

THE ACTOR PROCESS: PLAYING MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the process used while preparing for the role of *Daughter* in Jim Helsing's adaptation of *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, performed at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater (OST). Within the framework of the play, *Daughter* is a character who is transformed into multiple roles. Her characters include Charity Collector, Belle, Martha Cratchit, Miner, Fred's Wife and Quarreler #1.

Presented with the challenge of playing multiple roles in the same production, I sought efficient and straightforward character development and analysis methods to strengthen my performance. Using Uta Hagen's nine questions as a scaffold, I composed a distinguishing analysis for each of my characters while utilizing skills cultivated in my MFA program at the University of Central Florida. I created an actor process motivated by the examination of my identity and circumstances at this point in my life. It is supported by a rehearsal and performance journal detailing my journey, followed by analysis.

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I extend my deepest gratitude to my mother. You are my light. Though I will always miss your physical presence, my memories of you light my heart and my life eternally.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,

C. D.

December, 1843

(The Christmas Carol)

In November of 2014, I was cast in The Orlando Shakespeare Theater's (OST) production of *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, directed by Michael Carlton and in partnership with the University of Central Florida (UCF). For this production, artistic director Jim Helsinger adapted Charles Dickens' well-known 1843 novella, *The Christmas Carol*. It is a timeless Christmas tale of charity, humility, goodwill and the unforgettable Ebenezer Scrooge's redemptive transformation. Written in only six weeks, the 19th-century satirist William Thackeray, who was not always an admirer of Dickens, called *A Christmas Carol* a "national benefit." After only six weeks of publication, the book was adapted for the stage by Edward Stirling and ran for more than 40 nights. Stirling's was the first of many adaptations (Francis 1). Due to this Dickens is often referred to as the man who invented Christmas (Standiford 1). The strongest testament to the timelessness of Dicken's narrative is that 173 years later, from film to stage to radio to graphic novels, from parodies to opera- inspired adaptations have continued to come alive. The earliest film version was produced by British silent film pioneer Robert Paul and directed by Walter Booth in 1901 (Jones 1). Some of the more notable film adaptations include Bill Murray's *Scrooged* (1988), and *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992) (Blake 1). Similar theatrical adaptations in which actors play multiple roles include Patrick Stewart's

one-man production (1987) and *Fellow Passengers*, a three-actor narrative adaptation written by Greg Carter (2004).

As artistic director and writer, Helsinger's approach focused on ensemble acting and narration; actors played multiple characters as opposed to each actor performing a single role. All actors remained on stage for the duration of the play and used costume pieces and props to portray a number of characters as they traveled through the past, present and future. Helsinger's adaptation of the story begins with a family gathered together and singing Christmas carols. They venture into the attic to find more holiday decorations. Rummaging through a few boxes, the smallest child comes across a book named *The Christmas Carol*. The little boy has never heard of the book, and the family excited to share this "ghost story" begins spinning the hypnotic tale (Helsinger 2). From this point, Dickens' words are used to tell the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and the stage is transformed into the Victorian past.

As director, Michael Carlton envisioned our production as a scary ghost story. He successfully realized his directorial vision using a collaboration of goblin soundscapes and a hauntingly lit set resembling an old wooden attic. The Orlando Sentinel's Matthew Palm described our production as having "Ghostly voices whisper, the microphones' echo effect booms, lights swirl and Scrooge's epitaph glows blood red (Palm 1)."

As a cast member of *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, I worked to help bring the summation of Dickens', Helsinger's and Carlton's creative visions to life. Daughter was my primary character. I also portrayed the roles of Charity Worker, Belle, Martha Cratchit,

The Miner, Fred's Wife and Quarreler #1. Throughout the production, I played one of my secondary characters until that character's scene was over. I then returned to my role as Daughter, engaged in the story and interacted in the background as the other members of the cast carried the story along. Thus I was presented with the challenge of playing multiple characters while maintaining clarity in character shifts to protect the fullness of each character's portrayal.

Never one to turn down a challenge, at this point in my academic, professional and personal life I found myself absolutely inundated with one challenge after another. Academically, I was working on this thesis, taking classes, teaching Saturday morning classes and rehearsing. Professionally, I was working on three additional productions:

1) The Best of Enemies

a) Understudy for Ann Atwater

2) To Kill a Mockingbird

a) Townsperson

3) The Merry Wives of Windsor

a) Anne Paige

b) Understudy for Mistress Paige

This meant rehearsing and committing to memory the lines, blocking, identities and emotional lives of a total of ten characters as well as communicating with three directors and more than twenty-five cast members. Personally, I was still reeling from the recent loss of my mother and grandmother. Grieving through my first holiday season without them was a series of daily

heartbreaks. Also, with my mother gone, I struggled financially trying to stay in my graduate program as well as feed, house, clothe and maintain my financial responsibilities on an intern's stipend.

It is in these demanding circumstances that I explored character development and analysis methods to strengthen my stage performance. In the course of my exploration I came across Uta Hagen (b. 1919 - d. 2004). This legendary Tony award-winning, critically acclaimed actor was inducted into multiple halls of fame, electrified her audience and distinguished herself in numerous roles (Gussow 1). Her impressive body of work includes: Blanche Dubois in a *Streetcar Named Desire*, Georgie in *The Country Girl* (1950), Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) and dozens more notable performances. Two of her final Broadway appearances were in plays by her favorite writers: *The Cherry Orchard* (1968) by Anton Chekhov and *You Never Can Tell* (1986) by George Bernard Shaw (Simonson 2). Her later stage productions include: *Collected Stories* (1998) and *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks* (2001) co-starring David Hyde-Pierce.

I looked to the simplicity of Uta Hagen's approach and methods, as they spoke to me both personally and professionally. Uta Hagen began teaching in 1947 when her husband Herbert Berghof asked her to help him teach a class at his studio, which later became their studio. Though she had never previously considered teaching, in no time she was hooked. (Gross 2) Hagen made her acting career secondary to her teaching and directing. Her methodology developed the talents of many famous actors including Jason Robards, Matthew Broderick, Sigourney Weaver, Jack Lemmon, Al Pacino, Lily Tomlin, Robert Deniro, Judd

Hirsch, Cynthia Nixon, Whoopi Goldberg, Amanda Peet, David Hyde Pierce and many others. (HB Studio 1) Lemmon credits Hagen with having taught him the truth about human behavior and instilling confidence in him. (Rosenfeld 2)

Uta published her first book, *Respect for Acting* in 1973 after being approached and commissioned by MacMillan Publishing Company. It became a bestseller and is still regarded as a seminal work on the craft of acting. In her book, *Respect for Acting*, Hagen detailed nine questions that provided me with a straightforward, efficient, reliable process for individualizing my characters and successfully tackling the challenge of playing multiple roles in the midst of personal chaos.

CHAPTER 2 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

“These are the questions we must ask ourselves, and explore and define in order to act.”

(Hagen 83)

Throughout Uta Hagen’s career, she referred to the laymen of the theatre remarking, “The lack of respect for acting seems to spring from the fact that every layman considers himself a valid critic (Hagen 2).” She argued that no lay audience discusses the bowing arm or stroke of a string instrument player, or the brush techniques used by a painter, so how can a lay audience truly understand the process by which an actor develops their role. She argued that many theatergoers have no real understanding of the actor process or what we as actors must do on stage to create a character and in some cases, even the actors do not have a true understanding. Instead, they rely on their basic instincts and tricks used along the way to illustrate a character (Hagen 2). Hagen dedicated her life to acting truthfully on stage and being fully invested in her characters. She was blacklisted from the theatre, stage and film community after her performance as Desdemona in Shakespeare’s Othello, playing opposite the groundbreaking African American actor, Paul Robeson, she received much criticism and was ultimately forced from the stage. Prior to Robeson’s portrayal of Othello white actors portrayed the Moor in blackface. Her performance relationship with Paul Robeson and accusations that she was tied to the communist party led to her unwanted retreat from the stage and she repositioned her life to the teaching of acting (Rosen 2).

