyond*, playwright Valcq strives to find a balance between escapism and realism by using realistic characters embroiled in a very non-realistic, heightened situation.

“The Protagonists of ZOMBIES are all striving desperately to preserve and promote the American way of life as they battle each terrible threat to their security. As such, the 'stakes' are *very high*. The characters are 'real' and must be played with *extreme* honesty. Mary,

Trenton, Rick, and Malone could all be playing *Death of a Salesman*; so earnest is their delivery. Charlie and Bill are obviously the more animated 'second bananas' but even they are more sweet and endearing than they are broadly comical. Zombina is the only 'personality-driven' role in the show, and how she is played will depend entirely on the actress cast in the role...most importantly; *the necessity of a deadpan performing style cannot be overemphasized. The characters are written as cartoons but must be played as real people.* (Valcq 9)

The quote above aptly clarifies the presence of both realism and escapism within *Zombies from the Beyond*. All the characters within the show have been given realistic dialogue and believe whole-heartedly in their given circumstances. If the actress playing Zombina played her role for laughs, she would have less impact on the story as a whole causing the stakes to be less meaningful. The playwright also seems to have based each character on easily recognizable prototypes and many embody archetypes within popular 1950s movies or television series'.

Trenton Corbett: handsome all-American leading man, Clark Kent type; similar prototypes include Kevin McCarthy from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

Rick Jones: sexy, film noir leading man who is really a red agent; similar to Richard Denning from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*

Billy Krutznick: enthusiastic tap dancing delivery boy; a young Donald O'Connor or Mickey Rooney

Major Malone: no nonsense, Eisenhower-esque military man; similar to characters played by Morris Ankrum in movies such as *Invaders from Mars*

Mary Malone: the perfect 50's woman with a comic edge; prototypes include Julie Adams from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, or Marie Windsor in *Cat Women of the Moon*

Charlene "Charlie" Osmanski: man-hungry secretary with lots and lots of heart; similar to Rose Marie in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

Zombina: Voluptuous alien aviatrix on the prowl, Prototype: Zsa Zsa Gabor in *Queen of Outer Space*

### **Cultural Context**

Since the playwright asks the audience to accept the fantastical scenarios in which the characters find themselves, *Zombies from the Beyond* is primarily escapist in nature; however, Valcq also sets the play in a recent historical time period supported by facts and references to real people, locations, and situations. In the musical's introduction, Valcq states:

“ZOMBIES FROM THE BEYOND affectionately evokes many facets of 1950's pop culture: B-movie musicals and B science-fiction films, TV programs, commercials, and popular music. Above all, however, ZOMBIES FROM THE BEYOND is a nostalgic valentine to a way of life that perhaps never was: the fervid patriotism of the Eisenhower-era postwar boom years. The play celebrates our collective joy as a nation feeling we were invincible and infallible...The science-fiction films of the

decade were the perfect outlet for their audiences because these fears were played out in the safe realm of fantasy.” (Valcq 9)

It is interesting to note that during the 1950s, American cinema was filled with sci-fi movies that depicted creatures from other worlds as the villain (a metaphor for the relationship between the United States and the USSR) who had only one purpose: total domination. Such films include *Forbidden Planet*, *The Thing from Another World*, and the aptly named *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

What makes the following quote ring true in reference to *Zombies from the Beyond* is the hysteria and paranoia surrounding the “cold war” and the “space race” that dominated America in the 1950s. The play makes comic use of the idea of a “double-red agent” in the character Rick and employs this character as a plot device in unmasking the true threat in Zombina. It also ties together the idea that the space race and cold war were inevitably tied together, while paying homage to the idea of Russia playing dirty in order to expand their power. During his 1958 State of the Union address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated:

“What makes the Soviet threat unique in history is its all-inclusiveness. Every human activity is pressed into service as a weapon of expansion. Trade, economic development, military power, arts, science, education, the whole world of ideas.... The Soviets are, in short, waging total cold war.” (qtd. in Lodge 620)

In addition to the historical ramifications of *Zombies from the Beyond*, post WWII America saw an explosive growth in female empowerment. Valcq’s musical tackles the

struggle most women faced between the new feminist ideals and old-fashioned morals through each female character's thoughts and actions on stage. Based on historical data from the 1950s and 60s, as many as half of the marriages in America occurred due to of a pregnancy. With the introduction of the pill, the consequences were vast. Pregnant single women had two main choices: an abortion or motherhood. The idyllic dream of Prince Charming arriving to save the day became passé, and young women sought a way to support themselves without the help of a man. The character of Charlie Osmanski is a woman very much caught between the traditional values of the 1950s and the progressive, more feminist attitudes starting to take hold in the country. She herself is an oxymoron as she is well educated and working at a top-secret space station; however, she distrusts this security and continues to search for a husband to support her.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

While I have often been told that completing a character analysis is instrumental in truly discovering and understanding a character, I rarely create one when developing a character. When the assignment was given in class, I rushed through the analysis with a focus on completion rather than gaining insight or knowledge. However, as I approached the role of Charlie, I decided to tackle the dreaded analysis with a positive outlook and a certain degree of enthusiasm. I found that the answers surprised and delighted me, causing me to become even more excited to perform this role and to understand Charlie as an emotional, fully-functional being.

In the book, Playing: An Introduction to Acting, Paul Kuritz developed a thorough character analysis that I borrowed to aid me in my greater understanding of Charlie Osmanski. I also used questions from character analysis assignments used in class to create a character analysis that is more comprehensive and wide-ranging. The answers are based on the information I discovered in the text as well as information I can intelligently or intuitively gather based on the clues put forth by the playwright.

***Who am I?*** I am Charlene “Charlie” Osmanski, Major Malone’s secretary at the Milwaukee Space Center in Milwaukee, WI. I have been working at the center for five years and love the people I have met and the friendships I have made. I live close to the station in a small apartment with my cats, Miller and DiMaggio, named after Marilyn Monroe’s famous hubbies. My mom recently passed away, and since dad’s never been around much, I don’t miss not having a large family. My friends are enough, and I would

do anything to keep them safe. Though, I do wish I had a man in my life to snuggle with under the covers.

***Who am I named after? Do I like my name?*** My mom always wanted to visit France, so she named me after President Charles De Gaulle of France. She never made it there, but at least his name and her dream lives on through me. I like the name “Charlie” but hate “Charlene”. It always makes me think of that stupid cat that tries to get away from Pepé Le Pew in the Looney Toons cartoons. Why would she ever want to get away from him?

***What is my sex? What do I think of sex?*** I love being a female! Although, I can’t imagine living in any time but the 1950s because of the rules placed on females. If I want something, I’m going to get it. I’m not waiting for it to come to me.

***How old am I? What do I think of my age?*** I’m not getting any younger; that’s how old I am. My mom always said a lady never tells her age, but I know better than that. As a grown woman of 28, I have experience and savoir-faire other younger ladies just don’t have yet. To tell the truth, I am looking for the right guy to come and sweep me off my feet. It’s got to happen soon after 30 or I’ll be an old maid.

***How does my posture express my age, health, and inner feeling?*** I’m proud of who I am, so I’m not afraid to stand tall. Not that I am tall, but I stand up straight, shoulders back, and look the world straight in the eyes. I am always searching for the right guy to walk into my life. I am a trusting and loving person, so I have a tendency to lead with my heart first and foremost and think afterward. Mary says I wear my heart on my sleeve or that I’m an open book, and all those clichés people use to describe folks



who are passionate. I just experience everything very intensely, very black and white. I want to be loved, so I return love by helping my friends in any way I can.

***How is my complexion? What do I think of it?*** My mom always said that I take after my Grammy Lula, and from what I have seen in pictures, that's not a bad thing at all. I am so proud of my fair complexion; so many try to emulate it and I've got it.

Thanks Grams!

***What is my height? What is my weight? What do I think of it?*** I wish I were tall like Grace Kelly or Judy Holliday. Unfortunately, I'm only five feet two inches. I read somewhere that Elizabeth Taylor is the same height; that's not too shabby. However, I do have the same measurements as Marilyn Monroe, 37-23-36. Of course, she's 4 inches taller....

***What is the pitch, volume, tempo, resonance, or quality of my voice? What do I think of it?*** I have been working to pattern my voice after Lauren Bacall in *How to Marry a Millionaire*. There was something so sensual, yet ladylike and so high-class about how she spoke every word. Her voice is so deep and just a little raspy, but smooth. I think guys will notice me even more if I sound like her!

***Is my articulation careless or precise? Is my articulation standard or colloquial? Do I have a dialect?*** I have been working hard to get rid of my Wisconsin accent, and I think I have been somewhat successful. Although, when I get excited, that accent just comes right back! Last year, I went and saw Lauren Bacall in *How to Marry a Millionaire* in the movie theater five times. She never cuts off the ends of words or uses slang. If I'm going to be a real lady, I've got to talk like her.

***What is my hair color and style? Do I like it?*** I've been trying something new with my hair. Betty Grable and Lucille Ball always wear their hair up, and it seems men find them attractive. I also dyed my hair a brighter shade of red instead of the mousey brown I was born with. Now, people really stop to look at me when I go out in public. I'm attracting attention, and I love it!

