

LAVINIA'S VOICE:  
VERBAL AND NONVERBAL EXPRESSION  
IN SHAKESPEAREAN PERFORMANCE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2013

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## ABSTRACT

For my MFA internship requirement, I currently serve as an acting intern at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF. I was cast as Lavinia in OST's spring production of *Titus Andronicus*, and I will use this as my thesis role. It will be the very last show of my MFA career, and it will provide an exceptional opportunity for me to utilize all the skills learned during my three years of MFA classes and training. Jim Helsinger, Artistic Director at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater and Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida, will direct the production.

I intend to approach this role in a manner very similar to my MFA coursework: through vocal work, physical work, and research.

Lavinia is a Shakespearean character; Shakespeare is immediately associated with language. However, Lavinia is interesting because the role's vocal work will require both verbal and non-verbal experimentation. I will be able to utilize the various language tools and techniques I have learned in my MFA voice classes to approach Shakespeare's text; but Lavinia has her tongue cut off halfway through the show, so I anticipate additional vocal, non-verbal contributions to make the role unique. Physicality will also play a large part of my acting work in this particular role, more so, perhaps, than in a typical Shakespearean ingénue. Because Lavinia is verbally silenced, her body must also speak.

No approach to a Shakespeare role would be complete without character work, and research will play a large part of this role in particular. Mr. Helsinger encourages his interns to watch other productions of the same character and to perform visual research from which to pick

and choose. I also plan to do research on violence against women and its significance in both the play and real life in order to better inform my vocal and physical choices.

By delving into this role, I plan to explore several questions. What exactly makes up the voice, as heard or interpreted by an audience, of a Shakespearean character? How has my graduate study prepared me for this role? What techniques work for my own personal process as an actor? How do the voice, mind, and body combine to inform a character's arc, and which of these will prove most powerful to an audience's understanding of that character's journey? Is it possible to retain the audience's attention in a Shakespearean, text-oriented, production without using words? I hope to answer these questions through the process of combining, in one character, all of the aspects of my MFA journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe my graduate success to the support of many people. First and foremost I would like to thank my thesis committee, Katherine Ingram, Julia Listengarten, and Christopher Niess, the three of whom stood by me every day of graduate school. I would also like to sincerely thank my other graduate professors, directors, and mentors: Be Boyd, Gary Cadwallader, Steven Chicurel, Anne Hering, Tad Ingram, Steve MacKinnon, Allen McCoy, Diane Messina, Jamie Mykins, Suzanne O'Donnell, Matt Pfeiffer, Mark Routhier, Donald Seay, Judi Siegfried, Tara Snyder, Sybil St. Claire, Brian Vaughn, and Vandy Wood. I could not have done my thesis performance without the efforts of those supporting me every day in rehearsal: Jim Helsinger, Stacy Renee Norwood, Jonny Epstein, Jean Tafler, Esau Prichett, Greg Jackson, Paul Bernardo, Geoffrey Kent, Justin Baldwin, Casey Noble, Danielle Gosselin, Greg Joubert, Matthew Natale Rush, Alex Koller, Tina Henderson, and Grace Richardson. Finally, I would like to thank Kory Kilgore, Caspian Kilgore, my family, my M.F.A. classmates, and all of the other wonderful people at the University of Central Florida Department of Theatre, the University of Central Florida College of Graduate Studies, the Abilene Christian University Department of Theatre, the Orlando Repertory Theatre, and the Orlando Shakespeare Theater.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will detail my journey from pre-rehearsals through rehearsal and performance. The first three chapters, excluding this introduction, will include character and text research, some done even before rehearsals commence. I will journal my thoughts and feelings throughout the processes of rehearsal and performance. Then I will look back and examine my process in the context of the final performance. I hope to answer some of the questions posed in my abstract, and I anticipate finding additional questions in the process of rehearsal and performance.

First, I will do research relevant to my character's given circumstances. I will try to glean helpful behavioral insights from the experiences and observations of scholars concerned with violence against women and from an examination of references to mutilation in the text itself. Since Lavinia is silent after being raped and mutilated, her words can give me no insight to her state of mind; I hope my discoveries about the experiences of real women who have undergone similar tragedies will bolster my understanding of Lavinia's emotional arc.

Second, I will attempt to learn from those actors who have gone before me in inhabiting Lavinia's body. I will read reviews of previous productions of *Titus Andronicus*, analyzing both the actors' choices as recorded in the articles and the reviewer's opinions of the actors' performances. I will find filmed versions of the play and record my own thoughts. From these reflections, I will speculate on choices I can bring into my own rehearsal process.

Next, I will begin experimenting with my own voice and body on how to bring my intellectual observations into corporeal form. The Orlando Shakespeare Theater production of *Titus Andronicus* will not use the entire text that Shakespeare wrote. I will offer a thorough analysis of Lavinia's lines in our cut, and this exercise will lend me insight into her character for

the first half of the play. Because Lavinia is silent for the second half of the play, I will venture into nonverbal physical and vocal exercises to see what might be useful to aiding my characterization without words.

The next chapter will be devoted to journaling. All of the ideas, opportunities, and actions I discovered in the preparation process will be tested in the rehearsal hall. I will talk about my own discoveries, those of my fellow actors, notes given by the director, etc. Anything that could inform my performance or could narrow down the vast field of choices may be written down in rehearsal journals. I will create performance journals as well, which will examine the effects of my rehearsal choices on a live audience.

In the final chapter I will attempt to summarize the process of creating the character of Lavinia from before rehearsal start through performance. I will discuss what worked and what did not work. I will record my feelings about the process as a whole and consider what I learned. I will compare my MFA coursework to the professional rehearsal process and examine how the one has prepared me for the other.

The first few chapters are meant to be a record of my own preparation process and will be written in speculative terms, since all options can change in a breath during performance. The journals will be written in a very casual tone, as one might write in a diary. Throughout, I may use the word “I” to refer either to myself as actor or to Lavinia as character, depending on context. This thesis will document my journey from pre-production into rehearsal and production, and I hope this record of performance as research will aid future actors on their journeys.

In an interview with Wendy Cartier of the College of Graduate Studies at the University of Central Florida, I said the following:

In an ephemeral art such as live theatre, our performances are our experiments and our audiences are our test subjects. Our work deals not with numbers but with moments between people: between actors onstage and in the actor-audience relationship. A performance can never be ‘solved’ as a math problem can, and the theatre artist must be continually fascinated with peeling away layers of human behavior and group storytelling (2).

I intend to use this thesis to document my own process, crafted by myself with the help of my teachers and directors, of discovering the layers in the character of Lavinia. I hope to capture in a brief, though incomplete way, some of the incredible moments of live theatre, to set down a path toward achieving them again, and to understand the different aspects that make up a character’s voice.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE PLAY

The text for our cutting of *Titus Andronicus* was drawn from MIT's online version at *The Tech*, and throughout this document I will reference the script by scene since no page numbers are available. For those unfamiliar with the play, here follows a short overview.

In scene I.i, Saturninus and Bassianus, the two sons of the recently dead Roman emperor, vie for the throne. In the midst of this tumult, Titus Andronicus, a Roman general, returns home with his four surviving sons, Lucius, Quintus, Martius, and Mutius, and five prisoners, Tamora, Queen of the Goths, her sons Alarbus, Demetrius, and Chiron, and a Moor named Aaron. Although she pleads with him not to, Titus kills Tamora's eldest son, Alarbus, as a ritual sacrifice for his dead sons. The emperor's sons arrive at the tomb of the Andronici with Lavinia, Titus' only daughter, and she and Titus greet one another. Marcus Andronicus, Titus' brother and a Roman tribune, announces that the people of Rome have chosen Titus as a third contender for the throne and that he is likely to win. Titus declines the election citing age, and advises the people to elect Saturninus, the eldest, rather than Bassianus, who is engaged to Lavinia. Saturninus, a hothead, is overjoyed with Titus' choice and in thanks to Titus chooses Lavinia, his brother's betrothed, as empress. Saturninus flirts with Tamora, the captive queen, and asks Lavinia if she is bothered by his actions. Lavinia, trapped, can only say no. Bassianus, enraged, kidnaps Lavinia, and Titus' sons defend their exit in order to save Lavinia's honor. Titus, who feels his sons have dishonored him, kills the youngest, Mutius. Saturninus feels he has been dishonored by Titus and chooses the recently freed Tamora as his new empress. Marcus and the three remaining brothers try to bury Mutius in the Andronici family tomb, but Titus tries to prevent them. Finally they succeed in convincing Titus to let them bury Mutius. Saturninus,

Tamora, Bassianus, and Lavinia return, and Saturninus tries to pick a fight with his brother.

Tamora publicly chides him and begs him to restore peace and forgive the Andronici. Privately she tells Saturninus that she will find a way to massacre them all for the murder of Alarbus.

In scene II.i, Aaron reveals that he is Tamora's secret lover. Chiron and Demetrius enter, fighting over which of them loves Lavinia the most. Aaron reproaches them for lusting after Prince Bassianus' wife, but the sons do not care. Finally Aaron asks if they would be offended if both brothers had Lavinia, and they say no. Aaron tells them that during the hunt the next day they should rape Lavinia. Chiron and Demetrius happily agree.

In scene II.ii, Titus leads everyone on a recreational hunt in the forest. Chiron and Demetrius sneak away to hunt Lavinia.

In scene II.iii, Aaron buries gold under a tree, telling the audience it is part of a villainous plot. He meets Tamora, who tries to seduce him; but he tells her of the impending death of Bassianus and rape of Lavinia. He gives her a letter to give to Saturninus that will frame someone else for Bassianus' death. As he is leaving, Bassianus and Lavinia arrive and see the two of them together. They tease Tamora about her illicit liason and threaten to tell Saturninus. Chiron and Demetrius burst in and Tamora eggs them on to kill Bassianus. They do. Lavinia begs Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius for mercy but they do not give it to her. The boys reveal that they want to rape Lavinia, who then asks Tamora to kill her rather than force her to undergo such a fate. Tamora refuses, telling the boys to make sure Lavinia is taken care of afterward. Chiron and Demetrius drag Lavinia offstage to rape her. Meanwhile, Aaron lures Quintus and Martius, the middle and youngest remaining sons of Titus, to the pit where Bassianus' body lies. Martius falls into the pit and Quintus, trying to pull his brother up, also falls in. Saturninus,

Tamora, Titus, and Lucius arrive, following the instructions on Aaron's letter, which Titus found on the ground. Aaron reveals the money buried under the tree. Saturninus discovers his dead brother and the two living Andronici in the pit and dooms them to death on suspicion of the murder.

In II.iv, Chiron and Demetrius taunt Lavinia. They have raped her and cut off both her hands and tongue so that she can't say who committed the crime. They leave and Marcus finds her. He is horrified and takes her away to see her father.

In III.i, Titus begs the Roman tribunes for mercy for Quintus and Martius, but the tribunes will not listen. Lucius arrives, having been banished from Rome for trying to rescue his brothers. Marcus brings in Lavinia. Everyone weeps and wonders what they can do to help the situation. Aaron enters, claiming to have hope. He says if one of the Andronici will chop off their hand and send it to the emperor, Saturninus will spare the lives of the brothers. Titus, Marcus, and Lucius argue over who will send the hand. Titus tricks the other two, and while they are offstage he and Aaron chop off his hand. Aaron takes it away, letting the audience know in an aside that he really means to send back the brothers' heads. Marcus bids Titus bind his woes into limits, and Titus responds that Lavinia is the weeping welkin, or sky, and he is the earth. Her tears fall on him and there is no limit to his woes. A messenger returns with Titus' hand and the heads of Quintus and Martius. Titus laughs because he has no more tears left. He bids the banished Lucius go to the conquered Goths and raise an army, and he swears to right everyone's wrongs.

In scene III.ii, Titus, Marcus, Lavinia, and Young Lucius, who is Lucius' son, sit at dinner. Titus tries to cheer up Lavinia. Young Lucius kills a fly with his knife, and Titus berates

him for committing murder. Young Lucius says it was a black fly like Aaron the black Moor, and Titus forgives him. Titus says he and Young Lucius will read to Lavinia.

In scene IV.i, Lavinia chases Young Lucius. Titus, Marcus, and Young Lucius can't understand what she wants at first. Then Titus realizes she wants one of Young Lucius' books. She finds a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the story of Philomel, a young woman who was raped in the forest like Lavinia herself was, and by this Titus finally understands what happened to her. He asks her what Roman lord committed the crime, and she can't answer. Marcus gets an idea to have her draw with his staff, holding it in her teeth and guiding it with her feet. Thus she is successfully able to write the names of Chiron and Demetrius. All four kneel on the floor and swear vengeance.

The first part of scene IV.ii is cut from our production, but it contains Young Lucius delivering a present of weapons to Chiron and Demetrius. After Young Lucius leaves, a nurse enters with the empress' newborn baby. The nurse reveals that the baby is black and therefore belongs to Aaron rather than Saturninus. The nurse tells Aaron that Tamora wants him to kill the baby. Instead, Aaron kills the nurse and tells the boys to send him the midwife so he can kill her, too. He recommends the white newborn baby of a friend be substituted in the real baby's place. He plans, himself, to return to the Goths in hopes they will succor the empress' child.

In IV.iii, Titus and his followers shoot arrows asking the gods for justice into the sky. In reality, the arrows fall into the emperor's court, and in IV.iv Saturninus finds them. He says he is frustrated because Titus' insane actions are making him look bad. Aemilius, a messenger, enters and informs Saturninus that Lucius is raising an army. Saturninus is upset because the common people like Lucius more than they like him. Tamora tries to comfort Saturninus. She sends

Aemilius to Lucius with an invitation to dine at Titus' house, and she tells Saturninus that she can convince Titus to hold a peace banquet.

Scene V.i shows that Lucius is, indeed, now in command of the Goth army. Aaron arrives with his baby and is captured. Lucius threatens to kill the baby, and to save the baby Aaron confesses all of the evils he and Tamora's family have done. He wishes he could have done more evil in his life. Lucius commands that Aaron must have a worse death than the hanging with which he was being threatened. Aemilius arrives with Tamora's message, and Lucius and the Goths prepare to travel back to Rome.

In V.ii, Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius arrive at Titus' house, disguised as Revenge, Rape, and Murder, respectively. Revenge tells Titus that if he invites Lucius to a peaceful parley with the emperor, she will revenge all his wrongs. Titus agrees, asking only that Rape and Murder stay with him while she goes. Revenge agrees, and when she is gone he captures Chiron and Demetrius. He brings in Lavinia with a basin. He tells Chiron and Demetrius that he plans to bake them into a pie and serve it to Tamora at the banquet. Then he cuts their throats and lets the blood pour into the basin.

In V.iii, Lucius, the Goths, Saturninus, and Tamora arrive at the banquet. They eat some of the pie made of Chiron and Demetrius. Lavinia enters and Titus asks Saturninus if Virginius, another Roman general from an old story, should have killed his ravished daughter. Saturninus said that Virginius did the right thing since the girl was shamed by being raped, and Titus kills Lavinia. Everyone is shocked. Saturninus demands to know why Titus killed her, and Titus says she was raped by Chiron and Demetrius. Saturninus orders they be brought to him, and Titus declares that the boys are baked in the pie. Titus kills Tamora, and Saturninus kills Titus. Lucius



kills Saturninus, and the people proclaim Lucius the new emperor. Lucius declares that Titus and Lavinia be buried in their family tomb, Aaron be buried up to his neck to starve to death, and Tamora's body be left to the wild animals.

## CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER RESEARCH

### Violence against Women

Unfortunately, rape, murder, and mutilation are not restricted to Shakespearean plays. These things occur frequently in real life—even in our modern day and age. As someone who has never undergone anything remotely as traumatic as these events but who must try to depict them onstage, I think it is important to learn as much as I can about how a real woman would respond. Shakespeare cannot be trusted to tell me everything I need to know because he was a man and, to my knowledge, never had his hands or tongue chopped off. I think scholars from our modern time will offer the best bridge from my mind to that of the raped Lavinia because they speak in modern words I can understand; I cannot imagine the actual experience of being raped or mutilated would be that different in the modern age than in Shakespeare’s time. Therefore, in this section I will first perform research on modern studies of rape and its effects. Then I will attempt to discover if and where Shakespeare’s text aligns with the reactions of real women who have undergone these traumas. Finally, I will consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of adding these scientifically documented behaviors to my performance.

The objectification of Lavinia in the text of *Titus Andronicus* is supported by an historical objectification of women’s bodies and sexuality. Elizabeth Waites authored a book on the subject, *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women*. In it, she writes, “As a girl grows up . . . experience of her body—its desires, feelings, impulses—is often gradually eclipsed by appraisals of her body” (47). Richard B. Felson, who offers a psychological perspective in his book, *Violence and Gender Reexamined*, agrees conditionally, saying that women have not, historically, been treated as actual property—as slaves are—but that

when used as a metaphor the sentiment has truth. He writes of the similarity between domination of slaveholders over their possessions, slaves, and that of men in patriarchal societies over their families (63). Waites notes that in our society, a female, grown or young, must please men sexually if she wishes to please them at all (46). This societal principle is in direct contrast to the historical expectation that it is the female's responsibility to set limits both for herself and for men, and it sets women in the problematic position of trying to please men just enough but not too much. Since "men have varying requirements in this regard" (46), it is an impossible dichotomy. Felson adds practical historic reasoning for holding females more responsible than males for sexual deviancy: the simple matter of pregnancy places a greater burden on the family of a sexually active female than that of a sexually active male (74). The danger faced by women is common knowledge, according to Waites, and "most people probably take it for granted" (73). Felson puts the dilemma in an economical context, observing that "Men perceive younger women as more sexually desirable" (159) and "the demand exceeds the supply" (146). The latter is certainly true in *Titus Andronicus*, where the number of male characters greatly outweighs the number of female characters.