In an NPR interview that was recorded during her time of being blacklisted she comes across as strong, resilient, and very sure of who she is. I related to Uta in that I hope to come across the

same way, in the midst of my personal pain and professional obligations I aspired to be resilient and brave. Uta Hagen also spoke about the intuitiveness of the actor and how sometimes even though an actor may understand their process it can be hard to explain the art form when talking to others.

In the midst of her personal chaos and her ability to perform being stripped from her, Hagen began teaching and immediately fell in love with it urging her students to become the character rather than pretending to be the part. To further her teachings she eventually wrote a book, *Respect for Acting*, which details nine questions and exercises actors can use on their own to inhabit the role. She believed the nine questioned must be answered in order to build fully developed real characters. For my thesis, I have extracted those nine question as a guide for building my characters for the stage.

Hagen's Nine Questions from Respect for Acting

1. Who am I?
2. What time is it?
3. Where am I?
4. What surrounds me?
5. What are the given circumstances?
6. What is my relationship?
7. What do I want?
8. What is in my way?
9. What do I do to get what I want?

Daughter

Who am I?

My name is Isabella Morrison. I am 20 years old and live at home with my family. I have two sisters and two brothers of whom I am the eldest sibling. Although we differ in age, we all get along pretty well and at the end of the day we love and rely on each other. I truly don't know what I would do without my family and although I can be a bit cynical at times, the older I get the more I realize how much they mean to me. I am forever grateful for the close bond we share.

My mother is a phenomenal homemaker. She has a gift for making the holidays very special and helps to reinforce the foundation of family tradition. My father works as a teller at a bank in town not too far from our house. He has always had a knack for mathematics which led to a career in finance. Although I am a woman my father feels it is important that I learn more about finances and the importance of saving, especially now that I have picked up a job doing household work for a family in town. My father has worked at the bank my entire life and is a well-respected employee. My grandfather lives in my family home and I am very close to him. Being his first born grandchild, I feel we have a stronger bond than the rest of my siblings and although he loves all of his grandchildren he has a special connection to me. I remember certain occasions when my grandfather took me out for ice cream as a young girl. He always made me feel like a princess and reminded me that I was beautiful and intelligent.

At this point in my life, I have finished high school and am working part-time as a housecleaner to help my family. My mother is intent on marrying me off, but I wish to be independent- something that eludes many of my contemporaries. Most women my age are either married or in

the process of getting married and completely controlled by their husbands. I wish to be different but if I have to fall in line with other women my age, I hope to truly fall in love. The idea of sharing the rest of my life with someone I have only known for a short period of time scares me. I want to fall in love but I also want it to happen naturally. At this point in my life, I have never known or experienced romantic love.

I tend to be a realist when it comes to the details of telling the story and my mother sometimes describes me as cynical. My mother and I are not as close as I am with my father. Although I respect and love her, we never see eye to eye on anything and she had remarked many times during my childhood and adulthood that I was cut from a different cloth---whatever that means. My supposed cynicism comes from comments like that, but I've learned to allow her to say and do whatever she wants and try not to let it affect me.

I have curly brown hair and a birthmark underneath my chin. As a child, my younger sibling used to try and make fun of my birthmark saying it resembled a squirrel. Due to this, my family called my "Squirrely" for short and the nickname turned into a form of endearment. I actually like it now. The name "Squirrely" is also a comment on my attention span. It's not that I don't know how to focus, but I do often get bored easily if I am not mentally challenged.

I have a medium smooth tone to my voice and I walk with a mostly neutral but carefree gait which is increased when I am around my younger siblings

What time is it?

Today is January 23, 1848, two days before Christmas. It is 5 o'clock in the afternoon and my family and I are at home. We have just eaten dinner, and my siblings and I are playing cup and ball. We have three of them in the house. My father made three of them so he would not have to listen to us fight over them- although there are only three cup and ball toys and four of us.

Where am I?

I am in my family home in the attic. I live in a four bedroom Victorian home with lots of windows. The many windows allow me to see the snow covered foliage that surrounds our house. My house was painted red two years ago. My mother and father chose this color because they've always loved Christmas and thought it would be a great contrast to the several feet of snow we get in during the holiday season. Our house is dressed with modest decorations for the Christmas holiday. Mistletoe, the smell of cinnamon and nutmeg fills the air of my family home. I'm not quite sure what my mother is making for dessert, but her meals are always delicious.

Later on, my mother goes into the attic. While in there she asks the rest of my family to join her to help gather the last of the Christmas decorations.

What surrounds me?

In the attic, I am surrounded by exposed wooden beams that produce an eerie feel to the attic. A few family paintings are hung on the wall. One is a painting of my grandmother when she was in her late thirties, she is accompanied by my grandfather. My grandmother is deceased. The attic is filled with boxes, trunks of memorabilia, old papers, extra wooden chairs for guests when they come over, and decorations for various holidays. There is a window overlooking our backyard

and periodically I see deer running in the snow. My grandfather, mother, father, two sisters and two brothers are with me in the scene.

What are the given circumstances?

It is the night before Christmas and my family and I are holding to our family tradition of singing Christmas carols. While engaged in song we venture into the attic to help my mother with the last of the Christmas decorations. My youngest brother comes across Charles Dickens' *The Christmas Carol* while searching through boxes. Unaware of the title he asks about the book. He has never heard of the book before, so as a family we begin to describe the *A Christmas Carol* to him, explaining that it is a ghost story. As our story unfolds I take on different characters in Dickens' story, acting out scenes with my family to help my youngest brother understand the story.

What is my relationship?

I share the scene with my family members, my grandfather, mother, father, and four of my brothers and sisters. I am the eldest daughter and I still live at home.

What do I want?

I want to tell the story of *The Christmas Carol* to my youngest brother. As I've gotten older, I realize that I will not live at home forever, therefore the holiday traditions that my mother instilled in me are even more important. I want to share the story with my brother in order for him to understand the importance of the Christmas tradition.

What is in my way?

My brother has a short attention span and I must make the story interesting enough so he will pay attention.

What do I do to get what I want?

To get what I want I begin to tell the story along with my family and try to make live in the moment and inhabit the characters of Dickens' play as honestly as possible. Exercising my vivid imagination and the need my younger brother to grasp the story, I use props and costume pieces from my attic to assume various characters in the novel in hopes that my brother will better understand the story.

Charity Collector

Who am I?

My name is Ella Glasko and I work for a Christian charity raising money for the homeless. I love my job and feel is very important to give to the less fortunate. I am 23 years old and have not yet begun my own family. I am married to Augustus Glasko who works for Tillman Bank in London. Together we make a modest living as we prepare for our future.

My father was a baker for many years and supported a family of four, inclusive of my mother and brother. When my brother was old enough, he took over the family business allowing my father to retire.

I have reddish blonde hair and hazel eyes. My skin is very pale and I have a very thin nose which stands out among my facial features. As a young child, my classmates made fun of my narrow features saying that I looked like I could not breathe. I've come a long way from the small child who was made fun of for her facial features mostly because my beauty has been reinforced by my husband. He loves and appreciates me and we help each other become better through prayer and good will toward ourselves and others.

What time is it?

It is 11am in the morning of December 20, 1842. It is a few days before Christmas.

Where am I?

I am in a business named, "Scrooge and Marley", a counting house that does bookkeeping and accounting.

What surrounds me?

Scrooge and Marley's establishment is a bookkeeping and accounting establishment filled with an overflow of books and papers. On the outside, there is a sign naming the business, and although Marley is no longer alive, Scrooge never changed the name on the sign. On the inside, there are wooden desks and old wooden chairs which are covered with papers and books.

Lanterns are used to help light the inside of the business. It is very chilly inside his place of business.

What are the given circumstances?

Linda and I have set out to approach several businesses for donations to help the poor and homeless. I have come to Ebenezer Scrooge's place of employment to ask him for a donation. I have never met him before but I know that he is capable of giving. He denies our request, saying that he has already done his duty supporting the poor. He believes the poor are poor because they are idle and do not work for themselves.