***Do I have any deformities? What do I think of them?*** I hate my feet. My small pinky toes are so deformed at this point from cramming them into high heels and accidentally kicking everything. Whenever I'm in bed with a man, I wear stockings to hide them. They may think I'm crazy, but they don't want to see my hobbit feet.

***Do I have any mannerisms? What do I think of them?*** My face is extremely expressive, so I occasionally have a hard time preventing others from knowing how I am feeling. My reactions are large and dramatic which can be very funny to others who catch me rolling my eyes or raising my eyebrows. It's a habit I wish I could kick. Some people think I'm vain because I am constantly looking in the mirror to fix my hair, repair my makeup, smooth down my suit, and practice a flirtatious look. But, I need to be ready if Mr. Right walks through the door. I also have a tendency to wink at all guys...I can't help it. I love men, and I want to find the perfect guy. If it takes dating the entire male population of Milwaukee, I'll do it!

***How energetic or vital am I? Do I like it?*** I'll sleep when I'm dead. The only time I want to be in bed is if there is someone in it with me and, even then, there are more interesting places to be. I like to give everything 110%. That means I work hard

and play hard. I spend much of my free time going to the nightclub down the street. Believe it or not, Old Milwaukee has a great jazz scene. Sometimes I head to the Roof Ballroom on the NE corner of Wisconsin Avenue and 6th St to see Lionel Hampton or I head over to George's Million Dollar Ballroom to dance to Miles Davis or Charlie Parker. All the big names come through here. My favorite club in downtown Milwaukee is The Brass Rail, a seedy, smoke-filled room on 3rd and Well. Never know who I'm going to see there, but I know it's going to be great.

***What makes me excited?*** I am so excited real aliens might have arrived in Milwaukee. I want to be the first person to get there to meet them! Nothing exciting ever happens in Milwaukee. This might be my chance to get noticed and become a star.

***Do I like my walk?*** I love how I walk. I have been working for years to create the perfect walk. Slow, long stride, with just enough action in the hips to get guys to take a second look, but not so much movement that it is overdone. A walk should seem effortless and purposeful. It's my favorite attention grabbing technique.

***Do I have any objects with me? Do I carry accessories or hand props?*** I am careful always to carry my purse or clutch with me. It carries all the essentials: powder, lipstick, and a pocket mirror. At work, you usually will find me carrying a clipboard or a small notebook so I can take notes at any time. I also am trying to learn how to knit, because I've noticed on TV shows recently that all the housewives knit in the evenings. If I'm going to catch a man, I've got to have skill with every weapon in the arsenal.

***What do I like to wear? How do I wear my clothes? How do I handle them? I***

just purchased the cutest red dress with white polka dots. It's for work, but I can't imagine why a working girl can't have a bit of fun. It immediately reminded me of a Jerry Gilden nautical dress I saw in a recent issue of McCall's magazine. I like to buy clothes that have a bit of drama or flair, and I love the feel of nice fabrics against my skin, very sensual. If I'm trying to get a guy to pay a little more attention to me, I have a few tricks up my sleeve. Playing with a necklace at my décolletage, leaning over to pick up a piece of paper I "happened" to drop, or fixing my stockings always seems to do the trick.

***What do I do when I wake up each morning?*** Coffee is my best friend in the mornings. It seems as though I can't survive without a couple cups of Joe. I usually make some malt-o-meal and sit down to read the newspaper with my coffee in hand. Mr. DiMaggio and Miller are usually begging to be fed in the morning, so that's our family time. I hate to be rushed in the morning. It sets the tone for the entire day.

***What is my educational background? How much discipline was I subjected to?*** I went to high school at Riverside High and was number 18 in my class. Of course, only 50 of us actually graduated. Mom always said that women can't be too careful and shouldn't rely on a man to support her. I suppose she learned that the hard way. I took a dictation and typewriting class in high school, so I started looking for a job as a secretary. Growing up, Mom had to take a full-time job in one of the canning factories, so I pretty much took care of myself. It's taught me to be more independent and to look after myself because no one else is going to.

***How intelligent am I?*** I am always trying to improve myself and learn a little bit more about the world in which I live. I never know when it might come in handy to bring up a random piece of trivia. Some men are very impressed by that sort of thing. Of course, I'll also hide those factoids if I feel like it would turn away a potential love interest. I can never be too careful.

***What was my childhood like? What are my strongest memories?*** I remember playing outside with my friends, especially Mary all day long. There was always something to do. We rode our bikes, roller skated, or played hopscotch. One of my favorite memories was listening to the radio in the evenings with my mom. Every night we would sit in front of the radio and listen to the *Abbott and Costello Show*, *Jack Benny Program*, or the *Woodbury Soap Hour* starring Bob Hope. Sometimes Mom would bring out a deck of cards and we would play Euchre or Canasta. I usually beat her, but she probably let me win. Those nights I got to spend with my mother were special because it was just the two of us against the world.

***How much money do I have? How much do I want?*** While my job at the station pays well, I'm never going to get rich. I saved as much as I could for five years so I could buy my little apartment, but now I'm flat broke. I would love to meet some nice man with a lot of money who will sweep me off my feet and let me buy as many dresses as I can fit into my huge walk-in closet. I sometimes have dreams visiting New York City with my handsome husband, eating at one of those chic restaurants (maybe with Doris Day at the next table), wearing a long mink coat, and decked out in jewels.

We order one of everything on the menu because money is no object and then retire to our flat in the Upper East Side for the night.

***What is my occupation? Do I like it? What other jobs have I had? When and why did I choose this one?*** I currently work at the Milwaukee Space Station as the personal secretary to Major Malone. As far as jobs go, it's not a bad one at all. I have made a lot of friends and I get to see my best friend, Mary, almost every day. I have worked a few dead end gigs, so I'm happy I found one more to my liking.

The worst job was the first one I had out of high school. I worked for this good-looking insurance salesman, and boy did he treat me nicely. I worked with him for about six months before he asked me on a date to the Million Dollar Ballroom. I fell in love with him that night, and for the next year we were almost inseparable. I couldn't wait for the day when he would get down on one knee, take out a glowing 5-carat diamond ring, and ask me to be his wife. Unfortunately, his current wife wasn't going to let this dream become a reality. So, after almost two years of him hemming and hawing and me waiting, I left the job and him to start fresh. I went to work as part of a typing pool at Journal Communications, Inc, which publishes the Milwaukee Journal and broadcasts on WTMJ-AM. It was a great job and most of the girls I worked with were a blast. However, I was laid off after a year because of a simple misunderstanding involving the boss man's son, George. So, when Mary mentioned that her father was looking for a new secretary, I knew this was my chance!

***Where do I live? Where do I work?*** I live in a small apartment I purchased with the money from my first year working at the station. It is located about 10 minutes away

from work. I have to put in some late hours at the Milwaukee Space Station located outside Milwaukee, so I wanted to be close. It's not safe for a single female out there! The space station is very sterile and scientific looking with lots of buttons. I almost have Major Malone convinced that putting a few quilts or knick-knacks about would make the station much more homey.

***What are my political and religious attitudes?*** I vote each year in the elections. I never had a man who would guide or dictate my vote, so I have to keep track of the important issues in my world. I am proud the women's vote has become important to politicians and women are getting out there to talk about issues and get fresh points of view. I read recently that Dwight D. Eisenhower partially owes his 1952 win to women voters. As for my religious beliefs, I know that something exists, but I'm not sure what it is. Honestly, I don't care. I've always looked out for my friends and myself, and I'll continue to do that regardless.

***Who would I choose to be if I could be anyone else?*** If I could be anyone in the world, I would definitely choose Rita Hayworth. Growing up, she was one of my favorite stars on the big screen, and she just oozes sex appeal. Rick Jones calls her the "Love Goddess," and he is right! I love the way she walks. I wish I had taken dance classes as a kid so I could move like her. One of my favorite movies starring Rita Hayworth would have to be *You'll Never Get Rich* with Fred Astaire. It was the first movie I saw her in, and I was hooked. She played a dancer who was being wooed by a married man. Sound familiar?

***How has my mother influenced me? How has my father influenced me?*** My Mom raised me in a single-family, ranch home in the outskirts of Milwaukee. While Mom loved me dearly, she had to work a lot to support me, so we rarely got to spend lots of quality time together. I never really knew my father, so I didn't miss him. Although, it would have been nice to have a father around growing up to give us guidance and protect us if we needed it. But, it taught me the importance of having a good guy in my life, preferably one with some money.

***What was my favorite fairy tale?*** I love fairy tales; all those handsome men saving the damsel in distress. Growing up, my mother used to read Sleeping Beauty to me, and it became my favorite. Who wouldn't love to be saved by a dashing young man who rides up on a white horse, battles a dragon, and awakens you with a kiss?

***Who are my friends? Who are my enemies?*** My co-workers at the Milwaukee Space Center have become my best friends and my family. I am so lucky to get to work with my best friend, Mary Malone. We've been inseparable since junior high, and I couldn't possibly imagine a life of gossiping without her. While my boss, Major Malone, still terrifies me a little bit, he also is Mary's dad. I know his bark is worse than his bite. My two best guy pals at the station are Rick Jones and Mary's steady beau, Trenton Corbett. Rick is my favorite because he's a great flirt, and Trenton is way too much like the brother I never had (albeit a smart, super handsome and charming brother. Eek.) Of course, I don't expect Rick to double cross us and allow the evil Zombina into the Space Station. The love of my life, Billy Krutzik, delivery boy and boyfriend extraordinaire, is



the most recent addition to my life. However, in the short time I have come to know him I know that he is faithful and true.