"Unanticipated shocks like rape overwhelm mind and body" (Waites 40). The effect of rape compounded with the death of a beloved husband and the mutilation of both hands and tongue, as Lavinia experiences, must then overwhelm mind, body, and soul. Rape and other violations of the body in essence take away one's control over one's own body and "constitute an incontrovertible denial of the victim's choice" (Waites 86). In Lavinia's case, her rape could be seen as the culmination of a loss of control over her own body; first she is claimed by Saturninus as empress, then given away by her father as part of his tribute to the emperor. Next she is stolen

away by Bassianus who, though he may intend well did not ask her opinion in the matter, and finally she is raped and mutilated without her consent by Chiron and Demetrius.

Though coping mechanisms may make victims feel they can regain a measure of control, according to Waites, “the stress of assault ... is actually inescapable (86).” Felson agrees that the offender takes away the victim’s control, and goes on to describe the “three immediate consequences: sexual activity, harm to the victim, and the offender’s domination of the victim” (143). He argues that most sexually violent acts are motivated by sexual desire rather than a desire to do harm or a desire for power (143), supporting this assertion with the fact that men “have a stronger sex drive than women” (145) and are therefore “eight times more likely to commit violent crime” but “more than 100 times more likely to commit rape” (144-145). Shakespeare seems to agree, as in Lavinia’s case the text states plainly that Chiron and Demetrius are sexually motivated. An additional reason the text could potentially support is offered by Felson on 156: that “Perhaps for some men physical violence itself is sexually arousing.”

“In many instances, the resulting symptom picture is recognizably that of post-traumatic stress disorder” (Waites 86). Post-traumatic stress disorder is defined by *PubMed Health* as “a type of anxiety disorder [which can occur after seeing or experiencing] a traumatic event that involved the threat of injury or death.” The effects of battering are not limited to the mind; they “can contribute to very real physical diseases” (Waites 87) and can affect hormones and chemicals within the body (*PubMed Health*). Additionally, “apparent recovery from trauma may be deceptive” (Waites 86). This might indicate why Lavinia seeks release from continuing distress, if at the end of the play she does in fact choose to die. Waites states that PTSD tends

toward immoderate symptoms, “heightened states of excitement,” “emotional and behavioral constriction” or numbing, and avoidance (101); I think Shakespeare’s text affords considerable room to swing between these. The one reaction listed by Waites that I do not think is supported by the text is “identification with the aggressor” (101). Throughout the play, Marcus, Titus, and Lucius continually ask Lavinia who did her this wrong, and when she finally tells them they all instantly swear revenge. One fact stated by Waites that I had not considered is that “PTSD-related symptoms are likely to appear whenever a client begins to get in touch with painful memories” (102). This would mean that not only do Lavinia’s recollections of her rape, her mutilation, and her husband’s death still disturb her, they might actually take her back into some of the same symptoms she exhibited in the scene directly following those events. These symptoms might include “reflexive flinching,” the clenching of fists, muscle contraction throughout the body, grinding of teeth, headaches, etc. (Waites 113). *PubMed Health* adds more potential symptoms to the list: flashbacks, nightmares, lack of memory regarding the traumatic event, lack of interest in normal activities, difficulty with concentration, hypervigilance, survivor guilt, irritability, dizziness, and fainting. These are a slew of acting choices I could implement into my scenes following the rape. Waites also observes that a woman’s natural anger after undergoing a violent attack might result in a negative, “unfeminine” self-image that can also harm her mental state (105), giving yet another reason for Lavinia’s eventual death.

Lavinia’s family attempts to soothe and heal her, though their particular beliefs eventually guide their good intentions to her death. The family unit can be a strong factor in healing; Waites observes that “the family often does serve a protective function even in the face of terrible events such as war” (69). Waites also notes that “Patriarchal tradition assumes that

fathers protect their households” (71) as Titus does when he takes over the revenge plot after the reveal of Chiron and Demetrius as criminals. It makes sense for Lavinia to take comfort in the security of her father, powerful by virtue of being a family member, the male head of household, and an important general, and to expect that he will protect her and revenge her. According to Waites, victims sometimes tend to vilify or hero-worship those who try to help them (88-89), and this might also contribute to Lavinia’s complete trust in Titus. Waites observes that “Clients will quite typically have problems with boundaries” (93), and I think Lavinia’s dependence on Titus as main caregiver and protector might well reach past these boundaries. Although Waites notes that a tendency to withdraw from otherwise beneficial relationships can also occur (109), I do not think Lavinia’s family allows her to do this.

However, should a member of her family try to touch her, it might be the case that she reacts negatively, as “Assault involves a traumatic violation of boundaries that makes victims hypersensitive” (Waites 88). This would be a strong acting choice and would be supported by evidence from real life. Waites goes on to say that “In most instances ... physical contact is inappropriate to the therapeutic context” (96), so any physical touching by a family member might actually deteriorate Lavinia’s mental state. Rather than physical comfort, Waites advocates “sustained psychological contact” (96), which the text of *Titus Andronicus*, full as it is of long monologues by Marcus and Titus upon discovering Lavinia’s agony, affords her. Waites observes that physical shocks can erode not only the self but also social relationships (92), and the danger of these family supports eroding might add another dimension of conflict to the play.

The way to recovery is a reclamation of control. Waites describes this as “empowering the victim to lay claim to her own authority” (92). Lavinia takes steps toward this control by

writing the names of her rapists, by taking part in their deaths, and, it could be argued, by choosing to die. However, her road is blocked by many obstacles, including the inability to communicate. Waites advocates “verbal communication” as the best way to start victims on the path to recovery (93), and Lavinia cannot communicate at all until late in the play. As a secondary choice, Waites proposes “enactive techniques,” including writing, drawing, and play as therapeutic options (93). Lavinia does find a story mirroring her own in a book and eventually communicates through writing. “Tendencies to act rather than think or process material verbally need to be channeled into behavior, such as play, which can eventually be integrated with symbolic thought” (Waites 96), so I could also have her reenact a situation, or engage in play, if the opportunity arose. According to Waites, deep breathing and controlled confrontations are other aids in recovery (101), so it will be up to me whether or not to allow my Lavinia to engage in these beneficial actions.

### **Mutilation in the Text**

The text of *Titus Andronicus* itself makes self-reference to the many mutilations that occur therein, some tragic and some comic. Tricomi counted them up, noting “nearly sixty references, figurative as well as literal, to the word ‘hands’ and eighteen more to the word ‘head’” (226). Tricomi thinks the subjugation of metaphor to the gory content of *Titus* makes this play unique and daring (226-227). In many instances, an allusion to a bodily part that in any other play might be simple hyperbole foreshadows the physical manifestation of that it describes. Marcus asks Titus to become the head of Rome, and after he refuses, the new head, Saturninus, takes the heads of two of Titus’ sons. Saturninus and Bassianus argue over whether the latter

raped Lavinia, and later she is raped. Titus exclaims in his grief after seeing Lavinia that he will chop off his own hands, and later he actually does (Tricomi 228-229).

The number of puns regarding hands and heads also serves to inject a macabre humor into some of the more tragic scenes. Titus asks Aaron to “Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine.” He also makes a series of jokes about hands during the dinner scene with Marcus, Lavinia, and Young Lucius. Aaron adds his share of humor, clarifying his offer to bring Titus’ sons back with the caveat, “Their heads, I mean.” He riffs on the words “trimm’d,” “done,” and “hit it,” all of which have a very physical image associated with them. Tricomi finds *Titus* a very witty play (231) that reinforces its poetry so strongly with the physical images of mutilation that both transcend “into another realm ... to reach the utmost verge of realizable horror” (235). Only in this way can Shakespeare surpass the limits of human endurance in his revenge tragedy.



## CHAPTER FOUR: PREVIOUS PERFORMANCES

### Reviews of Previous Performances

Any actor approaching a Shakespearean role would be remiss if he or she did not research previous performances of the same play. One can glean insights into the text from those that have gone before, uncover possible pitfalls particular to that role, and discover choices that worked and can be implemented into the new production.

There have been many productions, and thus many reviews, of *Titus Andronicus*, so I narrowed the field down to three recent productions at prestigious theaters with the hope of learning from the best. The first production I chose was that of The Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2006. I chose this production because it was performed only seven years ago and because I had previously seen pictures of Lavinia from this production that intrigued me. The second production I chose to examine was at the Shakespeare's Globe Theater, also performed in 2006. The final production I researched was put on by The Public Theater in 2011. I chose this production because it was performed even more recently and because so many reviews were available online. I felt the plethora of reviewers would offer a broad perspective that might be helpful.

Overall, the reviews did not focus on Lavinia; indeed the common practice was to afford this character only a sentence or two of the entire review. Nonetheless, each one offered some insight into the role. Here I will discuss performances of Lavinia through the lenses of her relationships with Titus, her rapists, and the other characters.

One aspect that reviewers note is the close relationship between Titus and Lavinia. In a review of The Royal Shakespeare Theatre production directed by Yukio Ninagawa, Christian M.

Billing notes that “The on-stage chemistry between Yoshida and Manaka is certainly one of the more successful elements of the production” (207). Billing admires the joy between father and daughter when reunited and declares that their relationship is an essential part of “all good productions” of the play and should mirror that of Lear and Cordelia (207). Although I already had an idea that the father-daughter relationship was very important, the focus Billing places on this aspect of the play reinforces the pressure to craft a powerful onstage rapport.

Lavinia’s reaction to her rapists is interesting to read about through reviewers’ eyes. Billing liked the part of The Royal Shakespeare Theatre production when “Lavinia, possessed with rage, beats her stumps against Demetrius and Chiron ... until she collapses, exhausted downstage” (209). This would be an interesting choice and I could certainly try it in rehearsal. It would give Lavinia more spiritual fire than the text, for the most part devoid of stage directions, affords her, as would the scene Billing describes at the end of the play when she struggles with her father when he murders her (209). A more shocking choice from the RST production, which is a directorial choice rather than an actor’s choice but which is still good for an actor to because of its visceral and emotional impact, is when the rapists emerge from the forest attired only in red wool, representing Lavinia’s blood, on their genitals and torsos (Billings 206). The horror of this moment is also noted in F. Karim-Cooper’s review of the Globe’s 2006 production: “It was hardly expected, however, that people would respond to the bleeding Lavinia in the way they did ... This scene provided ... a profound recognition of the pain of rape—which does not emerge from the text alone” (76). It is true, because Lavinia cannot speak on her own behalf and because those who speak for her are men, the pain arising from the rape is secondary in the text to an Elizabethan sense of lost honor. However, it is something I should try to include in my

performance. Karim-Cooper praises the actress who played Lavinia at the Globe for her sensitivity, subtle changes in expression, and convulsing body, all of which served to take the audience through the emotions left out of the text (76). The Public Theater's 2011 Lavinia draws a mixed reaction from reviewers. David Barbour, a reviewer for *Lighting & Sound America Online*, has nothing to say about the actress except that she "finds herself largely hamstrung by the role of abused ingénue," which would indicate that her rape defined her in the role; perhaps it even overshadowed her. I am not sure how one would go about avoiding this, though, as the rape and mutilation of Lavinia is a huge part of her character arc. In his review of the same production, Matthew Murray praises the actress playing Lavinia for her "early entitlement and traumatized loss." The prerogative of which he speaks could certainly be a fun angle to play in the early parts of the show, and it would provide a nice contrast to her later distress. Sheward also reviews The Public Theater performance, and his only mention of Lavinia is that she is "heartbreaking."

Reviewers also take note of the other characters' opinions of Lavinia. Billing describes Lavinia as "the most vulnerable piece of territory over which revenge can be inscribed" (208) in Aaron's eyes. F. Karim-Cooper argues that in the Shakespeare's Globe Theater production in 2006, Lavinia becomes "an object of terror that harrows the sight of her uncle" in addition to a human victim (72). Both of these observations indicate that to other characters Lavinia is an object to be fought over rather than a person in her own right. This trend continues in Isherwood's review of The Public Theater's production, where he takes umbrage that Marcus delivers a long, flowery discourse upon discovering Lavinia rather than going to her aid.

Looking at these reviews, some of the dangers of the role are clear. It would be easy to let the violence of the rape create a picture of a two-dimensional victim, rather than forcing the character to deal with this violence in a three-dimensional way. Other characters may see Lavinia as an object, but the actor cannot play an object. Finally, the relationship between Titus and Lavinia is pivotal to the success of the play.

However, these reviews also supply ways to succeed in the role. Forging a strong relationship with Titus, dealing with the rape in a specific and human way, and creating moments with other actors that make Lavinia more of a person, rather than simply a symbol and object of adoration and lust, can all contribute to a successful run. I hope to incorporate these insights into my own performance.

### **Observations of Previous Performances**

Because reviewers look at the overall effect of a play and I am seeking to specifically examine the performance of actresses playing Lavinia, it is important to watch for myself and see what choices other actresses make. I was unable to see a live production, as *Titus Andronicus* is done only infrequently in this day and age. Instead, I sought out filmed versions of the play. I watched a short workshop from John Barton's *Playing Shakespeare* and the well-known 1999 version directed by Julie Taymor. By watching these performances, I gathered a slew of acting choices and will here discuss them and their possibilities for incorporation into my own rendering of the role.

In John Barton's Royal Shakespeare Company workshop series, Patrick Stewart performs the "weeping welkin" monologue to explore the balance between emotion and text. To help him, Lisa Harrow plays Lavinia to his Titus. She kneels beside him and nestles her head in the crook

of his shoulder. She keeps her eyes closed and her mouth open, and she moans gentle, repetitive sounds devoid of strong emotion but reminiscent of a permanent ache. Her sighs become an eerie underscore to the monologue, enhancing the imagery of the sea, wind, and earth. Although this is the only part of the play Stewart and Harrow perform, it is a great example of how nonverbal expression can aid a scene and enhance one's fellow actors' performances. It is also a great solution to the problem of how to maintain emotion, as one would in the wake of such a tragedy, without overpowering this beautiful monologue with loud cries.

In Julie Taymor's 1999 film version of *Titus*, Laura Fraser plays Lavinia. Her big eyes and sweet, slightly lisping, voice provide a sharp contrast to her confident characterization. In the opening scene, Fraser gives a straightforward reading of Lavinia's greeting speech. She kneels at her father's feet and plays into the solemnity of the scene, adding a delicate smile. When Saturninus takes her away from Bassianus, Fraser is vulnerable but seems to know she has no choice but to obey her father. She registers a beat of defiance, however, when she kisses the new emperor's ring and gives him a look of hatred over it. Her verbal response to Saturninus is self-possessed and drips with polite sarcasm. The strength of Fraser's Lavinia contrasts with the way I initially read the character but could be an interesting choice.

When Bassianus kidnaps her, Fraser's Lavinia looks as though she agrees with his action and runs willingly away. This contrasts with Titus' line to Saturninus, "Lavinia is surprised," for she doesn't look very surprised. The film is structured slightly differently than the play, and Taymor adds a silent prologue to Saturninus' forgiveness with Lavinia greeting her father and kneeling silently for his forgiveness. I liked this additional moment and I wonder if there might be a place in our production for such an exchange.

When Bassianus and Lavinia find Tamora and Aaron in the woods, Fraser's Lavinia takes the opportunity to make fun of Tamora. When Tamora begins her monologue, the sons circle and Fraser screams when they scare her. Her reaction to Bassianus' death is first shock, then rage. Only when Tamora threatens her does she seem to realize the danger to her own person and the reality of Bassianus' death. When she begins the begging section, her voice cracks but she otherwise maintains a deal of self-control, even when one of the brothers licks her hand. She doesn't seem to notice the brothers' disgusting actions but keeps her focus on figuring a way out of the situation. She doesn't seem to understand fully what's going on until her last request is denied and the brothers drag her off into the woods. The rage she exudes comes directly out of Fraser's decision to make Lavinia an entitled, sassy young woman. It may or may not be the choice I decide to make, but it certainly gives some variety to the scene.

After the rape, Fraser's Lavinia is in a daze. She keeps her mouth closed and doesn't make eye contact with her rapists, wagging her shortened arms about so the camera can see the wooden branches poking from them. She twitches a couple of times, but overall the way she moves her body is more artistic, like a dancer, than realistic. I suspect the director's hand in this choice and, although I appreciate its artistic achievement, I do not think the same style will play in our stage production. When Fraser finally does open her mouth, she leans forward so a lot of blood can fall toward Marcus. While Marcus speaks to her, she is distant, perhaps still in shock. She keeps her mouth closed and is physically still until Lucius asks her to name the criminals, at which point she gives a strangled sort of a cry and staggers a few steps forward. Her face is still relatively blank and she walks normally, if slowly.

At the family meal, she refuses both food and drink, and her gestures, made with the puppet hands Taymor provided, are simple and deliberate. She continues gesturing, as if trying to tell Titus something additional, until interrupted by Young Lucius stabbing the fly. This may seem like an obvious choice, but it had not occurred to me until I watched Fraser's performance.

Although Fraser typically does not use her voice, preferring to keep her mouth closed and speak through her eyes, she does try to speak to Young Lucius when she chases his books. When Titus asks her "what Roman lord," a question she is unable to answer, she screams and falls to the ground. Taymor gives Lavinia Roman handwriting; this is an interesting idea, but I would have to see how speedily I can write in our production and if such handwriting fits into the overall palette of design before making the same choice.