What is my relationship?

I share the scene with Ebenezer Scrooge, a prospective donor and my colleague Abba Fisk who works for my organization.

What do I want?

I want to encourage people to donate to help the poor at Christmas. It has been a passion of mine to help the poor at Christmas and I am happy to work as the face of an organization I care so deeply about. It is desperately important at this time of year for the homeless and less fortunate to have food and warm clothes. I believe everyone is deserving of a good meal and shelter on Christmas and I want Ebenezer Scrooge to contribute to my organization.

What is in my way?

Ebenezer Scrooge has no intention of giving any amount of donation and comments, "If they would rather die they had better do it and decrease the surplus population." I am very surprised that someone would ever think to say those types of things to someone who is encouraging good

will toward others. Scrooge is intolerant, rude and inconsiderate when he speaks of those less fortunate. He is a greedy non-charitable man.

What do I do to get what I want?

To get what I want- a donation- I approach Ebenezer along with Linda Fisk. I explain to him, “Thousands are in want of common necessities...and common comforts.” I help make the case for a donation to my charity and when met with Scrooge’s abrasive manner Linda and I leave his establishment and continue our mission.

Belle

Who am I?

My name is Belle Warner. I am 21 years old and I live on Norwich Lane in London, England. I have two sisters and one brother and I grew up with both of my parent in a small house. My family and I are close for the most part, but I wish that I had a better relationship with my father. At a young age, I began to write poetry and around the Christmas holiday I would recite poems relating to Christmastime. Through the years I have kept journals about my life and have written short stories about some of my close friends and relatives. I love writing because I can say whatever I’m truly feeling. Often in my daily life I don’t stand up for myself or share my opinions. I examine my thoughts feelings and emotions in written poem, short stories and journal entries.

I have a family dog named Dino and he is 7 years old, he means a lot to me and I look forwards to seeing him wag his tale and greet me when I come home. I have loved Dino and taken care of

him ever since he was given to our family. He was given to us by our neighbors after their female dog gave birth to a litter of puppies. Taking care of my dog triggered within me a very natural maternal instinct. I often daydream about having a family of my own and I have a list of names for them. I would eventually like to have four children. I am engaged to Ebenezer Scrooge a man that I love but do not always feel loved by. He is constantly putting his work before our relationship and over the years of us being together I have begun to see him transform into a man I don't have anything in common with. His ideals and moral standards are soaked with a tenacious greed for money. Ebenezer has always said that four children is too much and one child would be more than enough, but I hope one day he will change his mind. I pray that he will love me enough to give me the family I want, but I fear Ebenezer and my relationship may not last much longer. I can't imagine myself with another man. I can imagine my life without Ebenezer, but I yearn for his love and attention and it has evaporated; diverted by his covetous nature for material objects. During my first scene I break off our engagement- although I am in love with him I have lost the man I was once enamored by- whose friendship I cherished so deeply. I recognize that things will never be the same between us and I am prepared to move forward.

In the second scene as Belle, I am 27 years old and have two children with my husband and love of my life Christopher John. I met him seven months after breaking off my engagement with Ebenezer. We were pen pals, acquainted through friends, and I started writing to him as a good deed while he had been away in the military. John and I fell in love while writing while he was away. He shared his life with me and opened up to me in a way no man had ever done before. I fell in love with his mind and when we did finally meet it was as if I was meeting my best friend for the very first time. We held onto each other and never let go. We were extremely compatible,

it felt second nature falling in love with him. As our lives moved ahead he asked me to marry him, our bond was reinforced, and we created our family. I owe him all of me for the caring and commitment he provides for our family and our bond is reinforced by caring for one another every passing day.

What time is it?

The date is January 24, 1840, and it is 1:15 in the afternoon. It is winter time and there is a light dusting of snow on the ground. The time is significant because I was supposed to meet with Ebenezer at 12 Noon and he is over an hour late.

Where Am I?

I am sitting inside Hoover's Sweet coffee shop in London. The neighborhood is peaceful and there are not very many people on the street because it is winter time and it is cold outside. This is a place Ebenezer and I frequent because it is equidistant from his shop and my home.

As older Belle, I am now in my house. I live on Carpentry Lane in Norwich. Not far from my family home. My children and I are in the living room. My son is playing with a wooden toy car and I am doing my daughter's hair while we sit by our fireplace. I am sitting on a bench that my father carved out of wood. This piece of furniture has been passed down to me by my mother and is a beautiful addition to my living room. My daughter's name is Arianna Pearl. I named her after my favorite piece of jewelry passed down from my grandmother whose also loved pearls. My son, Benjamin John is named is named after his great-grandfather. He is rambunctious

tonight anticipating the coming holiday. I have told both my children that they may stay up until their father comes home and then they must go to bed.

What surrounds me?

While playing younger Belle, it is winter time and there is a light dusting of snow on the ground. I am sitting in Hoover's coffee shop in a wooden rocking chair waiting for Ebenezer. Hoover's potent sweet scent fills the atmosphere of the establishment and the Christmas decorations of wreaths made of burlap and golden colored bells brings me to a place of peace as I wait for Ebenezer who is running over an hour late.

In my second scene as older Belle, I am sitting in front of a fireplace in my home. Christmas decoration are laced throughout the house- four stockings are neatly placed above the fire place and there are gold and red wrapped bows placed on the dining room chairs. Our Christmas tree is placed to the right of the fire place far enough away to be safe. Rich earth tones of my home add to the ambiance and Christmas appeal and handmade decorations indicating memories of past adorn our tree.

What are the given circumstances?

In my first scene as Belle, I am waiting for Ebenezer Scrooge. He is my fiancé and love of my life but I am contemplating my future as his wife. I have always envisioned spending the rest of my life with this man, but his affinity for money and his miserly ways have distanced me from the man I once knew. He will not make a sacrifice for our future and has postponed our wedding due to his tightfisted ways and resistance to wanting to start a family. I recognize that this

relationship is hurting me very deeply and that I deserve more than what he is willing to offer me in a partnership. I have been patient with him, understanding, and have sacrificed my own happiness for his. I am ready to break off our engagement.

Later on in Belle's second scene, seven years have passed I am waiting for my husband, Christopher John to get home so I can put the kids to bed. When he arrives, he says hello to the children and embraces them in his usual playful manner. Once they finish I try to send the children off to bed, knowing it will take a while for them to get to sleep and they need their rest. While trying, my Christopher sneaks a present to our daughter and another one to our son. I am not particularly thrilled about this because I want them to go to bed and I know the excitement of another present will prolong the process of getting them to sleep and I need them to wake up on time tomorrow morning. Getting our children up and dressed in the morning has never been an easy task. They eventually head to bed and Christopher and I are left alone in the living room. When I welcome my husband home, he kisses me on my forehead, an affection he shows me frequently. We then seal our embrace with another kiss and take a moment to take a look deep into each other's eyes and take one another in. Our moment of silence is then released and I begin the process of the wrapping Christmas presents while sitting by the fire. My husband something tells me that he has just seen an old friend of mine and he tells me to guess who it is. I have now idea so after taking a moment I blurt out "Scrooge" thinking that would be the last person he would ever see. My husband reveals to me that it was, in fact, Scrooge and I am surprised that I guessed correctly. I listen to my husband as he speaks of passing Scrooge's business, seeing him through the window, and him being alone "Quite alone in the world I do

believe” says Christopher. I have not seen or spoke to Ebenezer since I broke off our engagement but I am not surprised to hear Christopher say that he looked alone.

What is my relationship?

In the first scene as Belle Scrooge is my fiancée and the man that I love. I truly want Ebenezer to release his ungenerous ways. Over the past years he has become more obsessed with money and I've seen him drift away from, our relationship and our future.

Later in Belle's second scene I shared the scene with my husband Christopher John, my son Benjamin John and Arianna Pearl, my beautiful daughter.

What does my character want?