***What hobbies or interests do I have?*** I know I am supposed to love the typical hobbies all women are supposed to excel in like gardening, canning, hosting parties for the neighbors, joining committees or social clubs, and running PTA teas, but those activities just don't interest me. I enjoy hanging out with the guys, smoking a cigar, and drinking brandy. It may not be ladylike, but it's a lot of fun!

***Do I have children? Why or why not?*** No way do I have any children, Not yet. I'm not married. Certainly can't put the cart before the horse. But eventually, I would love to have a couple of kids: one boy and one girl. After all, it's part of the American dream.

***What will be carved on my tombstone?*** "I am not a has-been. I am a will be." – Lauren Bacall

***How do your friends and family get along?*** We all get along just fine, thanks for asking. Of course, there is a social and work-related hierarchy, but for the most part that is followed and everyone gets along swimmingly. Since the group has worked together for so long, we all have become great friends, and I try to maintain that friendship on a daily basis. When I am disappointed or angry with someone on the staff, I try to hide my feelings, especially in the presence of others.

***What emotions do your friends and family generate in one another? What do they think about one another?*** I get a little frustrated by my inability to find a guy, but I'm completely positive it can and will happen. Billy could be the one; he's awfully

cute and looks fantastic in that white delivery boy get up. I'm a little worried I'm too old for him. Sometimes I wish I were naturally as sweet and generous as Mary. She has this uncanny ability to meet perfect candidates for marriage: nice, good-looking, and rich. However, she hasn't found the right guy either, so she must be doing something wrong.

## CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS OF A SECOND BANANA

### Introduction

The rehearsal of any performance piece can be an exciting and sometimes frustrating process. It allows the actor to explore his or her character to its fullest extent, to discover more about the character's surroundings, and to develop the character into a living, breathing entity. The following pages are a detailed, first person account of my process and experiences while rehearsing and performing in *Zombies from the Beyond* with the Jester Theatre in the fall of 2008.

Throughout the rehearsal and performance process, I have written my thoughts without editing, allowing this journal to serve as an uncensored reflection of my process. As you will see, my journal covers a variety of topics, including the discovery of new choices and evolution of my interpretation of the role as well as the challenges I faced as an actor throughout the rehearsal process. The main purpose of this journal is to lend insight into the choices I made during each performance and act as a resource for others researching this role.

### Rehearsal Journal

“You can't start worrying about what's going to happen. You get spastic enough worrying about what's happening now.” – Lauren Bacall

*July 10, 2008 – Cast in Zombies from the Beyond* – I was cast in a show called *Zombies from Beyond* at the Jester Theater in Winter Garden. I am very excited about

the cast and working with Diana and Jay, but what makes me even happier is that I will be using the role as my graduate thesis.

*“It’s a helluva start, being able to recognize what makes you happy.” – Lucille Ball*

*August 10, 2008 – First Read-Thru* - I picked up my script for *Zombies from the Beyond* today from the director’s house. When I was initially cast in this production, I was honestly worried whether or not the script would be written well or if the music would be memorable. However, after reading it this afternoon, I really enjoyed the show! I’m hoping it will be a successful production for the theater in Winter Garden. To gain a little perspective and to start my process with this role, I decided it would be a good idea to write down some of my first impressions of the character and the story so I can look back at them throughout the rehearsal process.

Charlie is the unmarried, man-hungry secretary to Major Malone, the head of the Milwaukee Space Center. As the Major’s secretary and the go-to girl to get things done, she keeps track of the Major’s correspondence, tracks the finances, places orders for Probe 7, and almost anything else that comes up that no one else can do. Charlie deals with all crises through humor and sarcasm. She isn’t the smartest bulb, but she is brave and willing to do anything and everything to save her beloved friends and Milwaukee. By the end of the play, she has fallen in love with the tap-dancing delivery boy, Billy Krutzik.

At the beginning of the play, a mysterious flying saucer has been detected in the air around Milwaukee. Charlie is given the daunting task to fit the men for space suits and to send them up to space to save the world from certain destruction. When the delivery boy, Billy, asks her out on a date, she rejects him, but he tap dances his way into her heart. They decide to meet for a casual date later that night; however, the Major orders Charlie to man the television monitors instead. Dejected, she decides to cancel her date with Billy, but (just then) she is waylaid by Rick, a double crossing red agent, who drugs her coffee and cuts all communication to the outside world. While Charlie is knocked out, Rick opens the saucer and welcomes Zombina and the Zombettes, who have come to Milwaukee to enslave the men of Milwaukee and eventually the world. Their plan is to “abduct, dominate, and subjugate all virilituous he-specimens in order to continue (their) superior race!” (Valcq 43). It is now up to Mary and Charlie to save the world! Mary and Charlie steal Zombina’s curling iron, but find she is still too powerful.

Billy arrives in the nick of time, and Mary devises a plan that will distract Zombina while Billy and Charlie attack her using Trenton’s secret weapon, an amplifactor. This amplifactor causes Zombina to lose her voice, and she mysteriously disappears much like the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*. Zombina’s death breaks the spell, and the men are returned to their natural state, except for Rick, who plummets to his death from a spaceship. They all have won the first interplanetary war and saved Milwaukee! Major Malone asks the employees of Probe 7 to be vigilant and to “keep watching the skies” (Valcq 77). The show ends happily ever after!

The director's notes/character breakdown calls Charlie a comic soubrette similar in style to Ellie in *Showboat*, Ado Annie from *Oklahoma*, and Minnie Fay in *Hello, Dolly!*. I'm not sure if I completely agree with this assessment. I definitely believe she should be attractive, friendly, and outgoing, However, I believe she has a lot more sass and empowerment than these other female characters listed above. She reminds me of the funny and spirited but desperate women such as Sally Rodger's in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* or Fran Kubelik from *The Apartment*. Although I am a little nervous about playing a character who is more sexually aggressive than I have previously portrayed in performances, I am excited to begin the work necessary to play this role. I loved reading the script and am thrilled to get started in a few weeks.

"Some women call this kind of relationship 'being friends with a man.' I call it what it is... nothing." From Nose Jobs for Peace by Selma Diamond

*August 28, 2008 – First Rehearsal – We had our first *Zombies from the Beyond* rehearsal tonight at Jay and Diana's house. The entire cast was there except for Kate, because she's contagious...some kind of icky lung infection. I am excited to work with Jay and Diana Hopkins from Jester Theatre, as I have heard a lot of fantastic things about Jay as a director and comedian. I'm hoping to learn a lot through this rehearsal process. Most importantly, I want to work selling a punch line. Comedy is an art and the timing has to be perfect, so I am hopeful Jay will have advice on how to do this*

effectively night after night, while still allowing the humanity of a character to shine through.

Looking at the rehearsal schedule, I am nervous about the amount of time being given to rehearsing the show. Due to our personal schedules, we will meet three times a week from 7:30-10:30 p.m. for the next six weeks. That might sound like a lot of rehearsal, but after doing the math, I realized it amounts to less than 60 hours of rehearsal time, including tech and dress rehearsals. For a typical show at the Orlando Repertory Theater or at Orlando Shakespeare Theater, we sometimes do that in one week. There has been some discussion of adding additional rehearsals for choreography and music, but it remains to be seen whether or not we can make those work. I am a little worried, especially at the amount of music that we all need to memorize.

“If there's anything worse than a woman living alone, it's a woman saying she likes it.”

– Thelma Ritter

*September 3, 2008 – Music Rehearsal* – Tonight, we met our fantastic music director, Jim Rhinehart, who taught us the music in Act One. On days like today, I wish I could read music. While I was growing up, I wish someone had told me that sight-singing or reading music would be a really great skill to have, because I could really use those skills right now. (However, at the time I probably wouldn't have listened or cared.) The harmonies in this show are tight, and I am not picking them up quickly. I'm simply

not able to keep up. I'll spend the time, plunk it out, drum it into my head on my own time, but until then I'm embarrassed that I don't have the notes. When it's not coming easily, I sometimes just shut down completely. It's a horrible flaw.

Overall, I am realizing I have to quiet the judgmental voices in my head and to trust my instincts and not hate what I do on stage. I have been reading several self-help books recently with the hope that I will find some solutions to this problem. One quote recently stuck with me from When Things Fall Apart. Author Pema Chodron says, "We want to be perfect, but we keep seeing our imperfections, and there is no room to get away from that, no exit, nowhere to run." (Chodron 89) Until I am able to look past my imperfections, I am unable to be the kind of artist and chameleon I want to be. Those tireless voices will continue to judge every move I make, making me scared, inhibited, ineffective. They also prevent me from looking beyond myself, listen to the other actors onstage, and respond to them emotionally. I am unable to look at another person impartially and without judgment.