When Fraser enters to see Chiron and Demetrius hanging upside down, bound and naked, she moves warily but steadily forward. We will almost certainly not be hanging our Chiron and Demetrius upside down in our production, so I think a little more fear may be in order in my case. After Titus explains what is to befall the brothers, Fraser gives a simple look up that speaks to her satisfaction. She is fascinated with the sight of their blood falling into her basin. At the feast, Fraser arrives after everyone has eaten, creating a dramatic entrance with her veil and long dress. She goes willingly to Titus, even lifting her own veil so he may more easily kill her.

Overall, Fraser's characterization of Lavinia draws an arc between a privileged, slightly annoying princess, an outraged wife, a helpless victim, and a willing sacrifice. She gives the role many facets, but I did not feel that her relationship with her father was very strong. I think it is a danger of the role to fall into a patriarchal view of a woman rather than a real person dealing with the many terrible happenings that beset her, and I see a degree of that in Taymor's film.

However, Fraser provides many interesting choices that I had not previously considered and could certainly incorporate into my performance.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: VERBAL AND NONVERBAL EXPLORATIONS**

### **Text Analysis**

One of the major components of my graduate study was Shakespearean text analysis. By deconstructing Shakespeare's words, an actor is able to discover many aspects of a character's emotional state. Because Shakespearean text lacks the modern convention of stage directions in parentheses, text analysis is one of the most useful tools in approaching one of his plays. Here I expand the process learned in graduate school from a single monologue to an entire play, applying it to all of Lavinia's lines retained in this production. I will describe all possible choices in this section, knowing that my experiences in rehearsal and choices in the moment even during performance will ultimately determine which I use.

### **Alliteration**

Consonants in Shakespeare tend to reflect the logic behind a character's actions; their opposites are vowels, which are discussed in the next section of this chapter. Alliteration is the repetition of consonants by which the author may draw attention to a given passage or even to specific keywords. In this section I will point out all opportunities for alliteration and attempt to divine their significance in the text.

In the first part of my opening monologue in I.i, there are a lot of sustainable consonants. I think this reveals that I feel at ease, able to spend time on these sustainable sounds and reaching toward him even with my voice. There are multiple [n] sounds in the first line, "in peace and honour," but these are then overshadowed by the stronger [l] words in "live Lord Titus long." The growth of these sustainables indicates that I may be getting more excited. The [n] and [l] sounds do a nice crossfade into the next line, where they transfer to [f] and its close cousin [v],

“My noble lord and father, live in fame!” Thus a three-tier build is established through simple alliteration. I am relishing both these sustainable consonants and my reunification with my dear father.

In the second part of my opening monologue, I pay tribute to my dead brothers. The sorrow I feel for their passing comes out in spurts of plosive consonants. First is the [t], established at the top in “Titus” and linked later to “tomb” and “tributary tears.” What’s interesting about this is that Titus will in fact meet with lots of tears later in the play. This is a little bit of alliterative foreshadowing. The [b] in “brethren” is followed by that in “obsequies.”

The final part of my opening monologue brings back the sustainable [n] and [t] of my happiness to see him in “feet I kneel,” followed closely by the hiccup [t] in “tears of joy.” Then two new alliterative consonants are introduced. Voiced [ð] comes in with “the” and “thy,” but as these are not strong words I anticipate passing over them in favor of the strong [r] and [t] of “return to Rome.” The [r] consonant, characterized as a trombone in Lessac’s consonant orchestra (105), is a phallic sound; it is intrusive and reaches strongly toward the ear. It is perfect to summarize my yearning for the return of the men in my family but catches with the double [t] to bring back some tears.

In my line to Saturninus at the end of scene I.i, there are echoes of the [t] and [l] from my opening monologue with “Not I, my lord; sith true nobility.” However, stronger alliteration can be found in the [w] in “warrants these words” and the [s] in “princely courtesy.” The consonant [w] is similar to the vowel [u], and I think a lot of emotion can be conveyed in [w] just it can in structural vowels. I am very upset right now. Not only is Saturninus taking me away from my betrothed, he is insulting my father by complimenting his enemy and insulting me by praising

her beauty. I am trying to contain my emotions; I think this feeling is expressed perfectly in the [w] alliteration. The [s] in “princely courtesy” could be a hiss, a spit, or the waves of a sad sea lapping against the shore, depending on what works in rehearsal.

The scene in which I have the most lines is II.iii, which is fitting because it is my final speaking scene. I begin teasing Tamora with sustainable alliteration through [n] and [s]: “Under your patience, gentle empress,” and then I twist the knife with a glottal [g] in “goodly gift.” I sense something bad is coming and combine the airy [h] with the persuasive [l] and the hissing [s] for “let us hence, and let her joy her raven-colour’d love; this valley ...” I alternate between puffing out my scorn for her adultery with [p] and hissing into Bassianus’ ear [s] in “purpose passing well.” My next line has a touch more of the [s] sibilance in the word “slips.” It then contains a patchwork of [h], [m], and [ŋ] with the phrase, “have made him noted long: good king, to be so mightily abused!”

When I begin begging Tamora, I suddenly begin using more drumbeat alliterative sounds. I combine [s] and [t] for “O Tamora! thou bear’st a woman’s face.” The [t] tears continue and merge with the heavy sigh of [h] with “Sweet lords, entreat her hear me but a word.” My entreaty to Tamora doesn’t work, so I double my efforts to beg Demetrius and Chiron, changing alliterative sounds like acting tactics in a struggle to win them over. First I approach them with the weeping [t] and its voiced brother [d]: “When did the tiger’s young ones teach the dam?” I crossfade from [d] to the nasal, begging [n] before the [t] tears take over again: “O, do not learn her wrath; she taught it thee.” This doesn’t work, so I add [m] and [ð] to the mix: “The milk thou suck’dst from her did turn to marble; even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny.” The hissing [s] in the difficult “suck’dst” becomes onomatopoeic for the sound of an animalistic feeding frenzy,

complete with tongues, teeth, liquid and whiskers. I am running out of energy at the end of this longer line, and lose all but [n] and [t]: “Yet every mother breeds not sons alike: do thou entreat her show a woman pity.”

I start to lose my rationality now, and the alliteration decreases in favor of assonance. However, there are still a few opportunities to play alliteration. [ð] is a meaty, earthy sound, and I combine it with heavy breathing in [h] for “though thy hard heart;” I switch back to the childish [n] as the line continues, “say no, nothing so kind.” The next line is devoid of alliteration except in the one shining moment of hope, with [f] in “for my father’s sake, that gave thee life.” The whining [n] comes back and combines with the frantic [k] in “gentle queen, and with thine own hands kill me in this place!” My penultimate line in this cut of the play has alliteration only with the tears of [t], the sibilant [s], and the crazy [k]: “’Tis present . . . tongue to tell: O, keep me from their worse than killing lust.” The repeated word “no” and its [n] in my last line provide a great opportunity for disbelief: “No grace? No womanhood?” I spit on her with [b] and [s], and [n] and [m] point up key words: “Ah, beastly creature! The blot and enemy to our general name!” I invoke my father with [f] and stretch out my final cry with [n]: “Confusion fall.”

Although there are instances in Lavinia’s speeches of normal alliteration using a single sound in the same word or neighboring words, she tends to use clusters of sounds together. I think this illustrates that Lavinia does not use her words with the skill of Shakespeare’s statesmen. She is young, and her value to society is probably in her beauty rather than in her ability to reason, think, and persuade. She tries to adopt the alliterative abilities of her elders, but ultimately is cut off before she learns to master this skill.

## Assonance

Vowels are where characters' emotions live. Assonance is the repetition of specific vowels or vowel combinations. In this section I will point out all opportunities for assonance and hypothesize on why the character might use them at this particular point in the play.

The assonance in the opening exchange between Lavinia and Titus focuses on the [aɪ] diphthong found in words like "Titus," "my," "I," and "thy." I am reestablishing my relationship with my father, and the emotional assonance reflects this. Another important instance of assonance to be found in this speech is the weeping [i] in "feet I kneel, with tears," which illustrates how deeply glad I am for his return. The final line points up the keywords "return to Rome" with [ɜ]. The potency of [i] and the space in the structural [ɜ] both reflect my powerful sense of relief to have him back home.

My line to Saturninus in scene I.i attempts to establish relationship with the same [aɪ] I used with my father in the words "I" and "my," but it is worth noting that no observation of his affections are included in the line, indicating that perhaps our feelings are not meeting. I again use [ɜ] to point up the dutiful "words" and "courtesy," using these words to mask my true feelings of dismay.

When I first talk to Tamora in II.iii, the only assonance is that of a nonstructural vowel, [e]: "patience, gentle empress." The use of this vowel, a neutral in Lessac (185), indicates that I'm not too stressed. The same sound continues in "let us hence." The word "her," and therefore its structural [ɜ], repeats, but I think the echo of [eɪ] in "pray" and "raven" is stronger. Another neutral pops up with "colour'd love," and I think the [ʌ] here shows my disdain for the romance between Tamora and Aaron. It is not even worth a structural vowel. I give more space to [æ] in

“valley” and “passing,” which almost makes the phrase that contain them sound like a valley girl. The final bit of assonance before Bassianus’ death is an echoed [i] in “Good king, to be,” but I think the second [i] in this phrase is less important than words that follow; so it probably just serves to underscore the rhythm of the iambic pentameter.

When I first speak after Bassianus’ death, I’m still in shock. My emotions, and therefore my assonance, have not had a chance to kick in. I start to realize what’s happening in the next line, and the weeping sound of [i] is manifest in “sweet lords, entreat her hear me.” In Shakespeare’s day, I imagine the other two keywords in this verse line, “lords” and “word,” also had assonance, but unfortunately today they are pronounced differently. I put down Demetrius and Chiron with the repeated [ʌ] in “young ones” and Tamora with “suck’dst from her.” I switch tactics and appeal to them with the yearning [ɜ] in “learn her” and “her did turn.” The potent [i] of “she taught it thee” and “even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny” reaches out to try and win them over. I try to lighten the mood with a repeated neutral [e] in “yet every.” I liken “mother” and “sons” to one another with the shared [ʌ].

I really begin to beg with the next line, which raises the level and number of structural vowels. “O, be to me, though thy hard heart say no, nothing so kind” contains repeated [i], [aə], and [oʊ]. The tonal pushing energy in [i] gives way to a call tone push with [eɪ] in “let me teach thee! for my father’s sake, that gave thee life, when well he might have slain thee.” I slap her with the hard [p] in “not obdurate.” Although I use the emotive word “o” throughout the scene, it is paired with “own” to reinforce that my feelings lie in Tamora’s “own hands.” “’Tis present death I beg” lends a breathless quality to this entreaty’s [e], and the quick patter of air is contrasted with the structural [aɪ] in “denies my tongue to tell.” I beg her once more with the

potent [i] in “keep me” at the end of my entreaty. I carry the [i] over to my next line where I curse her as a “beastly creature.” I think it’s intriguing that my last case of assonance in the whole play is the relatively weak neutral [e] in “enemy to our general name!” It seems as if my next words would contain something stronger were I not cut off from speaking it halfway through the line.

### **Antithesis**

Shakespeare uses antithesis to compare two concepts and thus illustrate his points with deeper, more connotative imagery. In this section I will explore the use of antithesis in Lavinia’s lines.

In my first speech in scene I.i, I wish my father “peace and honour.” This is an interesting choice of words because it is through war, not peace, that Titus earned his honor. I command him to live “long” and “in fame,” hoping that he can enjoy this honor for many years. My command to my father to “live ... long” also contrasts with Titus’ previous line, in which he commands his dead sons to “rest you here.” I call him both “lord and father,” showing that I owe him both my duty and my love. I compare two locations and that which I render at each location: “tributary tears” “at this tomb” and “tears of joy” “at thy feet.” In both cases, I cry; but in one location, the tomb of my brothers, they are part of a larger, sad, whole, and in the other, the feet of my father, they are happy tears. This comparison also extends to the reason for the tears: “my brethren’s obsequies” against “thy return to Rome.” The whole monologue demonstrates that I am torn between sadness and happiness. It also shows that the love of family, both fraternal and filial, is of utmost importance to me. This makes thematic sense in the context of the play as a whole,

where Titus and Tamora attack each other by hurting members of each others' families before finally dying themselves at the end of the fifth act.

My line to Saturninus in I.i only has one instance of repetition. I compare "true nobility" and "princely courtesy." "True nobility" could refer to Bassianus, whom I love and respect, or it could refer to my father, whose approval no doubt plays a large part in my acquiescence to Saturninus' offer. "Princely courtesy" is an empty phrase that refers to Saturninus. The heartfelt truth of the former is set against the mere courtesy of the latter.

I use many cases of antithesis in II.iii. In the first instance, I build upon something Tamora says. She threatens Bassianus, my husband, with a cuckold's horns upon his temples, and I respond that "you," meaning Tamora, are actually the one in danger of adultery. I then contrast my plan for action, telling Bassianus to "let us hence" and to "let her joy" her lustful encounter. I think at this point I sense that mocking her may not be the smartest idea and try to placate her with "joy." I also amend Bassianus' earlier reference to "a barbarous Moor" and describe Aaron as "her raven-colour'd love." Though still a teasing reference, it is certainly a much more generous description of Tamora's lover and thus less harsh to Tamora. I try to guilt her later with the contrast between the "good king" her husband and the fact that because of her actions he is "mightily abused."

In the final section of this scene, I am cut off after one line several times, and though I might have planned to use antithesis I am prevented from doing so. When I finally get a chance to talk for a span of time, I load the speech with antithesis. I compare the "tiger's young ones," Chiron and Demetrius, with the "dam," Tamora, hoping that one will be more merciful than the other. I beg the brothers not to "learn" the mercilessness that Tamora "taught" them. I call her



mother's "milk," which should be soft, liquid, and nourishing, "marble," which is solid and impenetrable. Her "teat" turned them to "tyranny." With all of these references I am comparing that which is natural and nurturing with that which is unnatural and harsh. I want them to be the former and to treat me kindly. To this end, I once more contrast the "mother" with her "sons." I beg the sons to ask their mother to relent with "thou entreat her show." None of this is working, so I ask for something between mercy and the lack thereof: "nothing so kind, but something pitiful." Trying another tack, I compare the action my father might have taken with that which he did: "gave thee life" and "might have slain thee." Though not a pure antithesis, I like to compare the words "gentle queen," for in this instance the queen is terrible and frightening. To ask her to be "gentle" delivers a delicious contrast. I ask her for two things: "present death . . . and one thing more." The latter, of course, is the preservation of my virginity. The inclusion of both items shows that I value my chastity even above my life and foreshadows the horror of the rape. In my last line, I am astonished to find "no grace" and "no womanhood" in Tamora. "Grace" I might find in any noble-spirited person, but "womanhood" is a sisterly bond beyond nationality that women share to protect them from the machinations of men. Finding neither, I add a third comparison: she is now a "beastly creature," neither a person of grace nor even still a woman. She is a "blot" and an "enemy" to all women, and I begin to curse her existence when I am silenced forever.

### **Folio Keywords**

When reading early editions of Shakespeare's work, one sometimes finds alternate spellings or selectively capitalized words. The process of going through this early script, or Folio, and noting which words Shakespeare chose to highlight through these means can yield

important information. Often these words are keywords and important to the character beyond their normal usage.

In my first speech (Applause 630), the word “Honour” is capitalized in the Folio. It is also given the British “ou” spelling, but I will concentrate on the capitalization rather than the variant spelling since this spelling is in fact still in usage in England today. I punch the word “Honour” because my father is a highly respected general and a dedicated father who deserves the highest respect. It is also a repetition of Titus’ usage of the word, which I will examine in the next section of this chapter. “Lord Titus” is capitalized, being a title followed by a proper noun, and I think it is important to play up this phrase for a number of reasons. Firstly, this speech comes early in our cut of the play and identifying names will help the audience learn who is who. Secondly, names are very important in many cultures and calling a thing by its name is to call it by its very essence. Titus is not only Titus; he is a “Lord.” Thirdly, I am making a personal connection to my father by calling him by his name, and I add the “Lord” to show additional love and reverence. I then go on to repeat myself and build upon the respect I’ve just shown with “My Noble Lord and Father.” I command him to “live in Fame,” which escalates from the previous command to “live ... long,” and the capitalization serves to punctuate the difference. “Loe” is given an extra “e” in the Folio text, indicating that I should stretch this word to encompass another vowel’s space and time. I could get his attention with this word, drawing it away from the tomb and toward my living self. Alternately, I could weep with the diphthong [oʊ] and join him in his tears. The words “Tombe” and “teares” each have an extra “e,” which I believe is Shakespeare’s way of drawing attention to the alliteration discussed in the first section of this chapter. “Tributarie,” on the other hand, is given an “ie” ending, which can indicate a

shorter pronunciation of the word. The rhythm in this case could sound like a triplet between the two strong quarter notes of “Tombe” and “teares.” In “Bretherens Obsequies,” both words are capitalized. This, again, points up the [b] alliteration discussed previously, but it also reminds me as an actor just how important these two dead brothers, who never appear in the play, were to Lavinia. In the next sentence, I stretch the potent [i] assonance of “feete,” “kneele,” and “teares,” all of which have an extra vowel. The final instances of Folio keywords in this speech come in the last verse line, “returne to Rome.” Here “returne” has an extra “e” and “Rome” is capitalized. This echoes the [r] alliteration found earlier, but it also differentiates between the verb, a stretched word because of the extra vowel, and the noun, which is punched because of the capitalization. The fact that “Rome” is the final word not only in the verse line but also in our production’s cut of the speech itself lends it an added significance. It reminds the audience where the play is taking place, grounds me as a character in my homeland, and clarifies the distinction between the land of war where Titus has been and the land of peace where he is now. It is ironic that this place of peace will actually be the bloodiest battlefield Titus has yet encountered.