As younger Belle, I want Ebenezer to see my value and to sacrifice his greed for my love. I want Scrooge to understand that although I am deeply in love with him I feel abandoned and uncared for. I want him to choose to love me instead of money and invest in our relationship. I feel unloved by the man with whom I dedicated myself to and I want to break off our engagement. I am making the decision to release him from our engagement.

Later as older Belle, I want my children to go to bed so I can continue to prepare for tomorrow's dinner and finish wrapping Christmas presents. I want them to get to bed at a reasonable time. I also want to spend time with my husband.

What is in my way?

In my first scene, I am waiting for Ebenezer to meet me at Hoover's and he is running over an hour late. When he finally arrives it is evident that he is unwilling to see my point of view. He is in denial of his greed and is unable to grasp my concerns therefore he does not validate my feelings.

Later in the story as older Belle, my children are wanting to stay up and my husband is sneaking them Christmas gifts. I want to get them to bed so we can finish wrapping the Christmas gifts.

What do I do to get what I want?

In my first scene as Belle, in order to get what, I approach Scrooge with my true feelings about his greed for money, telling him, "it matters little to you" and "another idol has displaced me," the idol is money, and I refer to it being a "golden one." I explain to him that his "nobler aspirations have fallen off one by one" do to his greed for money. I continue, explaining that I have thought over our engagement "keenly" and will "release" him. I end the scene by telling him, "May you be happy in the life you have chosen." and begin to walk away/

As older Belle in my second scene, my children are distracted from going to bed when Christopher sneaks them an early Christmas present. Christopher is the better enforcer of the rules when it comes to our children, but he doesn't always follow them. When my husband gets home we spend a few moments with our children and then I send the kids to bed; Christopher stands behind me and the children say good night and go to bed.

Martha Cratchit

Who am I?

My name is Martha Cratchit, I have two brothers and a sister and I am 22 years old. I live and work at a millinery establishment and have been working there for two years. I take pride in my job and feel fortunate when I am able to spend time with my family.

I put myself through apprentice school with the help of my father. He worked extra hours and sacrificed so much to get me through my apprenticeship and I want to continue to make him proud as I continue in my career. I eventually would like to specialize in making ornate hats. I hope to own an establishment of my own one day but for now, I work in the background, paying my dues and listening and learning from my experiences working there.

I have been living away from my parents for two years now and don't get to come home often. I yearn for the moments I can spend with them, I am working long days and am so tired by the end of the week that all I can think about is sleeping. I do not have a significant other. I have always been a bit of an odd ball and I don't think men are attracted to me. I am aware that I am not the most attractive woman but I feel I have great qualities to offer a husband and a household. Until my time comes I am focusing on my career and the goals that I want to achieve working in millinery.

What time is it?

It is Christmastime January 25, 1835. It is wintertime and it is 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Where am I?

I am at my mother's house and have traveled there to be with my family for the Christmas Season. I was supposed to be at my mother's house by 2pm but was unable to take the full day off. I am running late to Christmas dinner and feel bad that I was not able to help my mother with any of her preparations.

What surrounds me?

I am in my family home and I am surrounded by all my family members. My mother had created a feast for us all to share and the aromatic scents of Christmas dinner infiltrated the air. There is china on the table and my mother has prepared a huge feast of turkey stuffing, bread pudding and many other delights.

What are the given circumstance?

I am late for Christmas dinner because I was working and I was not released from my duties until completing my last alteration. Once I get to my mother's house I realize my father and brother are not yet there. Shortly after my father arrives with my brother Tiny Tim, and to be facetious my siblings try to hide me in order to surprise my father. My family communes together, eating Christmas dinner and enjoying our precious time together.

What is my relationship?

I am among my immediate family inclusive of mother and father and my four siblings.

What do I want?

I want to get home as soon as possible and I am running very late. I want to enjoy the evening off and spend time with my family on Christmas Day. I want to hug my parents who mean the world to me and be surrounded by my family during the Christmas season. I want to tell stories, catch up and bond with my loved ones.

What is in my way?

I had to work late and when I do arrive my father is not home yet. He arrives shortly after.

What do I do to get what I want?

I plan ahead as much as I can the days leading up to the Christmas holiday so that I can leave work early to be with my family. When I eventually make it back home, I appreciate this moment in time with my family knowing soon I will have to return to my life at the millinery establishment.

When I get to my mother's house I explain, "We'd a great deal of work to finish up last night, and had to clear away this morning." My family welcomes me and then my brother and sister tell me to hide. My father is coming home with Tiny Tim and they want to surprise him with my being there. My brother Tiny Tim eventually finds me and I am glad to be surrounded by my family. I help Tiny Tim wash up and help prepared for dinner. After dinner and dessert is served I sing Christmas carols with my family and I feel so happy to be home.

Miner

Who am I?

My name is Gerald Falvin and I was born in Portsmouth, I am 32 years old. I work for Hempstead Mining Company and I have been working in the coal mines since I was 12 years old. My father and grandfather were both miners. My spinal column is curved from having to hunch over to do work. I am a coal getter meaning I axe the coal seam. This position is given to the stronger workers who can endure the physical need of the job. My occupation provides for my family without my wife having to work. Financially, things are very tight but we make due. As a miner, I spend my day surrounded by dirt and darkness.

I have a deep cough from my time spent in the mine and it is very normal for me to cough up black mucus. I have two sons; Arnold who is five, and a five-month-old named Richard.

What time is it?

It is Christmastime 1947.

Where am I?

I am spending the holidays working and am in a mine.

What surrounds me?

I am in a huge hole in the earth. I am surrounded by dirt, darkness, and filth that clogs my lungs. At the entry way of the mine, I see the stars and the moon. This is a beloved sight for me and I cherish my peaceful moments looking up at the sky and analyzing the stars.

What is my relationship to the others in the scene?

I share the scene with my coworkers. They are the coal miners that have made the same sacrifices as I have and work in the mines to serve their families. It is an awfully hard job but it is my trade and so I do the best that I can and use my profession to support my family. Rudy, another miner, sits beside me and together we sing Christmas carols and reminisce on past Christmases with our families.

What are the given circumstances?

I work as a miner and I am away from my family for the holiday season so I can make the money needed to support my family. I never pass on an opportunity to work because I have no choice. I need to take care of my family. My wife does not work, nor do I want her to and I am the sole source of income. I spend a lot of time away from them, which is hard, and send most of my pay back home so my wife can take care of our sons. Today I am taking the time to embrace the holiday even though I am away from my family. I haven't seen skylight for a few days and today the moon is providing just enough light in the sky to be able to see the light dusting of snowflakes into the mining tunnel. This light fills with Christmas carols and moves me to sing aloud.

What does my character want?

I want to be with my family and hold my newborn son in my hands. I want to wake up next to my wife every morning and kiss my kids before they go to sleep. I want complete my duties working for Hempstead Mining so I can return to my wife and kids.

What is the conflict?

I have to work in order to provide for my family. I long for the wife and kids. At the moment going home is not an option and at times it makes me very sad. Mining is my trade and as a miner, I have to spend long periods of time away from my family and loved ones. I miss them all the time. I envision their faces and wonder and long to hear their voices. I will not be seeing my family for Christmas.

What do I do to get what I want?

I reminisce on the positive memories of Christmas. I think of my family and yearn for the next time we will be together. To clear my mind, when I am able I return to the surface of the earth and I look for the North Star. I sing Christmas carols since it has always been a tradition that my family shares. During my last visit home, I told my son Arnold to look up at the sky when he misses me and know that I too and looking at the same stars, therefore even when I am away him and I will always be connected. Examining the sky brings me peace of mind while spending time alone on the holiday

Fred's Wife

Who am I?

My name is Eleanor and I am married to Fred, Ebenezer Scrooge's nephew. We have been married for 12 years and we have a daughter named Rachael and a son named Rupert. My family and I have gotten along well, and although we don't have a large surplus of money I have managed to make our living arrangements very comfortable and even added a touch of elegance

to the decor. I have a flair for sewing and have made curtains, table clothes napkins and other items to add to the ambiance of Christmas. For this party, I am using the chinaware that was passed down to me from my mother. I always use the nice china when guests are coming over. My living room and dining area is filled with food and beverages and extra chairs for guests.