This inability to look past myself creates additional tension and prevents me from portraying another person honestly and effectively. All my focus stays on what I am thinking, feeling, or saying; therefore, I am constantly reviewing and editing myself on stage. This prevents me from giving the other actors my focus and energy, and I am unable to listen to my scene partner. This creates even more tension and prevents me from getting out of my mind, out of my way. It's a never-ending cycle. Tension inhibits my reactions and stops me expressing parts of my emotional life that are currently



dormant. I know I am able to do this in theory, but I feel as though it is almost physically impossible at this point.

My previous process was to explore how the character walks, talks, and moves first, until I feel safe exposing her wants and needs. It's as though I am hiding inside a character. But that's what it is...hiding. I'm creating a character from a superficial place and only letting her become real when I decided it is safe. Faye Simpson, author of the Lucid Body Technique, says, "The art of acting has to do with the ability to transform oneself into another character that walks, talks, thinks, feels differently while still working from the self." (Simpson 3) Throughout this rehearsal process, I will strive to quiet the judgmental voices, so I may work "from the self" and do the role of Charlie justice.

"You know Miss Blake, you're awfully nice. In fact, I don't even mind you being a teensy weensie bit prettier than I am." – Sally Rogers in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*September 4, 2008 – Music Rehearsal* – At rehearsal this evening, we spent the first half of the evening reviewing the music in Act One. I definitely did not retain my harmonies, but I also didn't have a chance to work on them on my own. I have to find the time to do my homework with this show. I don't want to let anyone down, and I refuse to just get through the show by singing the melody line.

While I am very disappointed with my progress in the group numbers, I am very happy with my solo, "Blast Off Baby". For the first time tonight, I got to sing the song

with my two handsome partners, Todd Allen Long and David Almeida. I was very excited and a little apprehensive, but proud of my work on the song. Jim also seemed very pleased with my work. The boys sound great and I can't wait to get "Blast Off Baby" on its feet next week.

"I have a date with an unmarried accountant and I want to get there before he gets married." - Sally Rogers in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

September 5, 2008 – James Valcq, the playwright of *Zombies from the Beyond*, very thoughtfully includes a character description within the script to help the cast and director better understand his inspiration. Since all the roles are based on archetypal or stock characters, Valcq mentions similar roles from which my character is based. Among the roles mentioned are Thelma Ritter and Rose-Marie. I have no idea who Thelma Ritter is, but I LOVE Rose-Marie. Growing up, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* was my favorite show on Nickelodeon's Nick at Night and Rose-Marie's character, Sally Rogers, was my absolute favorite character on the show. She always seemed so genuine, and she was able to make the best of almost any situation. Rose-Marie was a fearless comedian, able to do impressions of many of the famous stars of the early 1960s, and a talented, expressive vocalist.

This week, I plan on renting *The Pajama Game* with Thelma Ritter and the first season of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* so I can get to know these women a little better.

It's also a nice excuse to watch great TV. We'll see how these shows influence the evolution of my character.

“We're writing a comedy show; we don't have time for jokes.” – Buddy in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*September 10, 2008* – I watched a few episodes of *The Dick Van Dyke* show last night. I am really enjoying the show and find it really easy to do character research for Charlie. I also looked up old videos online of Baby Rose-Marie performing in the early 1930's. They are a stitch!

It was interesting to watch her mannerisms develop from the early videos through her performances on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. She is a very presentational singer who uses her face to tell the story, but somehow it never seems too fake or insincere. She does this funny thing with her eyes: she looks up and then back at the audience. Also, she always keeps this brightness and bounciness to her movement that is very interesting. I am hoping to incorporate some of her style into “Blast off Baby”, especially since it would work very well with the 1950's time period and the presentation style of the song.

However, I don't want to detract from the overall performance of the piece, but flesh out my character's arc within the story. *On Performing* author David Craig counsels that “in the theater, you can trust a cardinal principle: an audience will always look before they listen” (78). Craig argues that with even the smallest of movements,

you can take the attention away from the dialogue, “for even that will catch their eye and close their ear” (Craig 78). My hope is that my attention to detail will simply enhance the audience’s experience, not cause them to tune out.

“Understanding can be hazardous to your health” – Nose Jobs for Peace by Selma  
Diamond

*September 11, 2008* – This afternoon, I worked with Megan Wiley, another MFA in Theater at UCF, on the harmony in the title song, “Zombies from the Beyond” and “In the Stars”. She plunked my part for me, and I recorded it onto my computer using Garageband. Thank goodness for Apple software! It records all my rehearsals straight onto my computer, then I can easily transfer it onto an ipod or a cd. It was such a relief! Since I recorded the early rehearsals when I was first learning my part, the original recording was filled with wrong notes and tons of starts and stops. This recording quickly became totally useless. With the new recording, I just need to study my music and learn it as though it is my melody. Then, I have to make sure I don’t drift and start singing another part. Hang on to that harmony!

“A woman isn't complete without a man. But where do you find a man - a real man -  
these days?” – Lauren Bacall

*September 17, 2008 – Music* – Rehearsal went well last night. I am still extremely disappointed in myself as a singer. I know I have only myself to blame for my lack of knowledge and my inability to hold even the most basic harmonies. I knew coming into grad school that was something I needed to work on, but I haven't made it a priority. Therefore, I haven't improved one of the goals I deemed most necessary to my growth as a performer. It's very limiting, but I can't get embarrassed when I don't know what I am doing. I need to put myself in the hands of someone I trust and just get it done, or I need to stop procrastinating and teach myself. Right now, it comes down to time and my level of need. So far, I haven't been sufficiently motivated enough to deem it a high a priority. I need to remember to be patient with myself.

I have to get rid of the fear. Fear that I am being judged or I will fail. When I am able to do that successfully, I will release or lose the tension and stress that has been building in my body. I'm just not sure how to do this? How do you quiet almost thirty years of people telling you what's right and what's wrong?

“What is a girl supposed to do? Go on the street and ask the first man she meets to come home with her? -- No, don't do that. It doesn't work.” – Doris Day and Thelma

Ritter in *Pillow Talk*

*September 18, 2008* – Rehearsal was interesting tonight for many reasons. We worked on choreographing two of the numbers from the show: “Keep Watching the Skies” (finale) and “Zombies from the Beyond”. It was a lot to remember. The steps

aren't hard, but our choreographer, Heather, has staged every bit of the song, so there is very little time to catch my breath or remember the next step. I really appreciate her style of choreography and think it suits the campy, earnest feel of the show. I wish we could have run the number in its entirety a few more times, but the cast is all at various levels of dancing ability, so we did what we could.

I believe that when we meet again tomorrow night, we are going to review this dance first then move on to a few other songs, including "Blast Off Baby". I need to review all of my words for tomorrow night. I really want to go in prepared.

"When a man and a woman see each other and like each other they ought to come together - wham - like a couple of taxis on Broadway, not sit around analyzing each other like two specimens in a bottle." – Thelma Ritter

*September 24, 2008* – We blocked the first half of "Blast Off Baby" last night. It's fabulous! Heather is doing such a great job as the choreographer at retaining the show's tongue-in-cheek, but super earnest feel. I am constantly entertained by her quick, clever wit in person and am doubly amazed she can make it translate in her choreography. This is a great show for her to showcase her fantastic choreography.

I was very pleased with my role in rehearsal tonight as well. Knowing we would be choreographing "Blast Off Baby" this evening, I spent the past few afternoons

reviewing the music and breaking down the lyrics in order to see the words as a monologue or script.

In On Singing Onstage, author David Craig asks the performer to put the lyrics in their own words as objectively as possible by asking a series of questions. What is this story about? Where does the lyric take place? What is the age, socio-economic, and education of the narrator? The purpose of this exercise called “One” is to “isolate all the information, both of story and of character, that can be read *in* a lyric without reading anything *into* it...” (Craig 117) Using Craig’s “One” exercise, the actor separates the words from the music allowing the actor to make choices without relying on musical cues. Craig reinforces that while the answers should be in the actor’s own words, he should resist the temptation to personalize the text. Instead, he should look at the exercise like a journalist and report just the facts.

Intro            Take a memo, type a letter,  
Things are bad ‘n’ won’t get better,  
Major Malone has got a plan.  
The measurements must be taken,  
And now my heart is breakin’  
Because it’s clear to see:  
Ev’ry man will be an astronaut,  
Leaving naught for me.  
And when the men are thus employed,  
Of them my life with be devoid,

But I'll do my duty as best I can.

It's sad to see men on the run,

Still, sending them off could be fun.

1<sup>st</sup> "8"            I'll be a true blue blast off baby

I've got a great big job to do:

It's nothing but a pleasure

To give the men full measure

Before our teary toodle-oo

Blast Off Baby –Thirty-Two

2<sup>nd</sup> "8"            I'll be a true blue blast off baby

And I'll be stalwart, staunch, and strong.

I'll do the ship-to-shore bit

When you go into orbit,

And hope that not a thing goes wrong.

Blast Off Baby –Forty long

                 Bridge            Magnitude and amplitude, diameter and span,

"Tell the captain you're a king size man."

Shoulder width and neckline, inner seam and split,

It's all sewn up, you're a perfect fit

3<sup>rd</sup> "8"            For the true blue blast off baby

who supports your every aim.