In the Folio version of my line to Saturninus (Applause 631), I capitalize the word “Lord.” The word “lord” can mean ruler, but in Shakespearean text it often means husband. I am capitalizing this word to remind Saturninus that he just tore me away from my fiancé to be his wife, so he should stop flirting with Tamora. I likewise capitalize and change the spelling of “Nobilitie.” I could be suggesting that perhaps Saturninus does not have the nobility of his brother or my father, or I could be trying to justify his flagrant inattention with the excuse of an emperor’s kindness and thus save face for us both. With “Princely curtesie,” I am reminding him

that he is a prince and should act like one. Both “Nobilitie” and “curtesie” are spelled with the minimizing “ie” ending, indicating further my disdain.

I remind Tamora of her position with the capitalized “Empresse” in my final speaking scene (Applause 635). The variant spelling could indicate to me as actor to give this word, spelled a syllable short when compared to our modern spelling of the word, another beat. This would fill out the verse line and will be discussed later in the section of this chapter on scansion. The variant spelling could also point out the [s] sound in this word, making what should be an honorable title sound more like a snake. I capitalize the word “Horning” as well. This is a dig at Tamora’s character and throws her threat to Bassianus back in her face. It could also indicate a pun on the word “whoring,” which sounds similar and would also make sense under the circumstances. I refer to Aaron the Moor as Tamora’s “Raven coloured [sic] love.” With this phrase, I am likening Aaron to the black “Raven,” a bird that is often considered an ill omen. Though less harsh than Bassianus’ description of the Moor, the capitalization makes this phrase into an insult. I assent to Bassianus’ threat to tell Saturninus of Tamora’s adultery with “I,” normally spelled “aye.” In my experience, this is a fairly common spelling alternative in Shakespeare’s Folio, but it is worth giving some extra space to the tall [aɪ] vowel that can either mean oneself or yes. The next capitalization is “Good King,” in which I chide Tamora for being a bad queen.

After Bassianus is killed, I use capitalization and variant spelling to beg for my life (Applause 636). Whereas previously I called Tamora by her title, I now appeal to her by her capitalized name, “Tamora.” I try to flatter Chiron and Demetrius by calling them “Sweet Lords.” I change the spelling of “entreat” to “intreat,” pulling the neutral [e] closer to the

weeping sound of [i] by changing it to [ɪ], and I lengthen the [i] in “heare” by adding an extra vowel. The phrase “Sweet Lords, intreat her heare me” plays up the [i] assonance by drawing attention to those words with [i]. I bite back and introduce my metaphor with the capitalized “Tigers.” In the Folio, “young-ones” has a dash, which could be considered a variant spelling. I think linking the two words by the dash makes a compound word rather than an adjective paired with a noun, and I should adjust my mental image accordingly. In the next sentence, “doe not learne” adds an extra vowel to the two commanding verbs. This is another signal to extend these words in my plea, and to the actor it is a reminder to stress the verbs rather than the “not.”

Variant spelling and capitalization underscore the antithesis of “milke” and “Marble” discussed in the previous section of this chapter. The verb is once again stretched in “turne.” Highlighting the verb makes the metaphor more clear, but it also sets up the alliteration of the next line’s “Teat” and “Tyranny.” The antithesis of “Mother” and “Sonnes” is punched with capitalization, and I can use the variant spelling of the latter to make that word more persuasive in my renewed appeal to Chiron and Demetrius. The variant spelling of “intreat” is repeated at the end of this short speech, and I can use it to beg with both [ɪ] and [i], harkening back to earlier in the speech. The word “show” is changed to “shew” in the Folio, which is another common variant, but I can use it to stretch the verb and try to reach Chiron. The word “pitty” is given a double dose of [t] tears; this could be a catch in my throat. I beg Chiron, appealing to his “hard hart,” and the variant spelling of “heart” not only shortens the word, thereby making it feel harder in the mouth, it also plays up the assonance of [aə] and the alliteration of [h] in the phrase. Again, not one but two letters are added to the Folio’s “pittifull.” The tears of [t] are doubled in this variant spelling, and the complete spelling of the smaller word “full” helps me to fully invest in those tears. I

seize upon a new idea and capitalize “Fathers [sic],” thinking that by bringing up Titus’ mercy Tamora’s mind may be changed. I remind her that he might have “slaine” her even as she is planning to slay me, but that he spared her life. This doesn’t work, so I scream at her not to have “deafe eares.” I once again appeal to Tamora on a personal level by using her capitalized name, and then I both capitalize and add a vowel to her title, “Queene,” trying to flatter her. I beg for her personal mercy and elevate an adjective to stand equal with its noun by asking her to use her “owne” hands to kill me. My real request is highlighted by the additional vowel in “keepe,” and I can use this word to really beg her. When she refuses, I begin to curse her. I capitalize her lack of “Grace” and stretch out the [l] sound in “generall,” calling upon all women everywhere to curse her. Whatever else I might have said is lost.

The study of Folio keywords was very insightful to my comprehension of what Shakespeare thought significant to my character. It will aid me as an actor by pointing out important verbs, nouns, and sometimes adjectives. What I was surprised to find was how much these Folio keywords aligned with the work in alliteration, assonance, and antithesis in the previous sections of this chapter.

### **Repetition**

Repetition is a rhetorical device that highlights important contrasts by linking them through similar sounds. Though in previous sections I have examined the repetition of consonants in alliteration and the repetition of vowels in assonance, I will in this section study repetition of entire words and phrases.

My very first line is a repetition of Titus’ previous line: “In peace and honour rest you here, my sons!” is followed by “In peace and honour live Lord Titus long.” The repetition of the

first part of Titus' line, itself a repetition of one of his previous lines, allows me to take his grief and try to mold it into joy. I then repeat my command for him to live. First I tell him to "live ... long" and then I tell him to "live in fame!" I try to cheer him up with these commands, welcoming him home to a long retirement with me at his side and bidding him enjoy his well-deserved fame.

My line to Saturninus is not true repetition, but it echoes Titus' response to a similar question. Saturninus asks Titus, "Tell me, Andronicus, doth this motion please thee?" and Titus responds, "It doth, my worthy lord" with a semicolon followed by a more cautious exposition of his feelings. When Saturninus asks me, "Lavinia, you are not displeased with this?" I respond, "Not I, my lord" with a semicolon and some carefully chosen words. Although this is not proper repetition, the structure is the same; I think I am following my father's example in navigating this dangerous political territory.

When talking to Tamora, I use repetition frequently. I repeat Bassianus' "the king my brother" with "Good king." Here I build upon the familial link Bassianus has already established between us and Saturninus by praising him. This could be a veiled threat to Tamora, demonstrating how much closer we are to the man in power than she. I repeat my line "Sweet lords, entreat her hear me but a word" later in the scene with "Do thou entreat her show a woman pity." I repeat the phrase "O Tamora" several times in the scene, though it never succeeds in winning her mercy. My last instance of repetition is in the line, "No grace? No womanhood?" The repetition of the word "no" makes the noun following it more impactful.

Overall, I do not seem to use repetition successfully except when following the example of a male family member. This aligns with the function of Lavinia as an object to be won, used, or stolen throughout the play. I am overpowered by the men in my life.

### **Scansion**

Scansion is the study of the rhythm of Shakespeare's words. Shakespeare normally uses iambic pentameter, which contains five feet, or measures in musical terms, each of which contain one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. Determining where, if ever, Shakespeare deviates from this pattern, can be very insightful into the character's inner rhythm. In this section I will examine Lavinia's lines in this production and seek to understand how her body succeeds or does not succeed in sending a normal pattern of human words to her mouth.

My first speech is fairly regular, indicating a peaceful soul untroubled by worry or stress. My first line could be read as straight iambic pentameter; alternately, an additional stressed beat could be given to the word "Lord" since it is capitalized in the Folio. The third line starts with a trochee, or stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, as indicated by the variant spelling of "Lo" in the Folio. However, other than that it is regular. The last line starts again with a trochee because its first foot contains a verb followed by a preposition. Other than the above exceptions, themselves fairly common, the speech is regular iambic pentameter.

In my brief line to Saturninus, there is only one exception to regular rhythm. The word "warrants" begins the second verse line, and in this word the stress falls naturally on the first syllable. As I interpret the rhythm, it means I have my emotions mostly under control even though I have just been chosen as wife by someone other than my fiancé.



In II.iii, my speech starts regular and becomes more irregular as I draw nearer the rape. My first line starts with a trochee, “Under,” which interrupts Tamora’s ranting. The second verse line is regular except for a pronoun, “you,” which falls on an unstressed syllable. Normally one does not stress pronouns in Shakespeare, but since I am drawing a comparison between Tamora and Bassianus, I might choose to make this foot a trochee. My next line reads as a short line in the script, but when I looked it up in the Folio I discovered that it is a regular, full line with all five feet intact. The amount of time allotted our production necessitated a cut in the script, but I should not concern myself with any underlying meaning since Shakespeare intended none. I start my next line with a trochee, “Ay, for.” It is immediately followed by a spondee, a foot with two stressed syllables, in “Good king.” Both words are emphasized in the Folio, so I believe they merit equal stress.

After Bassianus’ death, my speech becomes more irregular. I start my line with a spondee in “O Tamora!” My next line also starts with a spondee dictated by the Folio, “Sweet lords.” My metaphor speech could begin with a regular foot, “When did,” but another choice would be to emphasize the question word rather than the verb, thus pointing up the question mark at the end of the verse line. Another spondee with the emotional word “O” begins with “O, do.” In the next verse line I have my first feminine ending, or extra unstressed syllable, in the entire play with the end of the foot “of marble.” *Titus Andronicus* is one of Shakespeare’s early plays, and he uses regular iambic pentameter for most of these early plays; so a feminine ending that might in another play feel like a normal part of the text feels very out of place here. It indicates to me that I am growing too desperate for normal speech and have more ideas than I can fit into one line. Directly after this feminine ending is another extra syllable in the foot “Even at.” I think I will

choose to elide the word “even” to sound more like “ev’n.” It will sound like my words are gushing out of me too fast even for my mouth to keep up but still allow the audience to understand what I am saying. I get my composure back for a brief, regular verse line, before losing it again with another feminine ending, “a woman pity.” I push hard with spondees in “O, be” and “hard heart.” A trochee follows this verse line in “Nothing.” “O, let” could either be a spondee or a trochee, depending on how Tamora gives me the previous line. The emotive “O” determines, either way, that the foot cannot be regular. I believe the potent [i] sound in “thee life” merits a spondee, as could the same vowel in “Be not.” Again, the adverb “not” does not normally merit a stress; but because the word that follows, “obdurate,” shares the delicious [ɒ], I think three stresses in a row are deserved. I end this line with yet another spondee, “deaf ears,” both of which are important in the Folio. I repeat the spondee that begins “O Tamora.” I contain myself for a good deal of the following line, but another “O” slips out into another spondee. My final line of the play begins with a feminine ending, “Ah, beastly creature.” Another elided word, “enemy” follows directly after. My final line, “Confusion fall—,” contains only two feet of iambs and is short. The audience should feel the absence of the last three feet.

### **Unfamiliar Words**

In any play, from Shakespeare to Mamet, it is vital to look up unfamiliar words so that one knows what one’s character is saying. Here I will define and associate unfamiliar words from my lines. I will also address a few words that I am familiar with but that have a deeper meaning to be gleaned than surface definitions.

The first word I looked up is “tributary,” which falls in scene I.i. According to *Dictionary.com*, the word means “a stream that flows to a larger stream or other body of water.”

This makes perfect sense in the context of the scene, in which I add my tears to the river of tears already accorded my brothers' remains by Titus and my surviving brethren. The adjective could also be defined as "paid as tribute;" this meaning, too, applies to the scene, as my brothers deserve a gift for their sacrifice to family and nation. The final definition given at *Dictionary.com* is "subject; subordinate: [as in] a tributary nation." This sense of the word is not as readily applicable, but it could indicate that my tears are subject to the commands of my father. This aligns with the fact that he is in command of my life; indeed, he later takes me away from Bassianus, my fiancé, and gives my hand in marriage to the new emperor, Saturninus.

The tears I shed in sorrow are for "my brethren's obsequies." *Dictionary.com* defines "brethren" as "brothers," an obvious definition in the given circumstances, or as "fellow members." The latter definition is interesting since I am not a member of the army in which my twenty-five brothers marched; it instead redraws the boundaries of the Andronici to be a family unit, which would then include myself and Marcus, rather than simply the military unit of that family. An "obsequy" is "a funeral rite or ceremony," which I already knew, but *Dictionary.com* also gives an additional tidbit: the root is "*obsequium*" or "compliance." It is intriguing that here, as in the third definition of "tributary," I am obeying an unspoken command.

"Nobility" refers to "the noble class" which in this case would be the Roman patricians. It can also mean "grandeur," a piece of flattery Saturninus would certainly enjoy, or "exalted moral excellence," which would be sarcastic in this case. To "warrant" something is "to give authority to," and Saturninus now has authority in spades. It can also mean "to give reason for," so I could be publicly excusing his improper behavior with Tamora by my speech. However, a "warrant"

can also be “an instrument ... authorizing an officer to ... seize property” (*Dictionary.com*). This last definition could refer to his seizure of me, his subsequent seizure of Tamora, or both.

When I begin II.iii with Tamora, I accuse her of “horning.” According to *Dictionary.com*, to “horn” is to “cuckold;” she is committing adultery with Aaron so that reading makes perfect sense. As an idiom, to “horn in” can mean to “intrude or interrupt.” Tamora certainly intruded upon my family and my country’s politics when she became empress. This word is a difficult one to say with the breathy [h] followed by the diphthong [ɔə]. So I can take the extra time to put in the disdain merited by both of these readings. I accuse Tamora of “slips” later. Looking at various definitions on *Dictionary.com* and at the context of the scene, I think this refers to her slipping away to meet Aaron in secret trysts rather than a silk undergarment or “a sudden losing of one’s foothold.” I beg Tamora to stop being “obdurate,” which means “stubborn, unyielding” in its most common definition, but which can also mean “stubbornly resistant to moral influence” (*Dictionary.com*).

Although I knew most of the words that I say, it was very helpful to look up additional definitions and see where Shakespeare added layered meanings to his text. I can only say each word once per night, so it is impossible to convey all meanings at once. However, choices are always good tools for an actor to have at his/her disposal.

### **Nonverbal Explorations**

Because Lavinia is verbally silenced halfway through *Titus Andronicus*, nonverbal communication is of the utmost importance for her journey through the second half of the play. Here I will record my process in exploring physical and vocal/nonverbal challenges, both practical and emotional, inherent to the part.

The first practical problem I attacked in my nonverbal explorations was the issue of how to convince audiences that my hands had really been chopped off. I have seen many television shows and movies where the actor accidentally places a normal arm next to a supposedly shortened arm and the normal proportion of one arm to the other instantly took me out of the action. To assess the problem, I looked at myself in the mirror, taking note of where my hands fall in proportion to my body. I tried flexing them at the wrist, effectively solving the problem of vertical proportion but creating a new difficulty in horizontal proportion. I tried to flex at the wrist and simultaneously clench my hands; but this was awkward to maintain and, though it minimized the horizontal space taken up by my hands, it did not remove it in any convincing capacity. Next, I tried comparing the proportion of my body standing with normal hands to the proportion of my body raised up on toes—to simulate heeled shoes—with clenched fists. This did alter the proportions and I noted it as a possible solution. Finally, I looked again at my standing body and then tucked my elbows back, clenched my fists, and raised my shoulders slightly. Though an audience member would logically know I had not really lost my hands, the effect was very successful in fooling the eye at a glance because it visually shortened my arms in vertical space. I filed this away as another possibility. When I went to my first costume fitting, I asked the costume designer and shop workers if they had any thoughts on how to solve the hand dilemma. They showed me their solution, which was to close my fists without bending at the wrist and to raise the forefinger to the height of the thumb. This created a slanted edge to the silhouette of my hand that at first glance would not look like a person clenching their fists. I asked if I should tuck my arms back to create an optical illusion of bodily proportion. When I

demonstrated, they all applauded and declared that this combination looked convincing. I asked about the shoes as well, but they all thought the visual trick was the better option.

The second practical problem I faced was the loss of my tongue. Katherine Ingram, my thesis chair, recommended I try speaking without my tongue to simulate what Lavinia might and might not be able to achieve. I went through the alphabet, noting which letters I could and could not say with any clarity. I discovered that the vowels are more dependent on the tongue than I had realized. Only two factors could in any way differentiate one vowel from another: the lips and the inner space provided by the distance between the jaw and the top of the mouth. The lips could form [u] by themselves. The jaw could give a relatively understandable [a]. A combination of the two could produce [oʊ]. By really stretching the jaw, I could approximate [e],[æ], [ʌ], and [ɪ], but neither [i] nor [ɜ] really sounded like themselves. Regarding consonants, the plosives [b] and [p] were easy, as were the fricatives [f] and [v]. The airy [h], the lip-centric [m], and the [u]-like [w] were also attainable. However, [t], [d], [n], [s], [dz], [l], [r], and [z] all proved impossible without a tongue. At first I also discarded [ŋ], [k], and [g] as unmanageable, but later Jim Helsing, the director, explained that in his vision only the front of my tongue had been cut out. This made perfect practical sense, as it would be very difficult to get a knife far enough in the back of the throat to cut off the glottal-producing area of the tongue without also slipping and injuring the throat or killing the victim. So I added these three sounds back into my vocabulary. Unfortunately for Lavinia, saying the words “Chiron” and “Demetrius” with these limitations, as she repeatedly tries to do, sounds like [kaɪ-ʌ] and [e-mɪ-ɪ-ʌ].