What time is it?

It is winter, Tuesday, December, 23, 1845. It is 6 pm.

Where am I?

I am at my home and my husband and I are hosting a Christmas party. Family and friends fill the insides of my home and we have just finished dinner. I am in my dining area and I have just finished cleaning the table of plates, napkins, silverware, and other dinner items.

What surrounds me?

I am surrounded by familiar faces, laughter and close friends and family. In my home, there is a picture of Ebenezer Scrooge hanging on the back wall of the living room. I strongly dislike this picture, and Scrooge's eyes seem to follow me wherever I go in the room. There is a chaise lounge with blue floral upholstery as well as dark wooden chairs. The walls of my living room are an off white color.

What are the given circumstance?

My husband and I are hosting a Christmas party and twelve of our close friends and family are in attendance. However, Uncle Scrooge, Fred's uncle, who was also invited is not in attendance. We are playing charades as the picture of Scrooge on our wall in the living room begins to strike up a conversation about his lack of attendance. Even though Fred invites Uncle Scrooge to our holiday party every year, he never shows up. We continue to play charades and Fred jokingly pretends to be Scrooge. We all burst out in laughter

What is my relationship?

I am in my house which I have decorated for the Christmas season. I love being home and I especially love entertaining friends and family. My brother, sister, niece and nephew are in attendance. My mother is also there along with my only child Lisa Ann. I have also invited a few of my neighbors to join in the festivities. My mother-in-law is here and because she has always made me a little nervous and very picky about everything, I am making sure that she is well taken care of and that her needs are met. Fred tells me I try too hard to impress her but I only want her to be happy and that is never an easy task. The one things we'd have in common is our dislike for Scrooge.

What do I want?

I want to make fun of Uncle Scrooge. I want my husband to stop talking so highly of his Uncle Scrooge and realize he is not a good person and will never be. I want Fred to acknowledge his uncle's flaws.

What is in my way?

My husband is an overly forgiving, gracious man who will always speak respectfully about his Uncle Scrooge. Fred has a way of encouraging compassion for others, even if it is undeserved.

What do I do to get what I want?

To get what I want, I put down Scrooge and make fun of him in front of my family, while we are playing charades I jokingly compare him to a bear.

Quarreler #1

Who am I?

My name Verlous Chamberlin. I am 34 years old and I do not have any children. I live in the Peter's Arc – a place known for being one of the poorer parts of London. I share a living space with three other people and have lived with them for three years now. I have a horrible cough and sometimes it produces a lot of green and yellow phlegm and my teeth are decaying. My former roommate died of what they called typhoid fever. I am burly, overweight and I stand five foot nine. My jacket has stains on it and is ripped along the armpit. Due to my uncleanliness, I have random patches of rashes that develop on my body and they cause me to itch. My hair is strewn about underneath a winter hat. I have a patch of hair that has begun to fall out, located in the back of my head which is due to the rashes on my body.

As a costermonger (street seller) I provide customers with random items ranging from trinkets, ornaments, and other odd items I have acquired over time. I sell my items using a wooden cart that is not very easy to maneuver. Some of my trinkets have been stolen and in my later years, I have developed a knack for pickpocketing. I feel I deserve to have these items in my possession.

I justify my actions through the belief that this is how God has allowed me to support myself.

Similar to my mother, I use God to justify a lot of the wrongs that I do. I do not go to church nor do I pray.

I am unhappy with my life because every day is a struggle and it will never get any better. Due to my circumstance, I am not afraid of getting what I want even if I have to hurt people achieve it.

As a young child, I was made fun of for being fat and having moles on my neck and face. I was ridiculed daily with jokes about my looks and my alcoholic aunt who raised my sister and I made it clear to me that no man would ever want me. I have also learned to use my negative attributes to instill intimidation and fear in others. The only person I care for is my sister, I don't see her often, but when I do she helps me financially. My sister knows me better than anyone else.

I use the money that I get from my trinkets and my sister to buy gin and food to eat. I have followed in the footsteps of my aunt and have alcoholic tendencies.

What time is it?

It is 6pm the evening before Christmas.

Where am I?

I am in the center of town in a Rivers square.

What surrounds me?

People are walking and milling around as they venture out to run last minute holiday errands. It is hard to navigate where to go. There are many people in this crowded streets and everyone is preoccupied with where they are going. The pedestrians are not aware of the people around them.

What are the given circumstances?

I am on my way home. It is 6pm and I am on a crowded street. I am using it as an opportunity to make money. Christmas is not my favorite holiday because it reminds me of how alone I am in my everyday life. My sister is away at her husband's parents' house for the holiday so I have nowhere to be. While navigating the pedestrian traffic, a man (Quarreler #2) bumps into me very hard. This makes me very upset and because of my prepositioned sadness, I start to become enraged. I move toward Quarreler #2 as if I am going to knock him in the face and he also starts toward me. At this point in the story, the Ghost of Christmas Present, who is showing Scrooge this scene, sprinkles magical drops over the both of us. Myself and Quarreler #2 are instantly resolved from the incident and recover from the conflict. We then embrace and continue our separate ways.

What is my relationship?

I do not know the man (Quarreler #2) who has bumped into me, but he has hit me very hard and I instantly want to push back

What do I want?

I want to make money for the next hour or so while the streets are filled. I intend to sell, steal and beg as much as I can while the streets are crowded with people. When I am pushed by Quarreler #2 I want to fight back.

What is in my way?

A passerby has mistakenly bumped into me making me drop some of my items. He then has the nerve to blame the incident on me. I am livid at this accusation and a physical confrontation is about to ensue.

What do I do to get what I want?

To get what I want I confront the man and tell him “Watch where you are going now!.” He then accuses me of bumping into him I respond, “You banged into me first!” I am upset with him so much that I raise my fist to his face, reiterating that he needs to watch it- he is messing with the wrong woman. It is here that the Ghost of Christmas Present sheds magical drops on the both of us. I am instantly transformed and the spirit of Christmas spirit fills me. I acknowledging that is “it’s a shame to quarrel,” I give the Quarreler#2 a hug and we part ways feeling more cheerful than before.

CHAPTER 3 IDENTITY

I explore the foundation of self and identity at this point in my life as I take on these roles. Hagen urged her students to become the character rather than pretending to be the part. In order to become a character one must have a strong knowledge of self-identity. This approach to acting, although not new, helped reinforce the desire to answer questions about myself at this point in my life. To accomplish this, I created a character analysis of myself during this time in my life.

Who am I?

My name is Danielle Brown I am 28 years old and I am an MFA Acting student at the University of Central Florida in partnership with the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. After being offered a full tuition scholarship and a graduate assistantship, I packed my belongings in my native state of Connecticut and journeyed toward my MFA in the sunny state of Florida.

A few months prior, I had never heard of the University of Central Florida and didn't originally apply for admission to the school. Instead while attending the URTA auditions in New York, NY. My soon to be professor, Kate Ingram, was auditioning for UCF and invited me into audition for the program. Two weeks later I was offered admission to the school and grasped the opportunity to further my career.

I come from a long line of only children. I am an only child, my mother was an only and so was my grandmother. I come from a very close, tight-knit family in which I always knew I was loved. My mother told me she loved me every day since birth and we would talk on the phone at least once daily. My mother was married for the first time at 55 years old and watching her

relationship flourish with my stepfather, Will, left a meaningful impact on the relationships I take on in the future regarding caring for one another and communication. My mother lived in my family home in Connecticut and enthusiastically supported my transition to grad school remarking she was, “proud of my baby girl.”