So if the space brigade-y



Should need a little lady  
To help ingnite the rocket flame,  
Blast off baby –Baby, I’m game! (Valcq 30-33)

Based strictly on the information above, I decided this is a story of a woman who is between the ages of late teens and mid-50s. Optimally, she is in late 20s, old enough to be worried about being alone for the rest of her life, but not so old that she seems desperate, unable to enjoy her freedom, unattractive physically, or psychologically unstable. The story takes place anywhere but in outer space. She talks about sending the men into space, which she wouldn’t say if she were already there. Regarding education and a general economic bracket, Charlie mentions typing and taking dictation, so she has had some form of higher education or technical training as a secretary. However, her speech pattern and choice of words causes me to believe she comes from a lower- to middle-class background and now is a middle-class working girl.

This exercise is interesting. My first thought is I simply would be repeating a lot of the information I had already included in my character analysis. While it was true to some extent, I wasn’t able to embellish Charlie’s history. It put the song and my character completely into perspective almost immediately. It could become a touchstone if I’m not feeling focused during rehearsal or a performance. I can just say to myself, “This is a story about a woman who...”.

Since the “One” exercise proved to be so beneficial, I want to delve deeper and make more personal choices based upon Valcq’s text. Craig identifies his next exercise as “The Two” and says its primary function is to “make you move.” (138) Through

another series of questions, he asks the performer to flesh out the life from the lyrics by returning to them for reference as he writes the “Two”. This assures the performer that it’s always “the lyric that initiates what you write.” (143) I decided to take a stab at creating this exercise to see how it would work for Charlie.

<p>This is a story about me, Mom.          Are you paying attention? Who am I? I’m just a little ol’ secretary who happens to be stuck in the biggest crisis the world has ever seen. I have always wanted to be part of something great, make a name for myself. Maybe now is my chance to make my mark on the world. It could be my last chance.</p>	<p>Take a memo, type a letter,          Things are bad ‘n’ won’t get better,          Major Malone has got a plan.          The measurements must be taken,          And now my heart is breakin’          Because it’s clear to see:          Ev’ry man will be an astronaut,          Leaving naught for me.</p>
<p>I’ve always let other people dictate who and what I am. You always wanted me to settle down and have a lot of babies. I’m still not sure if that’s what I want, but now I wonder “Did I miss my chance?”</p>	<p>And when the men are thus employed,          Of them my life with be devoid,          But I’ll do my duty as best I can.          It’s sad to see men on the run,          Still, sending them off could be fun.</p>
<p>No matter what, those men are counting on me to show them a good</p>	<p>I’ll be a true blue blast off baby          I’ve got a great big job to do:</p>

<p>time. I could be the last woman they see before they die. I have to stay positive and give them a reason to come home in one piece. Don't say I'm wasting myself.</p>	<p>It's nothing but a pleasure To give the men full measure Before our teary toodle-oo Blast Off Baby –Thirty-Two</p>
<p>I'll give each one of them a picture of me to take into space. I'll kiss them so passionately and remind them I'm here waiting for them to return. I won't shed a tear or let them see how scared I am for them. I'll be their tough little soldier.</p>	<p>I'll be a true blue blast off baby And I'll be stalwart, staunch, and strong. I'll do the ship-to-shore bit When you go into orbit, And hope that not a thing goes wrong. Blast Off Baby –Forty long</p>
<p>I shouldn't be worried about any of them, right? Mom, Those men who work at the station are some of the strongest, bravest, and smartest men I know. In fact, all they have to do is walk in a room. No one is going to mess with my guys.</p>	<p>Magnitude and amplitude, diameter and span, "Tell the captain you're a king size man." Shoulder width and neckline, inner seam and split, It's all sewn up, you're a perfect fit</p>
<p>I'll be waiting for each of those handsome soldiers to come home to me. I don't mind sitting on the sidelines as</p>	<p>For the true blue blast off baby who supports your every aim. So if the space brigade-y</p>

<p>long as each one of them knows how much I care. I would show them if one would just ask. Why hasn't anyone asked?</p>	<p>Should need a little lady To help ignite the rocket flame, Blast off baby –Baby, I'm game!</p>
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It took a little bit of effort to get started with this exercise. I wanted to stay true to the original intent of the lyrics but write something that actually meant something and came from a place of real emotion. I didn't want to manufacture anything. When writing this, I was startled to find that Charlie was talking to her mom. I suppose it makes sense since she is a liberated, progressive woman who is constantly fighting old values. I also was happily surprised that Craig encourages the performer to create a moment before the start of the lyric. This moment can be very important to the performer, especially in an audition situation, as it provides a reaction or jumping off point for the actor.

Because of all the work I did before coming into rehearsal, I simply had to focus on picking up the steps tonight. They are not easy! I actually woke up this morning with a little bit of whiplash from the "40 long" move. Oh my! That just sounds wrong.

"As a guest who doesn't eat, drink or smoke, you leave much to be desired, but as a writer, you're my girl." – Thelma Ritter

*September 25, 2008* - I thought it might be interesting to watch a few *The Dick Van Dyke* episodes that center on the character of Sally Rogers. It might answer a few questions or create new ones for my character. I also decided to transcribe some of the funnier lines Rose-Marie says in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. If I have the time, I want to do the same exercise for other movies that showcase a plucky sidekick. I am hoping they will reveal or add something new to my thoughts about Charlie Osmanski.

I jotted down some quick observations of the Rose-Marie's characterization of Sally Rogers. The first thing I noticed is that her walk is very free. She has a long gait and loose, almost careless, strides. It's a sexy walk but strong and almost masculine. It singles her out yet also makes her one of the guys. Her attitude is positive if not a little self-deprecating. It's as though she knows her faults but isn't ready to accept them yet. Occasionally, it seems like there is a hint of sadness in her. She's surrounded by men, but can't seem to find the man for her. Sally knows that while she's not a beauty queen, she is still physically attractive. I think she wonders why she isn't married. But, for most men she comes across too strong with talk of marriage, and they run the other direction.

Sally is always the first one to crack a joke, but she doesn't suffer fools gladly. I love her deadpan delivery of her lines and the long-suffering glances when she has had enough. Honest to a fault, she has a hard time holding back an opinion, and her words of wisdom can seem like anything but. Sally can come across as very acerbic and tough, making her hard to love, but with her friends she is physically demonstrative, friendly, funny, and dramatic. She is just looking for someone to love.

"It's just like my mother always said: The sun isn't always shining just because there are sparrows." – Sally Rogers in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*September 25, 2008* - I look up because I am short. I think this is manifesting itself in my body and causing me to experience neck and shoulder pain. I tried a new exercise today based on an Alexander Technique warm-up. Standing in front of a firm wall, I bent my knees and leaned back until the top of my head rested against the wall. I sat there for about a minute until my muscles grew tired and were forced to relax. When I stood up, I felt as though my head had no other option than to sit where it naturally is meant to rest. I felt weightless. The feeling didn't last long, but it felt effortless. I will continue to do this exercise daily to see if there is any change in my posture and therefore my neck tension.

"Our judgments are a reflection of ourselves, our priorities, and how we think the world should be." - The Lucid Body by Faye Simpson

September 26, 2008 – I don't feel great this morning. I'm not sure why. I think I am a little burnt out and my brain is definitely fried. I just want the time to watch the *Dick Van Dyke Show*, the *Pajama Game*, and pound out my harmony from *Zombies*.

I don't think I got cast in *An Inspector Calls*. I am surprisingly not too upset; however, it would have been really nice to play a role that had some depth to it. I really

want that right now. I need that. I am sick and tired of being type cast as the spunky sidekick. I want to play the leading lady, something serious with depth...not so dippy.

How do I get there? I feel as though people in the theater community see me one way, and I want to be seen in another. I have been thinking a lot about voices. Thinking about other people's perceptions of who I am and what I can accomplish. How much does that actually shape my existence? Most people's comments are well meaning and are said to keep me safe, out of harm's way. But what if they hurt more than they help? Aren't they just other people's judgments forced onto me, my identity, my sense of self? Why do these judgments even matter? I'm concerned that these well-meaning comments from others come from a place of fear. They are fearful about something in their own lives and want to create fear in others, in me. Misery does love company. However, I don't want to live in a fear based world. I want to embrace life and experience everything I can during my time here on earth.

In the book, The Lucid Body, by Faye Simpson, she says, "we seek the approval of others instead of relying on our own approval." (Simpson 4) But really, I want to get away from judging myself, especially when I'm onstage. When I started working at Orlando Shakespeare Theater, we were introduced to the concept of "check-in". The purpose is to state how I am feeling right now, to be present and to be able to clearly communicate and recognize emotions without judgment. The only rules were that we had to focus on who was speaking and we should avoid words such as "I feel good today" or "I feel bad today" because those are judgments. We were encouraged to use feeling words, "I am excited because...but a little apprehensive because...". It's a great

way for beginning actors to learn not to be ashamed of their feelings and to realize the other people in the room won't judge them for it.

I am not sure if this exercise is ever completely successful. As much as I try not to judge others or myself during check-in, I still find that my upbringing and experiences cause me to react positively or negatively to some comments. However, it does remind me to look at my reactions to myself and others in a different light and explore all the angles.

“Our lack of readiness is often caused by blindness, fear, and lack of self-appreciation.