A difficult physical challenge came during the rape scene. The scene is essentially a long fight involving Bassianus, Lavinia, Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius. My instinct as a person,

when threatened, is to pull my shoulders up and engage tension in them. This raises my elbows into a potentially dangerous position for an opponent, which would probably be a benefit in real life but which could endanger my partner in stage combat. I also tend to throw myself physically into any action at full strength. Again, this is an advantage in sports, but it is not practical to throw oneself against pieces of set, including the floor, eight times a week. During the process of developing and learning the fight choreography, I had to consciously remind myself to behave as if in a dance; that is, I tried to commit full energy without sending the energy beyond the point where I was choreographed to end the motion. I had to tuck my head, lower my elbows, and control my own circular motion when being stopped and swung around mid-run. I had to learn to fight off my opponents with lowered elbows, which is not natural to me. I had to learn to land softly on my knees. And, of course, I had to respond to my opponents' actions, delivered without full force, as if at full force. The latter was fairly easy as I simply followed their emotional intentions rather than their physical actions. All of these challenges might come as second nature to one trained in fight choreography, but that is something with which I have less experience than I could wish. One thing I learned about myself during the process was that my process of learning fight choreography is distilled from my process of learning dance—my instinct is to take auditory cues such as words of dialogue rather than physical cues such as a hand on my shoulder. I had to rearrange my thought process to learn to go off of physical cues of other actors rather than to anticipate actions coming on a certain line.

The most emotionally enlightening physical and vocal exercise that I did was Fitzmaurice trembling. Katherine Ingram, my thesis chair, taught us the basics of tremor work during our M.F.A. coursework, and she recommended it not only as a way to get into my left brain but also

as a potentially healing action the body can take after great stress. Normally tremor work is done as an exercise, intended to energize the actor, release him/her from tension, and unite the voice and body (Runnels 8). However, it can also function as “a positive energy to counter the negative” such as shivering to battle cold temperatures (Runnels 8), and it was to this positive healing force that Ms. Ingram referred.

Since Lavinia undergoes great stress and is released from it onstage—when Chiron and Demetrius finally leave—I thought it would be interesting to experiment with trembling onstage during the scene. Of all of the tremor positions we tried in class, I thought the surrender position would fit most naturally into the scene. In this position, one kneels on the floor, props their hands on their heels, opens up the heart and chest to the sky, and tilts the head back. Since I as Lavinia had no hands, I tried this position without the support of my hands, leaning back and opening the protective barrier of my chest and shoulders to expose the vulnerable heart. It was very successful. I found great physical release, and my breath merged with the tremors to produce some very free, though disturbing, sounds. The scene had to go on, but even after releasing from this position I found that my arms continued to tremble even as I continued with my blocking and new people entered the stage. Later when they referred to this moment, the tremors returned even without physically entering the position. I think visually and aurally this could have a powerful effect on an audience, and it certainly gave me as Lavinia an overpowering sense of physical relief when the two rapists left.

A surprising benefit of this work, however, came offstage another day when I was preparing to enter that scene. By chance I happened to be kneeling against a wall, and as I was getting into the emotional moment before I tipped my body back into a semblance of the



surrender position against the wall behind me. I found some good tremors even in this pose, and the sense of becoming more grounded in my body boosted the next scene even before it happened.

Overall, I think the nonverbal work will have just as much of an impact on my character as the text work. *Titus Andronicus* is such a physical play, grounded in the body even in its language. Lavinia's plight drives the action of the second half of the play even though she cannot speak, so her physical and vocal/nonverbal presence must be strong enough to support the rest of the action. These explorations have significantly impacted my portrayal of the character, and I think they may even prove my most important work in regards to the audience's understanding of both my character and the entire play.

## CHAPTER SIX: REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE JOURNALS

### Rehearsal Journals

The process of rehearsal is key to the development of a character. Direction, emotional gifts from fellow actors, and accidental discoveries all contribute to the formation of the character the audience sees in performance. During this period, self-censorship is generally detrimental to the creative process; therefore these journals will be intentionally casual in tone. Monday is the traditional day off for Equity shows, so the journals will survey every day from Tuesday through Sunday.

#### **Tuesday, March 5, 2013**

Today was the first rehearsal for *Titus Andronicus* at OST! I was completely terrified yesterday; but today when I got into the meet and greet and saw my name card with “Kelly Kilgore, Lavinia” on it, dripping in fake blood, I started to get excited again. Unfortunately, I got sick on Saturday and spent the entire weekend, when not doing shows of *Othello* or *Sense and Sensibility*, sleeping and trying to recover instead of preparing for rehearsal. However, I had already done a good deal of text work that I think served me in good stead. During the day I carted around a box of Kleenex everywhere I went and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible with my nose blowing!

First we had the meet and greet. Danielle, Casey, and Greg, my fellow interns, are in the cast; so are Esau and Matt, who currently play Othello and Montano, respectively. I was pleased to see my friend Brenna in a visiting capacity as Assistant Director and Dramaturg, and Geoff Kent, whom I met last year when understudying *Romeo and Juliet*, was back to play Lucius and do the fight choreography. I was gratified to see the entire staff, including all of the interns,

attend the meet and greet and show their support. After introductions, Jim Helsinger, the director, and all of the designers gave little speeches about the tone of the production. One thing that Jim said that really resonated with me was that the play should make “gut sense” rather than “brain sense.” This fits with the visceral themes of the play and will be an interesting approach, especially given that I am doing my thesis on this role. Normally a thesis is very brain-heavy, but I think it’s appropriate for an acting thesis that it also be gut-heavy. Jim also said that even though OST has focused on the technical and financial aspects of bringing the blood to the stage, the play is not about the blood but rather about the grief that follows the blood. I thought this was very good advice, especially for my character who spends a good amount of the play crying and sighing and fuels so many other characters’ grief. The last thing I wrote down from Jim’s speech was that we should look for metaphor and really make that live. The designers’ speeches were all made up of information I already knew, but they were still interesting. The costume designer is using elements of high fashion as well as grunge wear and is influenced by the *Game of Thrones* television series. The music will be mostly speed metal. The set will have blood thrown on it: two and a half gallons per night! I’m worried that my skin is going to turn pink.

After the meet and greet, we did a read-through of the play for time. Jonny, the actor playing Titus, took much more time with the text than I expected, but his voice has such gravitas and resonance it was impossible not to be drawn in. I’ve decided to work from my paper script rather than from my iPad for this production (I used my iPad for *Othello* and *Sense*), because even though Jim said he would allow iPads for script work I don’t want to cause trouble. I took care during the reading to give attention to alliteration, assonance, antithesis, repetition, Folio

keywords, and everything else I've worked on, and I was pleased with my success. I even cried during the read-through, but I will admit it was pretty easy since I was feeling sick anyway!

Next, we commenced text work in earnest; this process will continue throughout the week. First, we read a section of the edited text from our printed script, two or so verse lines at a time, paraphrasing in our own words as we go. When we finish a section, we read the entire, unedited section from the Folio, taking care to punch capitalized words, stretch out words with variant spellings, lift the end of verse lines, and breathe at the verse line break. Only a couple of actors in our cast were new to this process, and I felt confident because of all the text training and experience I received in grad school and during my internship. After reading from the Folio and discussing any questions that arose from this section, we got on our feet and started blocking. I was surprised to begin blocking so quickly, especially after my experience in *Othello*, in which we spent nearly a full week on text work alone. But since the rehearsal period is so short I was not disappointed to dive in so soon.

I was added to the first scene even though I don't have any lines, to visually link me with Bassianus. After running it once, I asked Jim if I could move from Bassianus to Marcus when Marcus announces Titus' return; I felt that this made sense for my character, who is overjoyed that her father is returning to Rome, but I also thought it would help visually show the audience that there was a new contender to the imperial throne, one who upset the status quo. Jim let me try it, and we kept it. It was my first success!

We will continue tomorrow, and I'm looking forward to it. All of the work I have done leading up to rehearsal has helped my confidence a lot, and I feel I can hold my own in what I am asked to do in the play. My first impression of Jonny is that he is awesome. I also noticed a

vast difference in register between the actress playing Tamora, who has a lilting soprano voice, and myself, whose alto register was augmented today by sickness. I always like to find a character's voice in plays, and this has as much to do with where in their register they live as it does with textual choices. Inasmuch as I think it's important to find a character's purpose in the play, that is to say, where they fit in, I also like to find where the character's voice fits amongst the other characters' voices. So the difference between me and Tamora, the opposite of what you would think given an older female role and an ingénue, was an added discovery, and I may try to keep it even once I get well.

### **Wednesday, March 6, 2013**

Today was exhausting. I'm still feeling sick, and that did not help. I had a costume fitting at 10:00 a.m. this morning. Then I ran straight to rehearsal a little past 11:00 a.m., then went straight to call for a *Sense and Sensibility* senior matinee at 1:15 p.m., then did a show, then went straight back to rehearsals till 7:30 p.m. Stacy, the stage manager, took pity on me and gave me a 20-minute break after the show once she realized I had not had a break all day. But I'm still exhausted tonight. Tomorrow is a similarly busy day, but I am scheduled to have a dinner break! Yay!

In rehearsal today we did more text work and did a little blocking. Jim asked me to try using a little vial of ceremonial tears and to pour them on my brothers' grave. I did, but after a few times he decided he didn't like it. Today we also blocked the part where Saturninus takes me away from Bassianus, and I noticed some old familiar tensions creeping into my shoulders, neck and upper back. I tried to relax this impulse, which is something I, Kelly, do naturally to stifle strong emotions and is therefore not useful for acting. Instead I tried to loosen my shoulders and

breathe through the emotion. At one point, Jonny, who is playing Titus, reached out his hand and didn't look at me. I was expecting him to come get me at a later point, but his expectation was so great that I found myself rising to leave Bassianus, who clung to my hand, to obey my father's wishes. It was a moment that made me truly glad to be in this rehearsal process, doing such a challenging piece with such great actors. I spoke to Suzanne, Jim's wife and a good friend of mine, during the run of *Sense*. She asked if I was enjoying it and said how happy Jim had been the night before. This made me feel proud to be a part of the group. She also described the cast of actors as "heavy-hitters," and I totally agree. I'm going to learn a lot from them.

#### **Thursday, March 7, 2013**

Today was a two-show day, and I had a nice dinner break between rehearsal and the second *Othello*. So I'm feeling a little less stressed.

During our text work today, I didn't have any lines; so instead I sat back and listened to the veterans read. Greg, who plays Saturninus, is particularly good at punching capitalized words in the Folio and having it make sense. He has a very interesting vocal quality, perfect for Saturninus, and an unsettling stare when he chooses to unleash it on me. I noticed today that Jean, the actress playing Tamora, moved lower into her register, but her voice retained a faux sweet quality reminiscent of a soprano even when in its lower range. If I can maintain the richness of an alto I think it will still serve as a nice contrast, though I want to make sure to concentrate on emotional honesty first and layer on technical elements second.

Something I noticed in today's blocking is that it seems I am always hugging or connected to a man. One time, Bassianus left my side to go challenge Saturninus on the other side of the stage, and I felt oddly isolated and unprotected. I spoke up in text session about that

same moment, when Bassianus describes me as his property; and I said that Titus seems to be the only person in the entire play who ever speaks to me as a person rather than as a pawn or piece of property. Saturninus in particular uses several money-related words to refer to me, which Greg pointed out this afternoon. So I'm not sure if Lavinia is someone who sees her own worth as dependent upon the man she is beside, be it Titus, Bassianus, Saturninus, or her brothers, or if it is only society who sees her this way. And what, given either choice, would be the effects of this point of view? Is she able to stand on her own, or does she feel uncomfortable on her own, as I felt this afternoon? Her brothers and father often leave her to go fight, so it would make sense that she is on her own a lot, but on the other hand in the space of the play you rarely see her doing anything without the consent, or more often, order, of a man. But back on the first hand, she certainly fights her rapists, and she does appear to love Bassianus. So this is a question I'm still exploring. I hope the rehearsal process, a very short three weeks, is long enough for me to find out.

### **Friday, March 8, 2013**

Today the first thing I did for *Titus* was a photo shoot! Lauren, my fellow intern, braided my hair in a really cool double French braid, which everyone loved! The costume shop couldn't find the white dress Denise, our costume shop manager, wanted me to wear. So instead I wore a beautiful silver dress that happened to have been worn by Jean, who plays Tamora, in a previous production of the Scottish play. Jean herself was decked out in her sexy red Tamora dress which had already been finished. Jonny, who plays Titus, was attired in a mishmash of armor they found in the shop. We climbed up to the roof to take photos amongst all the harsh mechanical scenery! The marketing team shot a few of Tamora first. Then they did some with all three of us.

Then they did Titus while I put some blood on my mouth. I tried not to put too much blood on, because, as I explained to Grace, one of the assistant stage managers, it makes me look like I ate a deer! Hopefully it will be enough for the photos. Then they took some photos of me and Titus. Jonny volunteered to hold me in his arms, and I felt bad! But they said it looked good. So I hope I look pretty and scary at the same time. I can't wait to see them!

Thinking about yesterday's question, I realized that Lavinia is never really on her own. Even when her father and brothers are off at war, she is probably under the authority of Marcus. I offered at today's text session that Lavinia seems to always be agreeing with someone, from Titus at the top of the play to Bassianus in teasing Tamora. No one disagreed with me, and Jim said it was interesting and he didn't know where it led. I said I didn't know either. Maybe we'll find out!

Today we texted and blocked the rape scene, which I was very scared to do! First we did text work. It was funny to watch as the normal jokes kind of dissipated, not due to anyone saying anything but rather as a result of the tone of the scene, as we went along. There were no real text surprises, as the meanings are pretty evident. However several people had lines added back in, including myself. I had a couple of lines added referring to the absent Aaron when teasing Tamora. I also asked to add back in the lines talking about Bassianus' death, as I felt it was an important character moment and a strong emotional touchstone for myself as actor.

It was very odd to block the rape scene without violence. The fight choreographer was not here today, and Jim wanted to get the shape of the scene before putting in the fights. But it was weird as an actor to want to hit, push, or fight people and not be able to follow these impulses because of safety. About halfway through I clicked, and there was a great moment after



Jim put Jean, playing Tamora, on the upper platform and I then went to her with the tomb, our only large set piece, between us. It gave me a lot of obstacles to play against. I clutched it, leaned over it, and hit it all in an attempt to get Tamora to listen to me. Then she crawled across it which was very scary! She was above me, in a position of power, and I cowered below her. We figured out where I needed to grab her because she has a line telling me to let go of her. The end of the scene is still a little uncertain because Bassianus has to somehow get into the pit, which in our case is the top of the tomb, and a paper must be torn off the back wall and thrown there as well to indicate it is the pit. It's still confusing to me. But what it means for me is I will probably struggle with Chiron longer while Demetrius and Tamora take care of the body. Then Chiron and Demetrius will probably take me offstage together.

One note I got during the first part of the scene, the part when Bassianus is still alive, was to not bring the energy down. I was kind of embarrassed to get this note as it is pretty common knowledge to build energy in a scene. But one of my lines is "Let us hence" which I had interpreted as trying to defuse the situation. And everyone gets notes. So I didn't let it bother me. Another note was to aim my last "pitiful" at Tamora even though the first part of the line has to be to Chiron. I took this a step further in aiming both "pity" and "pitiful" at her, and the movement improved what was otherwise pretty stationary blocking.

I had another strange feeling when Bassianus left me today to go challenge someone else. I feel really exposed. At one point I grabbed Bassianus' hand, trying to get him to stay with me. It was also strange because Chiron and Demetrius were circling us, but Justin, who plays Bassianus, and I don't have a common physical vocabulary yet. So it was awkward figuring out how he was going to protect me; also physically and subconsciously I probably don't trust him to

take care of me yet, especially since he keeps leaving me alone onstage. I'm sure time will answer a lot of these questions. I think I need to spend as much time with Justin as possible so we can be physically communicative without thinking about it.

Speaking of Justin, he told me that while I was in the photo shoot or possibly this morning's *Othello* they added some lines into another scene in which I previously did not have lines. I am thankful to him for letting me know, and I need to remember to email stage management and ask for the additions.

So although I didn't feel one hundred percent great about today's rehearsal, I feel like I did find some good things. After rehearsal, I apologized to Matt, who plays Demetrius, for hitting him during rehearsal and he said that level of violence was perfectly fine and it would help me get to where I need to get emotionally. I appreciated his generosity because it is helpful; and I also felt better because he is a fight guy so he puts safety first. Matt, Greg, who plays Chiron, and I chatted in the green room about the scene and defused a bit. Apparently they are planning to bring my severed tongue on after the rape is over. I thought that was pretty disgusting! At the show tonight, Piper, who plays Marianne in *Sense*, told me that Matt had told her that I had a moment today that was awesome and made him sick to his stomach. This made me feel happy because it's always nice to get a compliment, even indirectly!

### **Saturday, March 9, 2013**

Today was overall a good day, but I am beginning to realize how tired I am going to be throughout this run. The main scene I blocked today was the scene when Marcus brings me to Titus and Lucius after I've been raped and mutilated. It is the scene with the famous "weeping welkin" monologue and is very emotionally charged. So I was crying pretty much the whole time

we blocked it. Jonny decided to pick me up, yet again, and I think I tensed my back funny in an effort to make it easier for him to hold me. So anyway, after rehearsal I was emotionally exhausted and my lower back had a big knot in it! I am glad to realize this early so that I can try and take care of myself even from this early date.

However, I am proud of myself for doing such good crying! Lol. Geoff said it was hard for him to look at me and not cry.