My grandmother passed away a month before I moved to Florida. Six months later my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given two weeks to live. I was in between classes when I received a call from my mother who had been hospitalized. My mother had never been sick, and the harsh reality that I was going to lose her was unfathomable. After several rounds of chemotherapy, several surgeries and developing a will to live that reinforced her belief in God, I obeyed her requests to stay in school and develop my own life and career. As the months passed by I remain committed and involved in my graduate program, visiting home as often as I could and spending the holidays with my mother. I traveled back and forth to Connecticut from Florida while continuing to go to school and seek the opportunity to transform my life after by obtaining my MFA. Eleven months later, my while working on The Orlando Shakespeare Theater’s production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, my mother called to tell me it was time for me to come home. I had waited for this call for several months, explaining to my mother that as soon as she needed me, I would come right home to be by her side. I left my performance, flew home to be with my Mother and eleven days later she took her last breath in my arms. My last moments with my mother were filled with admiration, pain and bravery. The last eleven months brought us closer than we had ever been before, and as I said goodbye to my mother it was so special to be able to look into the eyes of the woman who gave me life. I was born into my mother’s arms and she died resting in mine.

When I returned to school, I struggled with my new reality without my mother. The pain and grief of losing my mother transformed me into a person I did not fully recognize. I had been stripped of my identity as a grandchild and daughter, experiencing the most severe loss of love and family I will most likely ever endure; I felt emotionally crippled and alone in a foreign state and was felt alienated from my collegiate peers who had no idea of the heartbreak I was experiencing. In spite of this, I moved forward applying myself to school and continued my studies.

I have life-long, meaningful friendships that have been cultivated over a long period of time with individuals I went to middle school, high school, and undergrad with. For the most part, they are all living up north and they reach out to me showing care and support as I move forward. The kindness shown by close friends has redefined my outlook of friendship and family. I believe my friends have been elevated to a new level in my relationships with them and now consider them family.

I am an actress, teacher, motivational speaker, student, friend and mentor. My work and school provide a rigorous schedule that I often feel is too much to bear. Facing the daily challenge of waking up, I try to be courageous and expose myself on stage and in the classroom. There are many days when I want to curl in a ball and give in to my fears but I find moments and seek out friendships that help me accomplish my daily tasks.

What time is it?

It is November 2014, it is nearing Christmas time

Where am I?

I reside in the Orlando Florida and I am preparing for the role of Daughter in the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost story of Christmas*. I spend most of my time at the theatre in rehearsals, fulfilling my duties in the education office of the theatre, teaching Saturday morning classes to young theatre students, participating in publicity shoots for the theatre, taking graduate classes while still grieving the loss of my mother and identity. My home life is out of balance. I live with a couple and three cats and every morning I wake up to the smell of cat piss. I hate cats but feel stuck in my current living situation while trying to finish my program.

What surrounds me?

White walls filled with costume character mockups fill the walls of my rehearsal studio complete with images of what our stage will look like. There is tape on the floor of the rehearsal space signifying the outline of the stage and I must use these parameters as a reminder of the space we will eventually be working in.

What are the given circumstances?

The given circumstances are that I am an actress, teacher and student. I am currently writing my thesis about my actor process while playing multiple roles.

What is my relationship?

The other characters in the scene are my cast mates. There are nine of us all together, Steven Lane, Paul Bernardo, Carly Swain, Parker Sims-Chin, Caroline Billings, Anne Herring, Steven Paterson, Chris Crawford and myself. Our director Michael Carlton is also in the room along with stage management.

What do I want?

I want to successfully achieve believable characters in my work on A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas and I wish to graduate from my MFA program. I want to work through the grief of experiencing my first Christmas without my mother and use the memories we shared and my mother's belief in me to move forward with my life. I want to feel whole one day soon and work on examining my life and purpose.

What is in my way?

My life is filled with obligations to school and I have a lot on my plate. I often feel overwhelmed by my current position and feel hopeless and alone. I miss my mother and family and feel angry that the two most important people were unexpectedly ripped from my life within a year and a half of one another. I contemplate the overall meaning of my life on a daily basis and wonder if the void I feel will ever get better, nonetheless I must fulfill my academic and professional obligations and move forward while doing the best I can.

What do I do to get what I want?

To get what I want, I look to my teachers for support and guidance and devote my attention to my work on stage. I pray for strength and I work on my actor process, explore acting, movement and voice techniques and apply myself to learning and understanding the world of the play.

CHAPTER 4 REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

The following is my rehearsal and performance journal detailing my actor process while on while working on *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*. It expresses the day to day operations of preparing for performance, discoveries and observations during rehearsals. These journals will serve as a summary of events and encompassed is commentary from my point of view.

November 11, 2014

Today was the first read thru and meet and greet for Christmas Carol cast and crew. It took place in the McLaughlin Theatre which is located above the greenroom on the 2nd floor. This space is mostly used for rehearsals and conducting classes. When I walked in tables and chairs had been set up in a kitty-corner fashion in the center of the room. Brown manila envelopes had been neatly placed and in front of those chairs along with holders with extra pencils and highlighters. Name cards for the director, playwright, stage managers and cast were placed in assigned seats. The stage managers, director and playwright sat at the head of the tables. I sat on the right side of the room next to our playwright. There are also chairs around the perimeter for the crew and other invited members of the theater.

George Hamrah, our production manager, started the meet and greet by introducing himself and welcoming everyone. Afterward, he invited everyone in the room to introduce themselves by stating their names and positions. We went around as the cast and crew, office staff and interns introduced themselves.

Stacy Norwood, our stage manager, took over for George after the introductions and went over logistics. She called our attention to a wall located outside of the studio. It's a wall by the entrance of the studio painted by a local artist and includes a quote from William Shakespeare's, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "and here's a marvelous convenient place for my rehearsal" by Peter Quince. The wall includes spaces for signatures and Stacy asked that all the actors sign the wall when they get the chance. It has been a tradition at the theatre for every actor who performs at Orlando Shakespeare Theater to sign the wall.

Stacy brought our attention to the packets that were placed in front of our name holders. Inside were show schedules, contact sheets, an updated script as well as pictures of the mockup costumes and set for the show. Information about parking and a calendar were included. There was a small credit card sized contact card with our stage managements' information as well as access codes to the theaters' keyless side entrance.

Stacy went over the calendar informing us know that a few of us would be taking publicity photos the following week and filming during previews. The footage will be used for the Orlando Shakes YouTube station. Our schedule included several talkbacks, one after all our school shows, and one scheduled for a Sunday matinee. Stacy continued by going over a few events taking place in the coming weeks and gave us a map of where to park on days there were multiple shows in performance as we shared performance dates with Best of Enemies which was playing in the Goldman Theater. There were a few additional performances including a sponsor performance and one week when we will have ten performances. I am excited to have an opportunity to do ten shows a week; I think it will be a great test of stamina.

Women were asked to bring rehearsal skirts and everyone was asked to wear closed-toed shoes. Coffee mugs were assigned to all actors and placed on hooks in the green room on the wall. We were reminded to clean up after ourselves while using the common area in the greenroom. Stacy ended by encouraging us to bring a sweater to rehearsal because it gets cold in the studio. She passed it off to Michael Carlson, our director.

Michael Carlson took over by first opening the room to dismissal. Most of the people who were not involved with the show left the room. Michael then introduced himself again and asked everyone seated at the table introduce themselves again. We began by talking about talk about the story we are telling. Michael stated that he wants us to be able to speak intelligently about A Christmas Carol. He said it was a great story and he wanted to pinpoint what made our story different. He focused on it "being a ghost story of Christmas. He described our production as being "dark" and "dank" and "not your Muppet's Christmas Carol". He talked about how to tell a ghost story and Jim Helsing, the artistic director and playwright interjected talking about the English tradition of telling ghost stories at Christmas. Jim and Michael continued by talking about the special effects of the play. Some of the effects include using a slip stage to signify moving from the past and future, also Scrooges' tombstone will rise from the ground our stage floor will open for Scrooge to fall into. Puppets will also be used in the show. One of my characters, Future, will be represented by large puppet designed by, Vandy Wood, Associate Professor at UCF. I will wear a backpack with long poles on it to maneuver the 11-foot puppet. I've never worked with puppets before so I'm excited to learn as much as I can about the art of puppetry.