When we are ready, we will be blessed.” - Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom

*September 24, 2008* – Wow. Tonight was a hot mess. Let's just face the facts. I am extremely overwhelmed with everything going on in my life at this point. I am making myself sick. The rehearsal process is just such a mess. We are only rehearsing three days a week...I'm sure I have mentioned that. What's really frustrating, however, is that when we do meet, the process is extremely disjointed. There are too many distractions, too many cooks in the kitchen. Jay is doing his best to keep things together, but we have no stage manager, and we are rehearsing either in his HOUSE or in the fitness gym in downtown Winter Garden. We were doing better when it was in the gym.

Tonight, not only did we not stick to the given schedule (originally we were supposed to just run through the music since we haven't looked at the music as a group



in more than three weeks), instead we did a run of the show. We haven't even spaced through the show since we were given our blocking two weeks ago. It was definitely a shock. Plus, we are doing dance numbers on carpet, in a new space! It's a mess. That's all I can say. We have yet to talk about character choices or anything. Luckily, I trust Jay's judgment and know he has a game plan. Right? RIGHT?

I don't want to be negative or become a negating influence on this rehearsal process. It's becoming very difficult for me to not feel that this show would be more successful if we had more time to work on the relationships between our characters and on our own character choices. I sometimes feel as though I could direct this show or any show better than the person in charge, but I was hoping that it wouldn't be the case for this rehearsal process. I'm going to be patient and focus on the work at hand.

One of the exercises encouraged in the end of Chapter 2 of The Lucid Body is to say your lines with an audible exhale between breaths (Simpson 15). On my own this week, I went through my lines to see if I could incorporate this breath into the text. While I'm sure this technique holds a greater impact when speaking emotionally charged text, I feel it did release quite a bit of tension, freed up the delivery of my lines, allowed for different choices to be made. I realized I am often holding my breath or simply forgetting to breathe.

The concept of the "audible exhale" is a core foundation of The Lucid Body Technique. It is challenging for me as an actor, because as a society we are taught to hide our physical and emotional reactions to outside stimuli. This socialization starts at an early age and "before we know it, we have no idea how we feel...We are so

accustomed to not expressing the body's visceral reactions audibly that the synapses from body to brain lapse into confused numbness." (Simpson 9)

One of the issues I have been working on recently has (seemingly) little to do with acting. I am finding I am very used to catering to what people want by doing or saying what I think is the "right" thing. However, the older I get, the more difficult this is becoming. I have never suffered fools gladly, and it is getting more challenging to keep my mouth shut. I feel restrained and burdened and it's showing in my face. I try to hide it, to mask it, but I think my poker face might actually be my tell. For people who know me, they can tell when I am unhappy or thinking, because my face goes blank. It also happens occasionally when I am thinking about something my director has said or a note that was given. I feel my forehead begin to crinkle while the synapses are firing. My face must portray a sense of confusion, disappointment, or disagreement, because people get defensive immediately. Unfortunately, this has become an issue during this rehearsal process. I don't want to upset anyone, but what would happen if I spoke my mind? I try to enjoy the rehearsal process, but when I am asked to run the same number 12 times in a row because a director doesn't have a game plan for the evening, I become extremely frustrated. What if I just let out that sigh of impatience that I am bottling up inside? What would happen? Would I be free? Would it mean my body would release some of the physical tension it has been carrying?

This freedom not only would help me grow as a person but also as an actor. It would help me discover the ease Charlie feels in the play. She isn't afraid to speak her mind and has little to no filter. Perhaps the audible exhale exercise will become a helpful

tool as it will allow me to vocalize constricted feelings and to release breathe more freely. I believe the audible exhale and its practice correlates directly to this idea of being private in public or as Sanford Meisner calls it, “public solitude,” a component to truthful acting. (Simpson 12) I hope it will prevent me from holding my breath when I experience tension and allow me to express difficult emotions through sound. Perhaps, like a great massage, it will even release memories stored within my body. I will continue to explore the audible exhale and record its effects with that in mind.

“I’ve never met anyone like your Sally before...That girl, she does go on. She wants to know how much I’m going to spend on her, so she knows how dressed up to get for me”

– Lab Technician (referring to Sally Rogers) in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*September 25, 2008* – I was able to see my costume for the first time tonight. It is adorable! It’s very 1940’s...not so 1950’s but I don’t think it really matters. It’s red with white polka dots. I’m going to wear a double strand of pearls and little pink glasses. Hopefully, it will be adorable.

We are going to finish running Act One tomorrow and (hopefully) finish Act Two as well tomorrow night. I guess that is good. Then we can go back and work specific moments. I need to really crack down tomorrow and this weekend, so I know at least I am doing my own part to make this process run smoothly. It’ll be my butt on that stage...not theirs.

My objective for this week is to go back through my script and chart my objectives and goals in each scene. I have to remember to use my words to get what I need; but first, that means I need to figure out what I need in each beat. What is my objective? How am I going to get it?

“Nobody ever invented a polite word for a killing yet.” – Thelma Ritter

*September 26, 2008* – I’m not sure what else to say about the *Zombies from the Beyond* rehearsal process right now. Tonight we ran the rest of the first act and the entire second act. I am just frustrated with the process. Right now, I feel as though I don’t have any clue what I’m doing on that stage. Since we haven’t really run anything or worked anything, I don’t have anything to hold on to, haven’t created a consistent character good or bad. I just keep reminding myself that growing up no one said I sucked as a princess today. I have to remain connected to the magic and make my job fun!

I am also a little worried about the direction...we were told tonight that we should pretty much overact at least one rehearsal so we know where our limits are. That is fine, but we have to stay rooted in some reality. I mean, the characters have to believe without a doubt that everything happening to them is real and of the utmost importance. Sure, everything has to be heightened and melodramatic, but it has to be honest. Otherwise, we might as well be on Saturday Night Live. I’m going to try it, but it makes me nervous.

I am just trying to desperately to cram everything in my head at once. I hope I am not a lazy actor...I'm working on the harmonies every day, but nothing is really sticking. I guess I have always relied upon the ensemble to pull me through. I've always done my work, but I've also just given up at a certain point and gone back to the harmony. I want to give up now, too. I just want to beg and plead to be the soprano and sing the melody. Reminder: Bag of tricks. It's a horrible phrase that is getting touted a lot around here recently.

"Imagination is the highest kite one can fly" – Lauren Bacall

*September 27, 2008* – Just a few quick notes. Talk about six degrees here. After talking with Jay tonight, he gave me the script to *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, which is a Neil Simon script based on the 1950's TV sketch comedy show called *Your Show of Shows*. The comedy writers on *Your Show of Shows* were the inspiration for *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. That means there is a real life muse for the Sally Rogers, the character Rose-Marie plays. It is also interesting that *Laughter on the 23rd Show* spawned the 1980s movie *My Favorite Year* and the Ahrens and Flaherty musical of the same name.

So, back to the woman who was the inspiration for Sally on the *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. I think it was Selma Diamond. Selma was a writer and actress for *Your Shows of Shows*. I know her from a short stint on *Night Court*. In 1970, she wrote a collection of humorous essays in which she talks about her time as a writer. I am

putting it on my Amazon wish list now. It's like \$.96 online, so I think it's a very affordable option.

“A man can be short and dumpy and getting bald but if he has fire, women will like him.”

– Mae West

*September 30, 2008* – Tonight I was very thankful we ran all the dances in both act one and two. We really needed to revisit some of the numbers. However, once again, I continually messed up the choreography, which was extremely frustrating because I've been practicing like mad during my down time at the New Journal Center. However, when I got to rehearsal tonight, I quickly realized that much of what I had been practicing was wrong. My mistakes were mostly small things, like an incorrect hand position or the wrong counts on the footwork, but it meant we all had to stop to re-learn the steps. I need to learn I can't just rehearse something; I need to break it down and work specific moments. I can't rehearse as if the number is general wash. Specificity is important.

On another note, since we aren't given rehearsal skirts I brought a dress of my own to rehearsal that is very similar to the one I will be wearing in the show. I thought it would help give me and the boys an idea of what kind of material they will be dealing with once we get into costumes. I also wanted to see what kind of undergarments that I'm going to need. I'm doing some pretty strenuous movement...lots of kicks, lifts, and splits. I don't want to flash anyone.

“If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it.” – Lucille Ball

*October 2, 2008* – Yesterday was my birthday! I’ve been enjoying a wonderful week so far; however, I am super swamped with homework, learning my lines, teaching, etc. It’s just way too much right now. I’m back to the place where I don’t know HOW I am going to get everything done! But, it has to happen...even if it means I won’t sleep this weekend. Of course, that means I’ll be a complete mess in addition to everything else going on in my life.

I received some very nice compliments this week in my voice lesson. I worked on “Blast Off Baby!” and “Even Though” from *I Love You Because*. I was so pleased! I felt as though I finally found my voice in voice class. It was strong and expressive. I am hoping I can build on this success and just grow stronger and stronger.