During this rehearsal, I also started playing with nonverbal vocals. It was mainly crying, but I tried some different ways of crying, fast and slow, in different parts of my register. I think it is good to vary these things, but I will need to explore more in rehearsal to find out the rhythm and flow of these changes. It is also hard for me to write about them since it is all happening during other people's lines and I don't always remember what I did in the moment. Jim did ask for me to open my blood and let blood pour out at a specific point in the script. After doing it once he asked that I not only open my mouth but try to name my rapists. So I got to try my famous non-tongue-speaking! It sounded like "Aih-ah. Eh-ee-ee-ah!" but hopefully the crying made it sound sad instead of funny. Or I guess funny could be fine. This play does have a lot of dark humor. Either way! The problem I'm anticipating is all the crying that happens before that moment. It is not easy to cry with your mouth closed: emotionally, it closes off your breath from your gut, and physically, it is hard to breathe through your nose when your nose is running. So I'm not exactly sure what's going to happen with that. I have plenty of time to palm a blood pack into my mouth, as I am hidden by Titus' shoulder when he comforts me. But I have no hands in which to hide a blood pack! Yay!

Jim also asked me to start looking at ways to communicate nonverbally with Titus via gesture. Two gestures he recommended were a simple head shake and head nod. I could definitely use the head shake for “no” when Marcus asks if my brothers killed Bassianus; I just need to find the right line because he has several lines about it and I jumped the cue today. I also need to memorize the specific crying cues Jim gave me today. In a way it is harder to memorize these nonverbal lines because I don’t use words and the others don’t necessarily pause for my noises. There is another list of things that Titus suggests he do to make me happy, and the first time through I didn’t realize I was supposed to say no because I missed the text session due to a show. So I actually let him kiss me when he offered to kiss me! Whoops! I was crying, but apparently I was supposed to say “no” again here. Lol. Well, rehearsal is surprising if nothing else. Another surprise was when Lucius offers to dry my tears and I let him. Whoops! I was supposed to say “no.”

Since there are two Gregs in the cast and their last names both start with “J,” I will refer to them from now on as Greg S., meaning the Greg J. who plays Saturninus, and Greg C., meaning the Greg J. who plays Chiron. During today’s text work, I was impressed by Greg S.’s ability to lift the ends of verse lines. He is really great at Folio work! I really enjoy this working environment. I’ve worked with actors who were good because they were the perfect type for their roles; but these actors are truly Shakespearean actors and listening to them work through textual problems is totally fun.

I started taking care to stand near, hug, or in some other way be close to Justin any time he was in the same scene as me, even when we were listening to notes. This is in an effort to begin building the physical vocabulary I mentioned in yesterday’s journal. I think we’ll be good

by the time we open. I just want him to always expect me to be next to him. This way he will not run into me or be surprised when I stand behind him, and it may start to feel more natural to both of us to function physically as a couple.

I had another costume fitting today. My post-rape dress is the same dress that Lindsey currently wears as Desdemona, and it is one hundred percent see through. I think I'm going to stop eating.

During tomorrow's rehearsal, we are scheduled to review everything we've blocked and then run it starting at 10:00 p.m. And this is after doing an *Othello* that afternoon. Yikes! This is why I am panicking a little. I am going to be so exhausted. I need to drink one million Emergen-C every day.

### **Sunday, March 10, 2013**

Today was pretty brutal as expected. I came away bruised from hitting my elbow against the tomb one too many times, scraped on the tops of my feet from kneeling wrong, and scraped on my right knee from I'm not sure what. I also feel pretty battered emotionally. First I couldn't get the tears going during the rape scene, although, to be fair, everything was at half speed and we kept stopping to adjust blocking and fight choreography. Then I did get the tears going for when Marcus finds me, and it was harder than usual to shake them off at the end of the night. I'm glad today is over, because I think I was also afraid of how tired I was going to be and that could also have affected me going into the rape scene. Now hopefully I know exactly what to expect and won't have to be worried.

A couple of highlights ... Justin gave me some pretzel sticks because I didn't get a proper dinner. Jonny taught me how to kneel with my toes tucked under, as opposed to Japanese *seiza*,

which is how I normally kneel in real life. He admonished me to not place the tops of my feet on the ground or they would become infected. Jim did bring up the crying with the mouth closed issue and I said it would be very hard. I asked if I could use a blood bag or perhaps a quail egg filled with blood. Jim apparently had never heard of the egg thing but thought blood bags might be a good solution; I would just have to bite down really hard to pop the plastic. I still won't have hands, so I guess I have to enter the scene with it in my mouth. I did the new scene cold during our stumble-through, having never even been told what the blocking was, but I just stuck with Justin and it was fine.

We were supposed to end at 11:00 p.m. but we hadn't finished when closing time arrived. I was putting on my rehearsal hands—that is, cuffs to stiffen my wrists and some silk sock things for gloves, and Paul motioned to his watch. I thanked him for letting me know but went ahead and put them on anyway; it's a good thing I did because we kept going and ended up with thirty minutes of overtime. So it was also an especially long day. I think a lot of what I learn in this process is going to be how to take care of myself under really arduous circumstances: long days, split focus, huge responsibilities, of which this thesis is one, the seesaw of emotions, and rough physicality. Well, at least I'm not sick anymore!

### **Tuesday, March 12, 2013**

I had a good discussion with Jonny today. He proposed we change the tempo following the funeral with my entrance. We discussed hugging and he said he might pick me up, which would also foreshadow him picking me up later. He said he wanted our relationship to be very strong since Titus gets so angry about Lavinia's misuse later. I agree, especially based on all my research of previous productions. Jonny also had an interesting idea that the Titus-Lavinia

relationship should be uncomfortable for the audience to watch, almost incestuous. He said that Lavinia embodies the spirit of Rome to all these men and that is why they are always fighting over her. And of course Titus, the great Roman general, would have a deeply personal relationship with his city. So I think we will play around with those things in rehearsal, even those scenes where their relationship is not necessarily the focus. It is a great opportunity to work opposite Jonny, and so any insights he has I am eager to consider.

I'm wondering, too, if I could bring a little more strength to Lavinia in the early parts of the play. That might make her downfall a greater arc. Either that or she relies on men early on and only after being raped finds her own strength. But that is certainly not in the text, since she doesn't say anything, and I'm not sure I can find opportunities to play with that. But it's an idea. One of the reviews I researched referred to her as an entitled character, so it's fun to think of her as a Roman princess.

Today we blocked the scene where I try to take Young Lucius' books. I am realizing exactly how specific I need to be with my gestures. It's not enough just to know when to gesture, based on the stage directions given by other characters' lines. I really need to have a specific thing to say and then figure out on the spot how best to say it. So the idea that I have no lines after the rape, I'm finding, isn't really true. This is a little disconcerting, as it's a lot more to memorize! Also, when I was trying to get them to give me the books, I had the impulse to try and tell them to give it to me since chasing Young Lucius around the stage wasn't working. Of course I couldn't use my tongue and therefore couldn't be understood. But it also made me wonder if I should be ad-libbing in something that sounds like iambic pentameter! Lol!

I'm starting to be less scared of rehearsal and enjoy it more, so that's good. It's a bit terrifying to be playing opposite all these incredible actors, but I have three interns and a young boy beside me, so I know we can all do it together! And taking this journey is an incredible experience. I am very lucky.

### **Wednesday, March 13, 2013**

Today was a short rehearsal for me. Matt is out sick so our fight rehearsal was cancelled. The only other thing I was called for was Revenge, Rape and Murder. I showed up and asked Stacy if I was in this scene because I didn't think the script called for me. She said she didn't know but I was in the rehearsal breakdown Jim had given her. It turned out that I didn't actually need to be there, but I was glad I came anyway because we took a field trip out of the rehearsal hall down to the actual theatre where we will perform. I, in particular, was interested in sightlines for an actor sitting or lying down on the floor. Jim had made it sound like we absolutely couldn't go down to that level, but the audience is raked up in that space so I think it will be ok. Obviously one wouldn't want to do the whole play in a location where the audience has to peer around the head of the person in front of them, but for the post-rape scene I think it will be fine.

### **Thursday, March 14, 2013**

I got a compliment from Jim today—an indirect compliment, but I'll take it! We were blocking the deaths of Chiron and Demetrius, and I was very scared to even go near them at first. But Titus told me it was ok and led me over to where they were being held. Anytime they moved, I flinched, and I was surprised to feel tears run down my face from fear. But as Titus began to talk about how much they had wronged us and how he was going to revenge it, I started to feel strong and angry and less afraid. Then afterward Jim was talking about having all four



faces—meaning Chiron, Demetrius, Titus, and me—downstage and how great it was to see Lavinia go from someone who was very frightened to someone who was ready to murder them. I felt good because we didn't even talk about it first; it's just what happened. Yay for when rehearsals go well!

I had another good conversation with Jonny during the break. He told me about Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh playing the roles of Titus and Lavinia. We looked at a few pictures online and he told me about how Olivier used to make himself a fake nose out of putty. Very cool. Justin has also been taking care of me lately. He gave me some Dr. Pepper today, which he knows I love. And our common physical vocabulary is growing. I am glad to have these offstage relationships getting stronger so we can feel more comfortable together onstage. Plus it's always nice to be friends with the people you are around for ten hours a day!

### **Friday, March 15, 2013**

I had a minor meltdown today, after Stacy told me they had blocked my death without me. There are so many acting choices to be made in that scene and I just freaked out when I heard about it. I didn't freak out in rehearsal, of course; it was afterward when I went to ask Anne if there was anything else I could be excused from in order to work on my thesis and to perhaps meet with Stacy outside of rehearsal to run stuff I was absent for because of *Othello* and *Sense*. Although there wasn't a lot she could do, Anne was very supportive, and told me that I had earned the role and all I needed to do was to be in the room with grace. I know I have to keep myself together in order to get through all of this, so after I talked to Anne I took myself to Subway to get a real meal—as opposed to something packaged from my locker—and worked on my thesis there. And I felt a lot better. Anne is another person I am very thankful for right now.

### **Saturday, March 16, 2013**

I have lost my mind. LOL!!! Today was actually very productive though. We went through Shakespeare's first four acts, one at a time, first working any moments of violence or scenes that needed attention due to previous absences, then running the full act before moving on to the next. Jonny brought bagels, which made me very happy as it staved off the mind losing for a few hours. Also I had already taught my morning Saturday class for two hours by the time rehearsal started, so I was already pretty beat.

Act I was pretty smooth for me, as it is the act I had been present for the most rehearsals. We changed our exit from the hunting scene so that Bassianus and I leave the hunting party through another exit as if we were going to go hang out in the forest together. Chiron and Demetrius follow us, setting up the rape. Their entrance into the rape scene was also changed to be following us.

Act II was crazy because we've never done all of the scenes in order before. It was nice to link everything together. We changed the bit where Tamora threatens me with a knife over Bassianus' body a couple of times, finally settling on something that looks good and Jean feels comfortable with. She draws back as if to stab me, and Greg stops her vocally rather than physically because apparently there wasn't enough time to get over to her. The new moves in the rape scene shocked our audience of fellow cast members, so that was a success ... I think ... We almost had a mishap in the carry off; Greg apparently pushed me—I don't remember well—so that I passed too far over Matt's shoulder. Matt almost fell back and dropped me on my head. But he is awesome and caught himself, saving us both. We did the scene where Marcus finds me a couple of times. Jim said it would not work to have us on the floor for the purposes of sight

lines, which I was disappointed to hear. We tried having me enter before Chiron and Demetrius—the preceding scene—and taking myself up to the platform, but Jim didn't like that. Then we tried a way where Chiron, Demetrius, and I entered the same way as previously—Demetrius first and then Chiron pushing me center—and when they leave I kind of take myself up the platform and then the tomb as if trying to escape. Then I am there for Marcus to find. Jim liked this, but we didn't do the rest of the scene. It will be interesting to see how what we've developed onto the floor translates to me being up on the tomb. I don't think there is room for both of us. Maybe he could join me at the end. I guess we'll find out tomorrow.

Act III comes in a weird spot for me as a character because it's right after Marcus finds me. He brings me straight to Titus so I am still in the same emotional state. And today we started it after a long dinner break. But I rocked out the tears by starting offstage. I will need to make sure with costumes that the change into the Marcus scene that I have time to get into the scene before entering. Today I started to get really hot while rehearsing Act III because I was wearing my OST polo from teaching in the morning and had gloves all up my arms. I asked for something to put in my fists to soak up or prevent the sweat. First we tried a tissue balled up and that didn't work. Then Stacy ripped some black cloth off a big old curtain or something and I wrapped my hands in it. That worked great. I wrapped it between each finger, put my cuffs on over, and put my gloves on over my cuffs. That really helped. Also Justin got me a T-shirt out of his car and Stacy closed the door and turned on the air conditioner. Everyone was so nice and takes good care of me. I really appreciate it. During this act, Jim asked me to try my very best to really communicate with my family. Whereas I had been thinking I had no tongue at all, Jim observed that I would still have the back of my tongue and thus the ability to form or almost

form glottals. I realized I could also make plosives and fricatives. Jim said the audience would actually root more for me if they can tell I'm almost succeeding in telling my family information.

I'm only in one scene in Act IV, but I volunteered to stay past my call, right up to my half hour call for Othello, because I have missed enough rehearsal and want to be there as much as possible from now on. Luckily tonight is the last *Othello* and tomorrow is the last *Sense*. The scene was the dinner conference with the remaining Andronici. Jonny tried to feed me with an airplane spoon, like a child, which is something he tried last time we ran this scene. This time I chased it for a little bit and then decided I didn't want it and pushed his hand away with my head. I thought refusing food made more sense with the next moment, which is when I refuse drink. After making me laugh with all of the "hands" jokes, Jonny tied up the beat nicely by feeding me again, which I this time accepted. He kept feeding me bites until Young Lucius interrupted by killing the fly. This time when I chased Young Lucius with the books, I tried saying, "I want to see a book" with the use of all articulators available to me, as Jim and I had discussed earlier. They all kind of looked at me, so I repeated, "A book! A book!" and I could almost say the word. It was great because that's when Titus realizes I want a book. He then took over and directed Young Lucius to empty the books on the table. Jim said later that this was great. There was another moment earlier when Titus asks me, "What Roman lord" it was that raped me. I said, "No, no Roman lord. Chiron and Demetrius! Chiron and Demetrius!" without my tongue. Jim also loved this bit and said the audience would have their hearts in their throats. So that's a good milestone. I did forget my cue to raise my hands in sequence, which I always forget because the order of the action doesn't make sense to me. I've just barely found the correct book and then have to gesture that there were two rapists. But I haven't yet told them which story in the book,

i.e. the story of Philomel, mirrors my own experience. So it never makes sense and I always forget it. I will have to try and remember. The spray paint worked better than it did yesterday. Was it yesterday? But it still twisted a bit after writing “Rape” during the writing of “Chiron,” and then it ran out of paint after writing the first three words of “Demetrius.” I managed to throw it off my hand, tape notwithstanding, after writing, but it occurs to me now that this may not be so easy in the real bandaged gloves. I also told Stacy afterward that the spray paint had gotten all over my arm and would thus get all over my dress, which is not allowed. Hopefully props can find another type of spray paint that will work better.

So all in all, it was a very productive day. But then I got to *Othello* and forgot three articles of clothing for my first entrance. I realized in time and went back for them. Then I almost walked to my entrance in the brawl without my props. I went back for them. Then I was making Easy Mac for dinner and tried to microwave the noodles in water without the noodles. Then halfway through the show, when I change costumes, I realize I had forgotten my show bra in the car and didn’t have time during the quick change to go get it! I wore a sports bra today that would totally have showed under the neck of my costume, so I couldn’t wear that. Luckily Danielle let me borrow hers for the remainder of the show. I have lost my mind!!!

### **Sunday, March 17, 2013**

I was nervous for today. We did a designer run; but not only did we have designers at a run for which I felt pretty unrehearsed, we also had some invited season subscribers attend for the first act. I was afraid I was going to choke and mess up, but I didn’t! That’s not to say it was perfect—far from it. But I met and improved upon my work from previous rehearsals, which is all I can ever ask of myself. And I cried a lot. Lol.

Even though Jim made it clear we were not actually performing for the guests, of course we actors still felt a bit of pressure and there was a bit of scrambling before the show, talking to each other about moments we'd had new ideas about. Jonny said the soup should get into my mouth on the first go round, and he also said he wanted to change the line where he picks me up during our greeting. The greeting thing was no problem, and the soup thing ended up working well because in this run we had graduated to humor by the time he offered. So it felt natural to accept. When he pretended to take the soup away after I went for it, we got a nice laugh. Then he put it in my mouth. The succession of "hands" jokes was really great. We laughed and so did the audience.

I am still unsatisfied by my performance in the Bassianus murder scene. The blocking before the boys come on was completely messed up, as neither Justin nor I remembered what the latest version was. I finally got some tears tonight by the time I got to "for my father's sake," but there is so much going on that I can't concentrate on crying. I know the tears should flow out of the action, but his death is still not quite up to speed and I have a lot of physical things I'm concentrating on such as not banging my knees on the floor, being held by Tamora without actually injuring either of us, and my blocking. So it's hard to split focus like that. Also, Matt is doing a lot of nice creepy things but I'm so worried about when my lines come that I can't take it all in. Hopefully this will get better with running over and over. Maybe I should change my focus to taking in what's going on rather than worrying about mechanical things. Jim does say that he likes when actors call for line because ninety percent of the time it means they just had a good moment before that.

Getting into the post-rape scene, though, I was pretty shaken. I couldn't get my hands on but thankfully Tina left her post at the stage management table and came to help me. Then I went into the corner, messed up my hair a little for the sake of the audience, and cried till it was time to enter.