Michael included, that this is the chance we get as theatre professional to have fun. They let us know that our play will need to be appropriate for children and that it will be rated PG as opposed to G because it will be scary and very young kids may not be able to handle some of the special effects with the ghosts.

Jim let us know that his script still had room for adjustments and he encouraged us to give him suggestions, for example, if we really love a line from the story that wasn't included in his version we could lobby for it, he is open to recommendations as long as we are still holding true to the story and using Dickens words from the book.

Jim reminded us that photos in the dressing room photos were prohibited. We would be able to take photos in the green room but the dressing room was off limits. He also encouraged us to use age appropriate humor in the dressing room and backstage as we had two minors, Carly and Parker in the show.

Jim ended by speaking about the use of electronics in the rehearsal space. He asked that we keep the rehearsal space a sacred place and for us not to use any type of electronics in the rehearsal space. He remarked that the outside room shouldn't be in this room. We then moved forward toward our first read.

It took us about two hours to read through the entire play. It was exciting to see all the choices the actor used. Distinguishing accents, subtle physicality, and tonality used to differentiate

between the characters. Prior to our first read, I had imagined and practiced what my multiple characters would sound like, and what detail in my character development would help distinguish them from the other. Although, still in the process of creating my characters while working with my character development questions, I find having this idea has sparked new possibilities in creating my character.

Many times before this first rehearsal, I wondered what Belle's husband would sound like or what the relationship between Daughter and her other sibling would be like. During this initial read, it was nice to start to put these pieces together. There was also no pressure on getting it perfect, instead, we were embracing and experiencing the story together as a cast free from judgment and filled with exploration.

November 12, 2014

Today when we entered the rehearsal space the chairs had been cleared out and replaced with bare bones markings of our stage as well as a few props for us the experiment and play with. Stacey went over the outline of the stage and talked a bit about the different types of entrances to the stage so that we can begin to image what it would be like in the performance space.

Today Michael took the time to ask us what talk more about traditions. He asked the cast, "What are some of our own Christmas traditions? We all contributed to the conversation, sharing stories from Christmas past and present. We talked about Christmas dinners, family rituals for opening presents, leaving milk and cookies for Santa, Christmas movies, decorating our Christmas trees and of course, singing Christmas carols. I enjoyed this conversation greatly because it made me refer to my own character analysis, Uta Hagen's nine questions have given me a platform to

develop my characters so far, but I want them to have their individual memories. Moments that I can they can reflect upon. I, as the actor playing the character, have many memories of Christmas with my family. I have traditions and rituals that have reinforced the spirit of Christmas and what it means in my life. My goal is to incorporate this into my multiple characters emotional life to use it as a source for defining them.

Michael made clear that although this wasn't a musical, there would be a strong presence of singing and caroling. He wanted us to recreate the feeling and atmosphere of Christmas on many levels including song. Steven M. will be our musical director and he will be creating original versions of carols for us to learn. Steven will be meeting with us later this week. Michal also mentioned also the possibility of playing live music. He specifically wanted someone who had a fiddler skills, but none of us are fiddler players.

I believe music can have a profound effect on individuals and move them emotionally and spiritually. In musicals, a song is sung when words are no longer enough- when our spoken language needs to be heightened to the emotion of a scene. I seek to find that with my own characters while applying the nine questions. One of my characters that song has a profound effect on is Miner. He is estranged from his family while working in the mines and unable to call or make contact. For him music and being able to look up in the sky and know his family is connected to or looking at the same image is monumental. He sings Christmas Carols out of yearning and love for his family- to be connected to them in his absence. It also provides hope that he will soon be united with them and be able to sing the songs hand in hand.

November 13, 2014

Today we worked on to blocking the first half of the show. Michael is very inclusive in his ideas for blocking and he has allowed the cast to create most of the movement for their characters. He did not have any preset blocking for the show. Sometimes a director will come in with all the blocking preset for the show--- what line you are supposed to step forward on, when you should sit down, etc. The liberty I have to create is so freeing in this show and Michael has communicated to us that he really wants this to be a collaborative process and the actors to have a lot of input. This gives me even more freedom when defining my characters with Hagen's nine questions because I have the liberty to define aspects of my characters' lives. Because of Michael's openness to suggestion, the progression of blocking the show is moving a little slower than other rehearsal I've been a part of here at Orlando Shakes. A few of my cast mates have expressed dislike for the process, but I see absolutely nothing wrong with this and I feel the ability to take our time and explore these options reinforce my invested in this process. Rather than just being given the blocking and trying to find the logic within it, I get to create it organically with minor edits from the director.

While we moved through the show and worked on scenes that I was not a part of, I tried to think of ways to bring my own nostalgia to the performance. I continue working on answering the questions detail for my character analysis and try to establish well-rounded characters. I wondered what types of smells and thoughts my character, Daughter, has during the opening of the show. What does she think she is going to find in the attic and what specifically is she looking for. It brought me to a memory of Christmas time last year. I was home looking through my basement and I came across my Steve Urkel doll that I was given to me by my mother as a

little girl. I loved the show *Family Matters* and seeing the doll brought back so many memories from my childhood. I wanted whatever I pulled out of the chest to have the same effect.

November 14, 2014

There was a lot of downtime during rehearsal while Michael worked with the actors to figure out blocking. Because we were working at a slower pace, I spent a majority of my down time memorizing my lines. I've never been able to memorize lines in a day or short span of time like some of my other actor friends. Instead, I find my best memorization comes when I have the time to allow the words to sink in and become a part of my characters blocking. Memorization paired with blocking allows me to have a physical muscle memory which I find is a much more reliable form of memorization because it is memorized in my body. Another technique I use is drilling my lines. I will say them over and over again until so I am very comfortable with the lines I am speaking. In addition, I have using two apps that I have been using on my iPad to help with memorizing lines, Voice Record Pro and Scene Partner. Voice Record Pro is a voice recorder and I use this app the most. To practice my lines, I recorded myself speaking the entire script. This is helpful because I hear the entire script as opposed to only focusing on my lines. I have never been able to memorize lines easily, and as an actor is one of the most challenging parts in the initial phase of preparing for a role. I find that drilling them over and over again has provided positive results. I also like writing them down. When I take the time to write my lines and the cue lines for my scene I am able to visualize the parts that I am having difficulty memorizing.

During our short 10 minutes breaks the cast and I take time getting to know each other. I knew Anne, Sarah Caroline and Steven lane prior to the show and I had seen Parker perform at the

Mad Cow production of *Tommy*. Parker was 7 years old and is an adorable fun loving child. He is well mannered and calm and every time he around people seems to comment on how cute he is. As a cast, we spent a lot of time talking about food, life, the Christmas tradition and other interests we share.

During our last 10 minute break, Stacey gave us the preliminary program for us to look over our bio and make sure everything looked good. I was surprised that we were being given this on the first day, but I've worked with Stacy as my stage manager before and she is always on top of things.

November 15, 2014

Today we began blocking the Scrooge and Belle Scene where Belle breaks off her engagement. Michael encourages us to do the scene on a diagonal slant instead of standing parallel to the audience. I was to walk to Scrooge once the lights came up on me and he noticed me sitting downstage. Downstage right which is starting to become my home position for most of the show be my home for most of the show. Featured in my given circumstances backstory, I have been waiting for Ebenezer Scrooge at a coffee shop where I am planning on meeting him. I am preparing to leave Scrooge, I have made the decision to break off our engagement and I don't believe Scrooge has any idea of what is about to happen. I am waiting for Scrooge, and he is late coming from work. This is a regular occurrence of his and fuels my need break off our engagement.