“No harm is being done because it never occurs to man that what he’s saying isn’t interesting. After all, he’s a man...so he’s interesting. Heaven knows, we tell him often enough. Please, I’m not knocking this. It’s the game men and women play and still the best game in town. He’s Mr. Interesting and I’m Ms. Lucky to be having dinner with an interesting man.” – Nose Jobs for Peace by Selma Diamond

*October 3, 2008* – I worked with Nate Beversluis and Megan Wiley again on my harmonies this week. I had been singing with my recordings for the past few weeks and

just felt as though nothing was sticking. I know the harmony when I am singing by myself, but as soon as I hear another part, I leap to that instead. Plus, I had no idea how the parts fit into the song as a whole. After working on some of the music, Nate said two of the songs were really hard and are the kind of thing I can't "save" by myself, even if I learn it cold. He said my time might be wasted if there's not enough group rehearsal to really pull it together. Well, there's not enough time to put this show together and that made me feel a little bit better about the entire process. I kept on plugging, but somehow the pressure was off me a bit. If I couldn't get it, that was fine. Strangely though, I also felt re-energized and motivated to get it "right" too.

"Good night, folks, and remember, if you find yourself in hot water, take a bath." – Sally Rogers, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*October 8, 2008* - The past two nights we've been running both of the acts in the show. I am concerned we aren't clarifying or working the small moments in the scenes. The director wants to run the show over and over, so we are blowing through everything. Therefore, I have continued to work with the script, so I can bring lots of options to rehearsal. However, I don't want to cement moments at home because I need to react to the other people on stage. I see others making decisions without really taking in anyone else on the stage. I don't want to be acting in a vacuum. However, since we are only running the show, I don't have a chance to try many of these options.



A choice I make either works or doesn't work, but we never go back to fix or further explore anything. I know this show will be good, but I wish it could be great.

I'm focusing on having fun and staying positive in rehearsals. I'm trying not to close down, but stay open to all the possibilities. I may not hit every punch line exactly, but I'm hoping my energy is positive and everyone enjoys working with me. At the end of rehearsal tonight, Jay says we will go through the show a bit slower tomorrow night. I'm hoping he'll stay true to his word, but we'll see. We have a tendency to get sidetracked pretty easily. My mantra for tonight is less is more when filled with passion.

### **Performance Journal**

“Your audience gives you everything you need. They tell you. There is no director who can direct you like an audience.” - Fanny Brice

*October 17, 2008 – Opening Night* – I had a lot of fun performing for everyone tonight, but I was terribly nervous and may have looked like a deer in the headlights more often than naught. My balance and breath support went away as soon as I got nervous, so I feel as though my performance suffered, especially vocally. While tomorrow's show will be easier, I definitely need to continue to work on that aspect of my nerves. Physically, my hair and costume looked right, and the audience seemed to enjoy the show.

“An ounce of performance is worth pounds of promises.” – Mae West

*October 19, 2008* – I’m still not sure if I gave tonight’s performance everything I could. I really wanted to be in the moment and worked throughout the show to stay focused and energized. I kept reminding myself to just jump! As the evening progressed, my mantra became, “It’s not going to kill you! Jump into the cold water. Don’t get in one foot at a time. You’ll miss an opportunity.” I also have to remember not to self-generate onstage. I need to let a moment play until something happens on the other end to change it. Overall, I felt it was a step up from last night, and I am encouraged I will continue to grow with the show. Eventually, the nerves will wear off, and I’ll be able to let go.

“When I was out in Hollywood writing, I made a little money and achieved a certain ‘dignified obscurity’. So on my first visit back to New York, you know how it is, you’ve got to visit the old neighborhood and ‘show them’.” - Nose Jobs for Peace by Selma

Diamond

*October 23, 2008* – I had a really fun show yesterday. I have been sick all week, so I was nervous it would affect my performance. While I am still suffering from a runny nose, a cough, and could break into a sweat at almost any minute, I found that on Saturday and Sunday I regained a lot of the confidence I had been lacking earlier in the week. I was having fun again and playing with my cast mates on stage.

"It is wise for a poor man to choose the weather, but it's folly for a rich man to choose a poor man." – Sally Rogers, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*October 25, 2008* – I often get so tired of shows so quickly. It seems as though they haven't even gone up and I'm done with the process. Tired of the role and ready to move on to something else. I was extremely over the rehearsal process, but then we started performing. I love doing this role! I think I could play Charlie forever. Patrick said something to me yesterday that really struck a chord. He said, "I love Charlie because she's the you I get to see everyday that no one else has ever gotten to see until now." I guess in a way he's right. It's the part of me I don't share with people until they really get to know me. It's only a little part of my personality, but usually it's hidden. It was a fun exercise to let people see me being goofy, having fun, and not caring what they thought. I'm so thankful for this experience and wouldn't change it for the world.

"...You can't tell a book if the title's covered." - Sally Rogers, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

*October 31, 2008* – I always think that when I have friends in the audience, I will become more self-conscious regarding my performance. Several friends attended today's performance and instead of becoming nervous, I felt liberated. I thought the reviews or friend's thoughts might subtly change my performance or make me feel I had something to live up to. But, it gave me the extra boost of confidence I needed to really

go for it and know people were getting it. Getting me. It took the pressure off to “be funny” and allowed me to just relax and have fun!

My experiences within this show have made me rethink the idea that I want to be the ingénue or the beautiful leading lady. Robert C. Morgan said in his book, Beauty: The Invisible Embrace:

“Beauty is not glamour. Most of what the media...the fashion world...Hollywood...the art world has to offer is glamour. Glamour, like the art world itself, is a highly fickle and commercially driven enterprise that contributes to...the ‘humdrum’. It appears and disappears...No one ever catches up to glamour.” (Morgan 45)

“I think your whole life shows in your face and you should be proud of that.”

- Lauren Bacall

*November 1, 2008* – I’ve been thinking about my character in *Zombies from the Beyond* a lot this week. Something struck me during one of the shows. Charlie doesn’t get embarrassed. I do all the time, over almost anything. However, this week I noticed that even when I didn’t do my best in front of 50 strangers, I didn’t care. I thought, “Oh, well. That sucked. Moving on.”

I had a similar experience this week at a convention performance gig I took. My role was to dress up as Miss Scarlet, persuade people to play an interactive version of

the game *Clue*, and flirt with all the guys. I couldn't always come up with something to say, but I don't think I was ever so mortified that I wanted to crawl in a hole and die.

I've been trying to put the focus on the other person...not on myself. I find I am less successful when I let myself focus solely on what I am doing. That seems so elementary, but it's very difficult for me to do sometimes. I am so technical. I want to get things right. There is no right and no wrong. I just read this in Robert Lawrence Smith's *Quaker Book of Wisdom*, "Those weekends provided me my first recognition that you learn about life through interactions with others who are different from yourself, not by looking inward" (105). Nice coincidence, huh? I'm going to work on it again tonight. I'm just going to go out there and have fun. I plan to put the focus on my actors onstage and be there for them no matter what happens.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

*Zombies from the Beyond* has closed. I finished The Artist's Way, The Lucid Body Technique, and Anam Cara, watched each episode of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* at least twice, and wrote almost a hundred pages on my experience. So, what did I learn in the process?

The development of this thesis reinforced that acting IS a process. As one of the only careers that asks you, the actor, to scrutinize your thoughts, the surrounding world, and the people that inhabit it, it made me actively investigate feelings that I would normally prefer to keep hidden. I was forced to explore, channel, and use the emotions that bubbled up inside. I learned to not to always leave my baggage at the door, but use it productively. While the effects of such relentless scrutiny can be tumultuous and terrifying, I know that I have become a stronger artist because of my unwillingness to play it safe.

Throughout rehearsals for *Zombies from the Beyond*, I stripped away obstacles and destructive habits that held me back in previous productions thereby creating a role in which I could be proud. I discovered I was extremely concerned with what I was doing onstage and critical of my work which lead to tension and inhibited my natural instincts. To combat this destructive tendency, I learned to keep my energy forward and focus my attention on someone or something else on stage. Acting is not all about me. I will continue to listen with not only my ears, but my eyes and all of my senses.

My role in *Zombies from the Beyond* allowed me to explore a new acting process that I am constantly refining. It became a catalyst for change, personally as well as

professionally, and inspired me to continue my training. While fear, tension, lack of focus, and holding my breath continue to be my worst enemies, I now focus on not allowing them to control me. Since finishing the show, I have continued my yoga practice and now meditate at least 20 minutes daily. I discovered that daily practice helps release tension and free my breath, while meditation helps focus my attention and reminds me to live in the here and now. As I grow as an artist, I will continue to explore the way that is most difficult.

While I have come a long way from the girl who played Betsy Ross almost 20 years ago, I still have a lot to learn. However, with patience, love and a lot of effort, I will continue to choose the most challenging path, while looking at my world with enthusiasm, openness, and clarity of spirit that will enable my growth as an actor and as a human.

I look forward to the journey.

## **APPENDIX: EVOLUTION OF SIDEKICK CHARACTER**



## Performance Reviews

### *A Spoof that Goes Helter-Skelter*

October 24, 2008 | By Elizabeth Maupin, Sentinel Theater Critic

When *Zombies From the Beyond* opened off-Broadway in 1995, USA Today called it the worst musical of the year.