I had never done the scene where Chiron and Demetrius leave me and then Marcus finds me with the new blocking, so it was all brand new. Greg has been doing a thing where he kisses my cheek as he says his last line, and tonight before the show I asked him to lean me back on my knees as he did it. For him this makes me more vulnerable, and for me it gets me into the Fitzmaurice surrender position I wanted to try. So he did that and I got some good tremors going which hopefully looked good. Once the brothers were gone, I did a fake get up and fall, as if my legs couldn't hold me, and then I stumbled up the stairs and kind of fell onto the tomb. I don't know if it looked stupid; but we'd never actually done it and it was the best I had tonight. I have noticed recently that I tend to look down or close my eyes, as I think one might actually do if they had had all of these terrible things happen to them. But I also know that this closes the audience out of your emotional experience. So tonight I tried consciously to raise my eyes and keep them open. I feel like they looked pretty crazy, which, again, might be a good thing.

I really want to work the scene where Marcus finds me, though, and when I talked to Paul afterwards he said the same thing. It's just weird on the tomb because I don't have a lot of room to get away from him and therefore didn't feel safe enough to look at him tonight. But we need to build in some eye contact moments, and we both felt the same way after the run.

After the run, Jim gave some notes. At one point he started talking about the scenes with Lavinia starting with the tribunes, and I said, "Yeah, I'd like to work those." He looked surprised

and said he thought they were terrific which he knew was funny since they hadn't been rehearsed as much. I was surprised in turn. I think I said something like, "Oh ... Really?" Lol. This is not the first time I've said something dumb like this when a director liked something. But it was pretty funny. And Jim went on to say it was because we had great partners we could trust. This I totally agreed with. Paul, Jonny, and Geoff are all especially great in that section.

Later, in the scene with the books, I tried a lot more talking. The word "book," made up as it is of a plosive and a glottal, actually sounded pretty clear tonight. When trying to explain who it was that raped me, I went over to the same spot on the stage that Chiron and Demetrius start the show in and crossed my arms to indicate being bound, as they are at the top of the show. The tape for the spray paint was not set right, so Paul didn't get it taped onto my hand well enough, but I got two letters of "Demetrius" written before it fell off my hand—enough for Jonny to say his next line.

We had time to rehearse my death before the run, and although I'm still not happy that I didn't get input on how I meet my end—willingly, unwillingly, surprised, convinced, etc.—I think we're past the point of exploring that. We just don't have enough time. Jim said he'd been thinking about it and he thinks I do know about the death and go willingly to it. So I did it that way and it was fine. At one point Lucius got up and Jonny gestured for him to stop. So I made eye contact with Geoff and gave him a little smile as if to say, "Thanks but no thanks." And then Jonny slit my throat and lowered me to the ground and I died. I feel the impulse to try to make eye contact with Jonny till the very end, but that presents two problems: one, that I need to die with my eyes closed because Jonny thinks closing the eyes of dead people is cliché, and two, that if I die on my back it's harder to mask my breathing during the ensuing scene.



Overall, though, the run made me feel a lot more confident. Well, that and the ten hours of sleep I got last night as opposed to six every other night this week. And the knowledge that *Othello* and *Sense* are closed. I've been getting some nice compliments from people, too. Last night Jean told me I was doing "beautiful work," which I appreciated as I look up to her as Future Me. I'm sure I will play Tamora at some point, and I even wore her old dress in the photo shoot! Also last night Greg S. gave me a nice compliment, which I returned citing his funny arrow moment that afternoon. This evening Esau told me he was very impressed by my work in the run, which I appreciated because his *Othello* was so great. So although of course we shouldn't live or die by compliments, these have helped to assuage the worry I had the other day when I talked with Anne—that I was completely sucking. These are professional actors, and I can hang with them!

### **Tuesday, March 19, 2013**

I crashed and burned today. Everything was going well until the weeping welkin scene, which Jim had emailed me a brief note about: "Crying all through 'kneel with me.'" I wasn't sure what this note meant, so I asked before rehearsals. He said that I needed to cry during the weeping welkin scene, which starts with Titus asking if I am kneeling with him. I had thought I was crying during this part during the designer run, so I asked if he wanted me to bump it up. He said yes, underscore it. So when we got to that part in the run of our Act I tonight—which includes everything up to Shakespeare's III.i—I raised the emotional and audible level of the crying. However, this threw Jonny off and he kept having to call for line. Stage management fumbled a bit throwing the lines back, and we couldn't all get in sync. We were all getting frustrated, and by this time I was having no trouble crying for real; Jim interrupted the scene

saying for me to try and comfort Titus instead of fighting him. I said ok and attempted to do this and finally we got through the scene. I apologized to Jonny afterward because the whole thing was a mess, and he said it was fine but that we had just gotten there too early. He was very sweet and said I was just taking a note and should be proud of the work I was doing. I asked him if he wanted to mark up the script like a music score and let me know when he wanted it *piano, forte*, etc. and he said he didn't want to choreograph it for me but would rather explain the text to me. So even though we were all released from rehearsal by that time, Jonny sat down with me and pointed out the stage directions in the text. He showed me how his monologue starts with *logos*, or a logical argument, which we discussed in Jim's class at UCF and which would indicate that we are not at a place yet of *pathos*. He showed me where the stage directions are for me to "sigh" are, and where approximately it should start building. He asked if I knew the Margaret/Suffolk scene in *Henry VI, Part II* and I said no. He said I should, as it is a part I could play. He then got his copy of Shakespeare from his bag and proceeded to go through the whole scene with me, asking me where the stage directions were and telling me to slow down when I skipped one. He said the *Henry* plays were written around the same time as *Titus* so the style of stage direction is similar. He said the Margaret/Suffolk scene is the best one for teaching stage directions. I felt a lot better after talking with him, and although I'm still not one hundred percent sure how much or how loud to cry during the weeping welkin scene, at least I feel like I have more of an idea of where in the text to do it. I wish we had time to sit down and work this scene and the Marcus finding me scene. Today all we had time to work were technical things like moments of violence and adding some of the blood effects using water. Supposedly we are going to use tech to work acting moments while lights are adjusted. I hope so. Speaking of the blood effects, I did use a

blood packet in my mouth today for the Marcus finding me scene, and it was relatively easy to incorporate. The most difficult part is keeping it under my tongue during the whole scene where Chiron and Demetrius taunt me, since Jim of course wants to use the biggest—and therefore bloodiest—blood packet possible. It was pretty funny when we tried a blood packet made of cellophane. I couldn't pop it in my mouth like I could the ones made out of plastic baggies, and I just sat there chewing on it for a really long time. Thankfully the blood packet in the tribune scene is cut, so I only have to worry about the one.

### **Wednesday, March 20, 2013**

Today we worked our Act II, which is nice for me because I don't do as much as in Act I. I was still pretty shaken up from yesterday, but I was proud of myself for going and doing my best anyway.

I'm a little scared because Jonny told me there would be flying cutlery after I die. He told me I should die with my arm protecting my head ... So I'm trying to find a way to do that and not look awkward. I do die facing away from the table, and I do block my face with my body. Jim said the cutlery shouldn't go near me, but Jonny seems to think it's a hazard. So I'm a little nervous about that.

Today during the dinner scene Jim asked me to ease up on the glottals. In particular, he asked that I not produce a full [k] sound because it's too clear in the words "Chiron" and "book." Really, I am able to say the full word "book" under the present given circumstances, so it's probably a good thing for the plot to make that more difficult.

There was a promotional article in the *Orlando Sentinel* today. It talked about all the blood that will be in this production. It's pretty cool. And apparently the print version has a picture of me in it!

### **Thursday, March 21, 2013**

Today was our first day onstage! The space is super shallow but wider when compared to the Santos Dantin Studio Theater where we've been rehearsing. In particular, the top step of the upstage platform is barely wide enough to walk on, especially if there's blood on the papers or walls behind to keep off costumes. It will take some getting used to. I've never worked in the Goldman Theater before, and I didn't realize that downstage does not face the lobby as in the Margeson Theater. Instead, the lobby is stage left. This means that the entrances are wonky. To enter from stage left, we have to go out into the hallway between the Margeson and the Goldman. To enter from the left aisle we actually have to go out in the lobby, and to enter from the right aisle we have to go to the lobby and travel through the conference room. Weird! I keep entering from the wrong place on accident.

I also got my bloody hands today. They are pretty disgusting, in a good way. They are white with bloodstains. The ends are firmer—plastic, perhaps—painted with a combination of flesh color and red. But the gross part is these little canvas tendrils that hang off the ends like nerves. Everyone has made a face when seeing them for the first time. I've been practicing in the mirror with them, and I've found that when I point my arms directly at the mirror they look really short. The blunt end looks very dramatic. So I'm going to try and adjust my stance to point my arms down at an angle to the seated audience.

We did our first full run tonight. Rob Jones, the master electrician, was on hand as he sometimes is to take behind-the-scenes photos. I wish I would have known he would be there so I wouldn't have worn my lime green PBJ Theater Factory Christmas t-shirt! But oh well, I'll live. My hair was a hot mess after Act I was over, and when I emerged into intermission I realized that you probably couldn't see my face at all. So I need to make sure it's not quite that messy. During the transition from rape to Marcus and again from Marcus to tribune, I went out and cried in the hallway because the backstage area is so limited. Apparently one of the theater staff walked by—I wasn't paying attention—and went and asked Grace if I was ok. Lol!

### **Friday, March 22, 2013**

Today we started working in blood and gunshots, so a lot of the rehearsal was devoted to the deaths of Alarbus and Mutius, which I'm not involved in. The guns are really loud but I'm pretty far away from the ones that are fired during my escape with Bassianus, so I didn't wear earplugs. I don't think I need them. It's nice that they are good and scary, because it makes the necessary screaming and ducking easy to motivate.

We did work with blood for Bassianus' death. At first it was really dark and you couldn't really see the blood after it was squirted on the wall; but of course they adjusted the lights, the boys worked with the blood more, and it's going to look really cool. Jean and I are going to have to cheat out more since the stage is wider than we're used to and in our old staging we are physically blocking one section of the audience's view of Bassianus' death. One note that Jim gave me was to try to reason more with Tamora and the boys during the rape scene. So I adjusted my own blocking a bit to have less running around back and forth between them. I also got a note that the [n] in "slain" was disappearing in the sentence so today I gave it an extra [nnnnn]. I

asked if I could cut the line “The blot and enemy to our general name.” I feel like it’s too much text at that point; and Jim said he couldn’t understand it. So he said I could just cut it. Yay.

The line to Saturninus is finally making sense. Jim had asked me to say it like I was reminding Saturninus that he needed to be a good king, but when I did it like that he said it sounded mean. So he said do it like I’m trying to make the best of the situation, which is a motivation I can understand. That is now the action Titus is playing when he responds to Saturninus. So it makes perfect sense that because I love my father I would follow his example. It also solves the problem I was feeling—that I am not making enough eye contact with Saturninus in the rest of the scene. If I’m so distraught over being taken away from Bassianus but I know that Saturninus has the power, it doesn’t make sense to look at him. But if I am trying to be a good daughter and obey my father’s wishes, it does make sense. So that’s helpful.

I talked to Jim about the crying which was such a disaster the other day, and he said it was better last night. He wants me to keep up a low sound throughout but then rise at the points Jonny and I had discussed.

Although I still feel under rehearsed, at least I am starting to feel like I’ve gotten things right at least once. I can’t believe we start previews on Wednesday! Aaaaaaaaah!

### **Saturday, March 23, 2013**

Today was a ten out of twelve. I had to be at the theater early to teach the Saturday class, but luckily my four-year-olds were good again and it was fun. I was pretty tired, though, and had two cups of coffee before the ten out of twelve even started! During the dinner break I took a nap and felt a lot better.

One thing that Jim and I discussed today and were both on the same page about was trying to speak. We both felt that I was getting so good at getting my point across with [m], glottals, plosives, and fricatives that it actually became too clear. Without really thinking about it I was easing up on the talking and he mentioned that he liked it. We cut a cross when I was trying to explain “Chiron and Demetrius” and really simplified my reaction to Titus’ question about who raped me. I used to try really hard to explain by saying their names, miming them being held prisoner, and looking through the books for another clue. Now I just move my hands as if I were saying “No,” look at the books, and give up. Then Marcus jumps in with his idea for the spray paint. Speaking of the spray paint, I’m really getting the hang of it. I had been given a note to try to fit each word onto its own line and today I was able to write “Demetrius” on one line even though it’s a really long word. I also asked if I could give “Rape” its own paper and write the boys’ names together. I think it worked better.

Something else we worked on today during the family dinner scene was clarifying even more my attempts to communicate with my father and uncle. Jim asked me to change what I was saying to Marcus. I had been miming “I don’t care,” but he asked me to mime, “It’s ok.” It’s a slight difference but the gesture changed from me touching my own chest for “I” and then my hands slicing above each other for “don’t care” to a reaching out to Marcus. I guess the rationale was that the first looked too much like I was beating my chest, which Titus speaks about in the next line. We had been playing that Titus does not understand my reaction about not wanting a drink, but today Jim asked Jonny and me to play that he understood correctly. It did make for a nice moment between the two of us, which is then rudely interrupted by the fly moment. I think

all of this is really helping clarify my voice in the second act. Having more control over the writing really helps; I hope I retain this when my new gloves come.

I still haven't worked with a real blood packet in my mouth. Today they had two water-filled ones. The first one was so big I couldn't fit it under my tongue and I kept having to spit it out to talk to people. Then I couldn't pop it. I thought this was because it was too big, but upon examination Jim said it was because it was tied too loosely. They gave me a second that was smaller, and it was also too loose to pop. So I didn't end up using one at all. There was a pretty funny moment though when George Hamrah, the production manager, gave me a cup to put the packet in while waiting on tech. But then I couldn't get it back in my mouth because I couldn't pick up the cup at the right angle to tip the water packet back into my mouth!

I had a brief costume fitting for my black costume. It's a little cocktail dress that they are going to dress in silk and add a long silk skirt to. There is a white nun-like collar that then gets switched out for the blood collar in my death scene. It's going to be cute. Stage management said that costumes is going to have to make my stumps a little more palatable because apparently they are so disgusting now that Jim said no one will be able to look at anything else. My own internal response was, "Wait till you see my dress!" I mean, I haven't seen it yet, but I know what's coming.

### **Sunday, March 24, 2013**

Tonight was dress rehearsal. We didn't quite finish tech in the afternoon, so we started late and went into overtime—like sports!—and then some technical elements at the end of the play were still not finished. But we have more tech time set aside on Tuesday before our second dress rehearsal.



None of my costumes, with the exception of my post-rape costume, are finished yet. In other situations this might be a worry for me, but I have bigger things to worry about! And I have come to have great faith in the Orlando Shakes costume shop over the past year. I'm sure they'll get it done, and I'm reasonably sure I'll be able to navigate the set without tripping over myself ... Knock on wood!

Tonight was a stressful night but also a night full of revelations. As I was thinking this afternoon, I started to think that *Titus Andronicus* could be read, at least from my perspective, as a love story between Titus and Lavinia. Although it is Bassianus whom Lavinia marries, he dies early on and their relationship doesn't really get a chance to grow. However, the relationship between Titus and Lavinia really develops through the course of the play. At the beginning, they sort of hero-worship the other: Lavinia because Titus is her invincible father and Titus because Lavinia is the ultimate chaste daughter, the symbol of Rome. Then their relationship is put to the test when Saturninus and Titus order Lavinia to marry Saturninus. Lavinia has to choose between filial duty and romantic love, and she chooses Titus. When Bassianus captures her, Titus and Lavinia are estranged. Then they make up. Then the rape happens. There is another test, this time for Titus. He has to choose whether or not he still loves Lavinia after she is shamed and deformed. He chooses to accept her. Then they have to learn how to communicate without words. Although they were able to talk before, now their communication requires intense concentration on the other. And they are able to succeed. Then he revenges her rape on Chiron and Demetrius while she stands looking on. Finally he kills her. In our production Lavinia's death is being played as a mercy killing, one to which she goes to willingly. Titus has no intention of living through the afternoon, and he sends her ahead while he kills Tamora. It is a

hard thing for them both and is in a way just as romantic as the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. This is why I think the reviewers harped so much on the relationship between Titus and Lavinia: I think it is at the heart of the play. Now whether all that comes across to an audience I couldn't say. But it was a revelation I had.

I didn't feel I did all that well tonight. I hit all my marks, physical and emotional, but the newness of the costumes, stress about my thesis, and stress about having an audience on Tuesday interfered with my flow. Afterward I was stressing out and Jonny pulled me aside. He said that with a show like this I have to be able to let go afterward or it will hurt me. He said I should make myself a ritual that I do after every show to let go. I had earlier thought of this same idea, both to get in and out of the emotional part of the character, but I have been neglecting to remember to do the getting out part. He noted the tension in my jaw and forehead and said I needed to figure out what was causing that and let it go. He said some actors have to force emotion but that I was not one of them, and that instead I should trust the rehearsal process, arrive and warm up, and then "fall off" on stage. The imagery he used reminded me of Chris' movement class our first semester when Chris talked about being off balance. I think it's true that it's important for an actor to be comfortable being emotionally off balance. Perhaps I was tensing my jaw in anticipation of a fall. But just like I've been told that drunk drivers survive car crashes because they are relaxed, actors, as drivers of emotion, need to also be relaxed. Maybe that's not a good metaphor. But Jonny is right; I need to be mindful to take care of myself just as much as I try to take care of the work.

## Performance Journals

The creative process continues even after rehearsals conclude, and the performance on opening night is rarely the same as a performance later in the run. Here I record thoughts from performance, including new discoveries, live challenges, reactions to the audience, etc. The casual tone of a journal continues.

### **Performance Check-in 1: Opening Night, Friday, March 29, 2013**

Wow, opening was crazy. I feel like we really ratcheted up the quality of everything tonight, and Jim was very happy afterward. I talked with my thesis committee a lot about the process of learning to trust myself, or “fall off” as Jonny puts it, and I think it’s really paying off in performance. I’m concentrating on massaging my jaw whenever I feel it tense, even during the day. I’ve been doing a lot of walking outside to try and let nature relax me, and today I got to the theater early to do some yoga and warm up properly.

I feel like I should talk a bit about previews. We had three days of early audiences, and I was totally afraid I would choke and not be able to cry or something stupid like that. But I trusted myself and my process, and I did the same thing I do every night; and I was fine. In fact the first night I didn’t even really feel like the audience was there, even though they were. The first night of previews was great, the second night so-so, and the third night felt off. I think we’re all just tired. But Mark Routhier, my director for *Sense*, said last night that he expected this pattern and that it meant we would have a good opening, and he was right!

One thing that really almost threw me was during previews when Jim decided the blood packet during the Marcus finding scene was just not giving the visual image he wanted and so we needed to go back to his initial idea of having a mouthful of blood. The problem, of course,

with this idea is that I now have to do the whole Chiron and Demetrius taunting scene with a mouth full of blood. This makes it virtually impossible to actively cry during the scene. One reason is because my mouth breath is stopped. Another is because the internal mechanisms of throat and tongue are concerned with not betraying the fact that my mouth is full of liquid, not swallowing it, and not choking on it. And of course I can't open my mouth to scream or anything when the boys touch me, which I personally feel like probably looks weird. But I asked Jim about it and he said it was fine. So now I have to make sure and get all my crying done offstage before entering so I look like a mess during the scene. When we practiced the mouthful of blood spill in rehearsal everyone went, "Ewwww," so I do understand that this particular moment is worth any losses in the preceding scene. I just wish we could have both.

I finally got all my costumes. It was a crazy ordeal, but the costume shop really pulled through. Lisa, the costume designer, had an idea for a cool dye technique for two of my dresses where it starts white and then fades into another color like a gradient. Unfortunately for us, when my white-red dress got blood on it—as every costume in this show does—they washed it and the whole dress turned pink! So the costume shop had to make me an entirely new dress in one day for last night. Then they dyed it red today and it was ready for tonight, just barely. Denise also made an executive decision to buy me a totally different dress for the rape scene since most of the blood was coming from dead Bassianus. And this new dress is washable. So all in all I now have four awesome costumes, but it was scary there for a few hours this afternoon. Tonight I wore the new hunting dress for the first time ever in front of the audience. Yikes! My black-white skirt still gets blood on it and is not washable, and we're just going to have to live with that. But I'm not concerned; it still looks fine, and the blood is mostly on the bottom anyway.

Another cool development that happened during previews was when Titus kills me at the end. Jim asked me to nod to Titus right before he kills me to sort of give him permission. However I felt really cheesy doing it. Then I remembered Jonny had said something about the relationship between Titus and Lavinia making the audience uncomfortable. And I also thought about my revelation about Lavinia's arc being focused on Titus. So on the first night of previews, without saying anything or asking anybody, when we got to that point, instead of nodding, I leaned my head back for a kiss. I left it open to Jonny if he wanted to kiss my cheek or lips, and of course he made the bold choice and went for lips. It felt like the right ending, and Jim later said he loved it. So yay!

One thing Jim said was that the text finally shone through above all the other crazy stuff happening. This made me feel more confident, because a note I've gotten a few times now is to try to let the text be the main focus in the rape scene. It feels very strange to me to be pulling the emotional intensity down during that scene—i.e., not screaming—but Jim wants me to try and reason with the brothers. I do think this is kind of a funny note because in my audition I initially did try to reason with them and he asked for something more intense. So I'm hoping that what I did tonight was a happy medium of the two. I really focused on slowing down my words to ensure the text was understandable. I use the word "slain" twice in that scene and I've gotten a note that this word couldn't be understood because the [n] at the end gets lost in this space. So I made sure to over-enunciate the [n] sound, especially. I kind of feel like I'm having the same problem in that scene that I noticed in Fraser in the movie; there is so much going on that it is impossible to grieve Bassianus properly. But I guess I would still be in shock so I guess it's fine. I haven't gotten a note about it, anyway.

So in conclusion I am extremely happy and relieved with the way opening went. I hope we can continue to keep it up throughout the run.

### **Performance Check-in 2: First Weekend, Monday, April 1, 2013**

Things are going well. After the stress of the costume business, Anne Hering, my boss in Education, offered to continue doing the Prologue series through the weekend. This is a pre-show chat that the theater is trying this year, and Anne did it before each performance of *Othello*. She had asked me to do it before *Titus* since she isn't in this show, but it will be nice to get the show solid before adding an additional element. I did watch her do it twice this weekend to get the hang of it, and I feel pretty confident it will be ok.

I'm also starting to feel a little bit more relaxed in general. Now that we are not having rehearsals every day, I have a bit more free time. We do now have to do office hours again, and of course I'm still working on my thesis. We are also going back to regular classes and also teaching children's theater. But in terms of time commitment, it's still a lot less and I am getting more sleep. This is a good thing because going into that dark emotional place is exhausting. Rewarding, but exhausting.

Something new we are now adding is when I enter after being raped. Jim—I guess—wanted it to appear more bloody, so now I dip my stringy stumps in water right before entering. I guess with the lights it looks like they are dripping blood. Up until now I had been wrapping my hands with a t-shirt fabric to keep my palms from getting sweaty. So now that I am dumping my hands in water the bandages are actually retaining water rather than soaking it off my hands. So I decided to cut the bandages altogether. They did a good job in rehearsal, but now they are no longer useful. And actually my stumps fit over my hands better now that the extra layer is gone.

We use a gun in the show—fake, of course—and Jim and Geoff had talked about going to quarter-rounds for performance. I don't know what this means except that it is quieter than what we had been using. But after opening night they were disappointed in the sound and we went back to the ones—half-rounds, perhaps?—that we'd been using before. They are pretty loud, but I am far enough away from the shots that I don't need an earplug. I also have my hair pulled back away from my ears so I didn't want to wear earplugs anyway. But even back with the half-rounds or whatever they're called, it's not too bad. The hardest part is not flinching when I'm laying dead at the end of the show and Lucius shoots Saturninus.

Something else Jonny added was when he makes the vow at the end of our Act I to avenge his family. He chooses a different action for each family member: he lays his hand on Lucius' head and shakes forearms with Marcus. For me, since we are now doing the kiss at the end of the play, he asked if we could try that for the vow, too. It's really gross because I am covered in stage blood, snot, and tears and my mascara is running all over the place. It's also shocking to the audience because it's the first father-daughter kiss of the play. But it's kind of awesome because of that. I think it shows just how crazy things have gotten for this family.

Jonny told me something interesting when talking about the scene at the top of our Act II. He said if we were going to hold hands—meaning stumps—then we should do it quickly so the audience could be listening to the words rather than watching to see if we would hold hands. He said modern American society is so visual that they can't actually concentrate on the auditory if given conflicting visual information. This makes total sense with our movie-based mindset, but it's something I'd never thought of before. And I think it helps answer my initial question that I had going into this process about whether or not I could retain the audience's attention without

words. I think the visual is so important to our modern audiences that, yes, given a strong image, such as my post-rape look, it is totally possible. So I guess the question is how I can strategically use my body to paint pictures in the times when I really want them to pay attention.

Sunday matinee audiences tend, in my experience at Orlando Shakes anyway, to be awesome. Yesterday one of my favorite moments was when Saturninus rips me away from Bassianus and says he's going to marry me. You could hear an audible reaction from the audience, which meant they were totally with us. Another great moment was when Titus killed me at the end and there was this huge gasp. I've never seen the kill, obviously, but apparently it looks good. And I appreciate it because it means the audience is invested and rooting for us. And that's all you can ask.

### **Performance Check-in 3: Second Weekend, Monday, April 8, 2013**

I am starting to feel the effects of doing the show every day, sometimes twice a day, but I'm also starting to figure out what my body needs in order to be able to do so. I drink at least one glass of coconut water during every performance, sometimes two. I have been making sure to eat enough during the day. And I do my in and out rituals for emotional depth. Regarding tension and trust, I've kept up my practice of massaging my jaw and releasing my shoulders any time I catch myself tensing them; I've also started taking Aleve if my jaw is too bad. Something new I've started making time for is going outside and having fun. The out-of-town actors like to go on Florida adventures, and I've found it is very good for my emotional health to save some time for nature and new experiences.

I've stopped worrying so much about keeping my hands visually shortened. I generally try and establish the visual trick when they are cut off initially, and then during the crying scene



with Titus, Marcus, and Lucius I gradually let them hang a little further down. There's a point in the scenes when Martius' and Quintus' heads are brought in, and at that point both Lucius and I kind of drop everything, emotional and physical, and just stare at them. So at that point I usually let the arms hang down with absolutely no tension in the shoulders, trusting that the audience will be thinking about other things at that time. I also try not to worry about things but just to trust myself, my fellow actors, and the run crew to make everything happen. And just live in the moment. It's actually fantastic, and I love having moments not be set because then the door is open for new discoveries to be made every night.

A few notable mishaps and changes ... The other night Jonny's fake hand didn't get attached right and it flew off before he had a chance to chop it. I was onstage at the time, doing my job which is to cover the sound of the blood spray with a scream, and I wasn't sure what had happened before my eyes or what to do about it. But we just kept doing the scene and I guess it was fine. It was pretty much the worst technical mishap we've had. Hopefully it doesn't happen again. Here's another: Greg C. has started adding a kiss to the taunting scene, which I love, but the other night he accidentally grabbed my throat when pulling me to him for the kiss. So I was upside-down, with a mouth full of blood, being choked onstage. It was pretty scary! But we fixed it the next day in fight call. And, more importantly, I managed not to die. Then one day when I was releasing the mouthful of blood in the Marcus finding scene, a bit of it trickled down my throat backwards instead of forward and I started to cough. I managed to control the coughs to be quiet and only one every few seconds, but I felt seriously like I was going to throw up onstage ... which wouldn't have been out of character, I guess. Anyway, after the scene was over I ran to the trash can and coughed it out. But I had no hands so I had to ask Tina to get me a drink of

water. She gave me her own water bottle, which I drank till I felt better. Then I told her, “Don’t drink that!” since it was now full of tears and stage blood. LOL! Live theatre is nothing if not exciting!

The show is going pretty well, these incidents notwithstanding, and I’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback from friends and co-workers. The Prologue series is going well, too. It’s actually kind of nice to get to know the audience before the show starts, and everyone always asks me how the house is when I return to the green room to get into costume. I think it’s helpful for the audience, too, to understand that they are allowed to participate in theatre and that they don’t have to sit back and self-censor like in a formal place like church. I got an email just yesterday from one of the audience members because we ask them to let us know if they enjoyed the Prologue series. Apparently the only way he could find to let us know was through my email address, which is listed on my Web site, which is listed in my bio in the program. Lol. It was nice of him and I forwarded it on to Anne and Jim.

I normally don’t feel sad when shows end, because I have a fairly short attention span and am usually eager by that time to move on to the next project. However, this process has been so rich and challenging that I wonder if I will be ready to move on when it’s over. It will signal the end of several things: the show, my internship, and my M.F.A. education. I can’t believe this is all happening. But I have many shows left before the run is over, lots of challenges still to meet, and hopefully many new experiences, just as fun and interesting, yet to enjoy in my acting career.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

In looking back on this process, I am extremely proud of the work I did. My preparation ahead of time prepared me for many challenges, but I also encountered unanticipated challenges and had to create new solutions to deal with them. My guiding questions elicited some interesting answers, and my character arc changed dramatically through the rehearsal process.

I knew when I began this process that it would be challenging, but in my journey I came across some unanticipated challenges. Time became my biggest enemy. *Titus Andronicus* came late in the theatrical season, so I was under pressure to get my thesis done quickly. I had other responsibilities to deal with, as well, including teaching classes at the theater, taking classes for school, and performing simultaneously in *Othello* and *Sense and Sensibility*. The rehearsal period was extremely short for such a technical show, especially since half the cast was in performance for fully half of the rehearsals. Being in two places at once became a desirable but unfortunately impossible outcome.

To overcome the time issue, I learned to trust my acting partners and not try to map out scenes too much. This was due to the impossibility of being too deliberate in our short rehearsal times. I developed relationships outside of rehearsal, engendering trust between scene partners that could then overlap with scene work. We actors came to discuss scenes outside of rehearsal to make up for the time lost while people were in another show. And I learned to trust myself: trust that I could live in the moment and respond with just as valid a choice as I could have had I mapped it out beforehand. This technique of skiing through scenes, trusting the momentum of the scene to carry me forward, is one that has carried through even into performance.

Another unanticipated challenge was that of self-care. I entered the process sick, and the physical and emotional demands of the show, combined with the stress of time, quickly threatened to undermine my hard work. To combat this problem, I came up with a health regimen combining sleep, water, coconut water, Gatorade, and Emergen-C. I also learned that I have allergies and was able to take the correct medication to overcome them. I had to develop a better physical awareness to keep myself from bumping up against people, set pieces, and the floor as much as had been my wont. I learned to trust my scene partners to handle my body in a safe way, and I learned to speak up when they did not. The most important self-care technique I developed, however, was a ritual for diving in and out of emotional depths. This technique is one I will keep close for future work.

I began this project with several questions in mind. I wanted to know how my graduate study had prepared me for the role, what techniques work best for me as an actor, and what balance of voice, mind, and body would succeed in this particular production. I also wondered if it was possible to retain an audience's attention in a Shakespearean production without the aid of Shakespeare's words. My final, overriding question was what actually makes up the voice of a Shakespearean character.

I believe my graduate study did prepare me for the role. I think it filled in the gaps of my undergraduate education and my own experience. Vocal preparation played a large part, as it does in any play. I was able to keep my voice supported and resonant due to the work I did in Voice class, and my text analysis boosted my understanding both of Shakespeare's language and how to effectively use it to convey my feelings to an audience. The Fitzmaurice trembling technique not only assisted in my offstage preparation but also created a viscerally impactful

moment onstage. Physicality played a huge part in this particular role; my experiences in Movement class learning how to assume and depart from neutrality, how to become aware of and redirect tension, and how to connect breath to emotion. My graduate research experience taught me how to find information that enhanced my understanding of my character's given circumstances, the impact of my character on the play itself, and how to record my practice as research in the form of this thesis.

I found many tools useful in my process. My expectations were that I would need text analysis, nonverbal explorations, research on my character's given circumstances, and research on previous performances. My director's expectations were that I would be completely memorized going into rehearsal, that I would perform a thorough text analysis, and that I would be emotionally available. These tools did assist me in the process, but I discovered additional techniques that also proved invaluable. Creating a ritual for myself to enter and exit emotional depths became an important part of each journey through the show. I became very aware of the need to tell a story with my whole body, especially in the scenes when I am not given lines. I discovered the importance of being selective in the use of nonverbal vocals in order to give them focus. I also learned how closely I needed to examine the text for stage directions and other acting clues—not only my lines but also those of my scene partners.

Regarding the balance of voice, mind, and body, I learned that if I do all of my preparatory work, everything falls into place on its own. I came to trust myself, my process, and my scene partners. This trust helped to facilitate an ease that allowed for more nimble acting and a more comfortable offstage journey.

I found that it was, indeed, possible to retain an audience's attention and even affection without the use of text. By choosing strong images in costumes, in tableaux with other actors, and in full-body acting choices, I discovered the audience still paid attention to my character's part in the story. I also discovered that a strong visual contrast between the beginning of the play, when my character is happy, and after the rape, when she is in her darkest place, created a greater emotional response in the audience.

Lavinia's voice came to encompass all of the forms of expression that the audience receives. Everything from visual images such as an easy, relaxed smile or a twitching foot to vocal choices such as an elongated [n] or a vocalized inhale served to convey what my character was feeling. The voice of an author is made up of more than just his words, and I feel that the voice of a character is, too. Everything that connects me to the audience is my voice.

Lavinia's arc developed throughout my rehearsal process. I started rehearsal with the idea that her character was shaped by the events that happen to her: the various abductions, rapes, etc. I also thought about her as journeying from a privileged princess to a mournful victim. I considered the fact that the text refers more often to Lavinia as an object of property than as a person. But I have come to understand her arc as being centered around her relationship with her father. It is the single most important relationship in her life. She hero-worships him at first, even choosing his goodwill over her love for Bassianus, and then she accidentally betrays him when she is stolen away by Bassianus. They forgive one another and all seems to be well until she is raped by Chiron and Demetrius. Then Titus has to decide whether or not to accept her. He does, and he even vows to right her wrongs. In our production, this vow is sealed with a kiss. Bassianus, Saturninus, Demetrius, and Chiron have each tried to establish their control of

Lavinia with a kiss, and now Titus, the father, overpowers all previous candidates and takes Lavinia fully into his protection. They relearn how to communicate, and Lavinia is finally able to name her rapists. Titus creates a plan for revenge and kills them in her presence. Her vengeance finally executed, he performs on her a mercy killing after she kisses him one last time. It is a strange arc, but I found that it works well in our production.

Though the show is still in production at the time of this writing, I come away from this process with both pride in the work I've done and a hunger for additional challenging work in the future. I feel that I did a good job of meeting and overcoming obstacles in the process, and some of the solutions I found will undoubtedly be great assets in later roles. My graduate studies gave me many tools to use when approaching character work, and I feel that this particular character's diversity allowed me to exercise many different techniques of voice, body, and mind that I can now use in various ratios in virtually any play. I feel that I found an interesting take on my character's arc, one that is completely in keeping with the play's text but that is interesting and relevant to a modern audience. I hope that my exploration of Lavinia's voice can inspire other actors to examine out-of-the-box choices in addition to straightforward text readings when they approach future Shakespearean roles. And I hope that what I have learned about my acting process will continue to develop and grow as I do the same.

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