To others it was a cult favorite. You can get a sense of both those views in Jester Theater's hit-and-miss production, which looks a little lost on the Garden Theatre's roomy stage. There are belly-laugh moments in *Zombies*, a deliberately cheesy spoof of 1950s sci-fi flicks. But too much of Jester's production is about trying to turn a so-so musical into something funnier than it really is.

All that trying doesn't improve some mundane songs, and it doesn't help that the actors are too far away from the audience and that you often can't hear the lyrics over the drums.

But director Jay Hopkins and cohorts have created some wacky props -- check out the deadly vacuum cleaner -- and a few swell performances, especially Melissa Mason as a man-hungry secretary in cat-eye glasses, David Almeida as the first human to be zombified and Kate O'Neal as the big-haired Zombina, an alien on the prowl for men.

O'Neal is a stitch, and so are her supposedly female backup zombies, clad nattily, no matter their body type, in green wigs, skirts and tights. With a fashion sense like that, anybody could rule the world.

*Who Loves the Living Dead? Send Them to Winter Garden*

October 23, 2008 | By Seth Kubersky, Orlando Weekly

If you share my fondness for flesh-eaters, you would have found plenty of fellowship at Spooky Empire's Ultimate Horror Weekend. The Wyndham Resort attracted so many lurchers last weekend that I had to park at T.G.I. Friday's and shamle across I-Drive. Once inside, fans found makeup maestro Tom Savini, along with many recipients of his latex lacerations in George Romero's *Dead* films. (The director himself was unfortunately a no-show.) And budding necrophiliacs must have had a holiday with all the decomposing décolletage on display – not to mention those costumed as demonic vixens and punk dino-centaurs.

Those same crowds who lined up to greet monster-movie bastions Cassandra "Elvira" Peterson and Michael Berryman should take note of *Zombies from the Beyond*, a musical spoof invading Winter Garden. True, these gore-free ghouls are of a pre-splatterpunk vintage, much like the classic tin toys in the lovely Garden Theatre's lobby display. Instead of severed limbs and masticated intestines, Jester Theater Company's likable love letter to sci-fi/horror clichés delivers a silly skewering of midcentury American movies and Eisenhower-era misogyny.

The plotline looks like a checklist from Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space* playbook: Maj. Malone (Rod Cathey) mans the Milwaukee Space Center circa 1955, launching space-race experiments with the aid of his right-hand man, Capt. Jones (David Almeida), and husband-hunting secretary Charlie (Melissa Mason). Egghead extraterrestrial expert Trenton Corbett (Todd Allen Long) arrives just in time to detect an

oncoming alien onslaught, foil a Russki spy ring, and fall for the major's multitalented daughter, Mary (Elizabeth Takacs). While Trenton and Mary build an "ultraphonic amplificatory" out of an upright vacuum and delivery boy Billy (Corey Matos) tap-dances his way into Charlie's heart, the zaftig alien queen Zombina (Kate O'Neal) is busy mesmerizing Earth's men with her hypnotic high-C singing in a bid to repopulate male-starved Planet X.

Enthusiasm for *Zombies from the Beyond* will depend on your affection for the cinematic disasters of the drive-in era and your appreciation for an expertly amateurish sendup of the same. James Valcq's script ain't exactly Shakespeare – characters are more likely to exclaim "Zoniks!" than "Zounds" – and as lyricist he rhymes "Milwaukee" with "walkie-talkie." The doo-wop-pastiche songs range from amiably insipid ballads to jingoistic jingles, and the full-throated cast delivers them with more vocal wattage than they probably deserve. Director Jay Hopkins packs the proceedings with delicious double-takes, corny kick-lines ("I just love catching up on the latest dance craze during a hideous disaster") and enough pie-plate flying saucers on wobbly wires to make William Castle proud. Little touches, like the authentic Amana and asbestos adverts projected during intermission, prove Hopkins understands the proper tone. And just as the absurdity threatens to overstay its welcome, there's a mock-opera finale to bring it on home.

Don't be deceived by the intentionally obvious stagehands and craptastic sets; there's a ton of talent in this tongue-in-cheek tour de farce.

## *Zombies from the Beyond*

October 19, 2008 | Carl F. Gauze from the Archikulture Digest

I can't believe I'm back in Milwaukee. Like a bad flashback we're in 1955 and crisis grips the heart of the Milwaukee Space Center (Just off Mitchell Street, right down there where the streetcar bends the corner around). The Probe 7 team suffers from the usual interoffice romantic politics – Captain Jones (Almeida) and newcomer Trent Corbett (Todd Allen Long) spar over Major Malone's (Rod Cathey) nubile daughter Mary (Elizabeth Takacs) while frustrated Charlene (Melissa Mason) debates whether her bio-clock is ticking loud enough to warrant a date with tap-dancing delivery boy Billy (Corey Matos). The Probe 7 team sets out to launch a camera to photograph the sun, but their sexual battle shifts into high gear when they discover a UFO full of horny undocumented alien zombie she-devils. We all know what THAT means – time for ray guns and tap dancing!

“Zombies From The Beyond” pushes the boundaries of corny camp, although the Zombie purist may object to the lack of shuffle-footed brain munching. The dialog is painfully stilted, and author James Valcq left no page of his science thesaurus unused. Almeida as evil Captain Jones danced fluidly in “Big Wig”, but the show stealer was Billy and his “Atomic Feet” tap routine. O'Neil's Zombina had a cartoony sex appeal, even if you had trouble hearing the words in her operatic “The Last Man On Earth” and “Breaking The Sound Barrier.” The sexiest women on stage was Charlene – while she never ditches the pink Edith Prickly eye glasses or lets her hair down, the sexually aggressive and unfulfilled secretary is always the hottest role in any sci-fi show.

Jester did an excellent job of recreating the Milwaukee skyline – both the Allen Bradley clock and the Wisconsin Gas building looked just like I remembered them, and while a nod to Schuster’s or Kopp’s Custard Stand would have been nice, it’s good to see that the arts community is still up to kicking old Beer Town around. The underlying paradigm of immanent absorption and annihilation by the Commies Pod People had passed out of our collective conscience, and I’m happy to report that “Zombies From The Beyond” avoids the temptation of replacing it with eco-fear or Palin jokes. Jester did what it does best – family friendly goofy comedy that entertains with out lecture and makes you laugh at the groaners as well as the actually funny stuff.

## Selective List of Actors Who Play Side-Kick Roles in Popular Culture

### TV

**Rose-Marie** – August 15, 1923 – Major work includes *Baby Rose Marie: the Child Wonder* (1929), *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-1966), *The Doris Day Show* (1969-1971), and *The Hollywood Squares* (1966–1981).

**Lucille Ball** – August 6, 1911 to April 26, 1989 – Major work includes *Stage Door* (1937), *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), and *The Lucy Show* (1962-1968)

**Vivian Vance** – July 26, 1909 to August 17, 1979 - Major work includes *The Cradle Will Rock* (1947–1948), *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), and *The Lucy Show* (1962-1968)

**Tina Fey** – May 18, 1970 – Major work includes *The Second City Improv* (1994) , *Saturday Night Live* (1997-2006), *Mean Girls* (2004), *Baby Mama* (2008), and *30 Rock* (2006-2011).

**Amy Poehler** – September 16, 1971 – Major work includes *Saturday Night Live* (2001-2008), *Mean Girls* (2004), *Baby Mama* (2008), and *Parks and Recreation* (2008-2011).

### Film

**Thelma Ritter** – February 14, 1905 to February 5, 1969 – Major work includes *All About Eve* (1950), *The Mating Season* (1951), *Rear Window* (1954), and *Pillow Talk* (1959).

**Shirley MacLaine** – April 24, 1934 – Major work includes *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), *The Apartment* (1960), *Irma la Douce* (1963), *Terms of Endearment* (1983), and *Steel Magnolias* (1989).

**Bette Davis** – April 5, 1908 to October 6, 1989 – Major work includes *Of Human Bondage* (1934), Nominated for *The Little Foxes* (1941), *All About Eve* (1950), *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962).

**Gloria Grahame** – November 28, 1925 to October 5, 1981 – Major work includes *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Crossfire* (1947), *In a Lonely Place* (1950), and *Oklahoma!* (1955)

**Ellen Burstyn** – December 7, 1932 – Major work includes *Same Time Next Year* (1978), *The Last Picture Show* (1971), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Pack of Lies* (1987), *How to Make an American Quilt* (1995)

**Margaret Rutherford** – May 11, 1892 to May 22 1972 – Major work includes *Blithe Spirit* (1945), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952), *The V.I.P.'s* (1963), and *Murder Most Foul* (1964)

#### *Broadway*

**Fanny Brice** – October 29, 1891 to May 29, 1951 – Major work includes *Ziegfeld Follies* (1910-1930), *Sweet and Low* (1930), and the film *Everybody Sing* (1938).

**Kristin Chenoweth** – July 24, 1968 – Major work includes *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (1999), *Epic Proportions* (1999), *Wicked* (2002-2004), and *Promises, Promises* (2010).

**Mary Testa** – June 4, 1955 – Major work includes *On the Town* (1998), *42nd Street* (2001), *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936* (2001), and *Melpomene in Xanadu* (2007)

**Hariett Sansom Harris** – January 8, 1955 – Major work includes *Jeffrey* (1992-1993), *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002-2003), and *Present Laughter* (2010)



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