Today I had my first costume fitting for a Christmas Carol. Costume fittings take place in the costume shop of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater and are headed by costume designers Mel

Berger and Denise Wood. When I got to the shop all of my costumes and pieces had been neatly hung up in order of appearance on a rolling rack. Mel Berger showed me to the back dressing area and asked to undress and get into a black petticoat for the show. I will be wearing a blue dress for the role of Daughter and this is my main costume. Denise the other costume designer is altering it to be more period. The purpose of the costume fitting is to alter and construct the costumes as needed for the demands of the show as well as the actor. It is a chance for the actor to communicate what it is I need or want in terms of costuming. The blue dress that I will be wearing is a dress that has been worn in many OST shows. When I tried it on it fit very well with the exception of the arm area. My cast mate Anne Herring has worn this dress in several shows prior to it being used for the Christmas Carol. She has talked about how uncomfortable it was so I was prepared before trying it on. Mel and Denise did a great job altering it to fit my body's needs. They will be doing an accordion pleat to the waistline of the dress, and the fabric is very heavy. Now that I know this I will take the heaviness and body into account when I am sitting and standing up on stage. In some parts of our show, I have been doing the narration from while sitting or kneeling on the floor. These are not the best sitting positions when it comes to this dress so I will work to find an alternative when I am doing narration as Daughter. My one concern is that the dress is so long so I don't want to step on the dress and rip it while I am standing up and sitting down which is something I do frequently. Denise is going to heighten the hem a bit, but the costume still needs to be period, so she will not be changing the length of the dress. This fitting is also for the publicity shoot that I will have in a few days.

I am on stage for most of the show and play various characters. Rather than having to do multiple quick changes, I will be adding a cape, apron or accessory to transform into my multiple characters.

November 18, 2014

Today we had our first group dialect coaching session. Our speech coach Ginny K. is a well-known teacher in the Florida area, and she taught dialect, voice and speech to actors and has been a performer for more than twenty years. She is a professor at Valencia College.

Ginny started the dialect session by introducing herself, and then allowing the cast to do the same. She talked a bit about her background as a speech teacher and then she jumped right into the work. We will be focused on RP, standard British dialect for this session. All of the cast uses this dialect and it will be the standard accent for the show. She gave us several handouts with the vowel and consonant changes for the dialect, then we went around the table, all of us speaking lines that we wanted help with. She gave us corrections and then we would practice saying those lines again with her changes. This first session with Ginny is a shorter session, but we will have an opportunity to work with her again in an individual session. I recorded this session with her on my Voice Recorder Pro app. I'm so grateful because now I can refer back to this session if I have any questions.

Today we had the opportunity to go over music additions with our Musical Director Steve M. There are several Christmas carols throughout the show that we will be working on, and he has written an original score for an acapella version of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas". He plays his version for us and then divides us up by our voices. Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. I will be

singing soprano with Sarah Caroline. I love singing but I not always confident when it comes to finding notes. Sarah is a musical theatre actress and knows music very well. I am glad to be paired with her as a soprano because she is much more confident in notes.

November 19, 2014

I am off book for the most part, but I have been using flash cards to help me remember all of my cues and beginning of my lines. I also have included which costume pieces I will be wearing to aid in my transitions. I've never really used flash cards before, but because I am playing so many characters, I find that it is helpful in remembering all of the transitions.

Physicalizing the text with movement allows me to better memorize my lines and put my body in the context of the play. Undulations, exploring the speeding up and slowing down of the lines and internal rhythms for my characters help test my knowledge of the lines. Physicalizing while memorizing lines help me retain the fast paced speech, forces me to have more clarity in diction.

November 24, 2014

Today I started to develop a personal warm-up for the show I'm finding that to achieve the forward facial posture needed for the RP British dialect I need to really warm up my facial muscles and body to inhabit the voice.

I start my warm up by doing body work. Kate Ingram, my voice and speech teacher at UCF taught us an array of physical vocal warm-ups that I've found to be very useful during this production. I start by doing floor work. While on my back I start with a light hum to warm up my vocal folds. Then I incorporate the pelvic clock to loosen my lower back and hips. While

warming up I think of the various characters I portray preparing my body physical, vocally and mentally for the multiple roles. I also try to envision my characters faces and so that I see the differences between them. My character development using Uta Hagen's nine questions helps differentiate the lives while doing my vocal warm up.

My warm up starts in the morning around 8 am while I'm on my way to the theatre. I live 10 minutes away so the ride gives me a short opportunity to warm up my face and vocal muscles. I start by doing light hums and lips trills to warm up my facial muscles. There is a sense of freedom when warming up in the car because it gives me the freedom to make the noise as I want without people hearing me. However, I may look like I'm talking to myself by the passer buyers on their way to work. I've had to get over the self-consciousness of warming up in my car and the possibility of someone who is not a performer seeing me.

Generally, I arrive at our rehearsal space at least 45 mins in advance so I can get coffee, fill up my water bottle, finish my body and voice work, review my script and catch up a bit with my cast mates.

November 27, 2014

Today is Thanksgiving so we do not have rehearsal. I woke up feeling very tired from this past week but I promised myself I would rehearse before partaking in Thanksgiving festivities. I decided to go over lines first thing this morning so I could get it over with and have the rest of the day to spend with my Orlando family. I have been using the Voice Recorder Pro app that I have on my iPad to listen to my lines over and over again. I find that playing it in the background forces me to rehearse even when I am at home lounging around and doing other things. It allows

me to rehearse on a subconscious level because although I am not focused on the background recording of my lines, I'm still soaking it in. This type of memorization is very helpful for memorizing the other cast members lines and my cue lines. I find it helps me to become very familiar with the entire show. I rehearsed for three hours today going through my lines and reminding myself of the character development I created using the nine questions.

November 28, 2014

This week starts the beginning of tech rehearsal. Tech rehearsal is when the cast and crew gets to come together in the rehearsal space and line up cues. I'm excited to start working in the space. Our set is absolutely gorgeous! Although it is not complete the artistry and heart that went into the construction of the set is apparent. Prior to our set being built, we only got to see a smaller version of what it would look like on paper. Our scenic designer did a great job at capturing this sense of the Victorian home and the rigid warmth of a family's attic on Christmas.

Our tech process was long, but it seemed to go by faster because of all the conversations amongst my cast mates. As a cast, there was an array of conversation being had. We talked about everything from *How to Get Away with Murder*, to experiences with our exes. At one point we started going around trying to tell the only jokes we knew. Stephen Lane was the champ at this he had several clean jokes that were funny and age-appropriate for our younger members Parker and Carly Swain.

It was nice sitting there with my cast mates enjoying everyone's company and seeing different sides of them. As tech rehearsal continues on, I found myself enthralled with the sound and lighting design for the show.

Brit, our sound director compiled really great sound effects. They weren't exactly what I envisioned in for this production but his creation of sounds added to the allure of the production. The music he chose for the Marley scene created such a stir. It was scary and suspenseful- paired with the theme park style lights swirling through the audience, his sound design helped establish our imaginary ghost story.

Our slip stage is moving a lot slower that I thought it would. The slip stage is being operated by a manual pulley system that is very difficult to maneuver. It has moved a lot slower than imagined while we were working in the rehearsal studio. The transitions on the slip stage will signify transportation from one memory to the next as it is intended for Scrooge's memories.

Stacey called all the cues for lights and sound and was the go-between for the director and the rest of cast and crew. There were moments when her patience was tested, but I imagine having this position can be very stressful. She handled herself well and got the job done. She was able to conduct the cast in a respectful way and work as a liaison between the director, light designer, set designer, sound designer and the cast.

November 29, 2014

Today was our first time having all of our costumes and hair pieces. Denise picked out several different hair pieces and let me choose which one I wanted to wear, two of them were curly and one was straight. I chose to go with the curly hair because it matched my hair texture better. Denise matched the color of my hair perfectly, and I was really pleased with how the banana comb ponytail looked on my head.

Today I took publicity photos as Martha Cratchit. Usually, these photos are used for Facebook and published in the newspaper and other platforms. They are also replayed on the television in the lobby of the theatre. Scrooge, Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit and Martha Cratchit were called for this photo shoot. I was asked to bring my makeup with me to the costume shop. As I waited for my turn I worked on my Martha Cratchit's makeup. Denise wanted light makeup for the shoot so I applied a little foundation a neutral light pink eyeshadow, a minimal amount of dark blue eyeliner, mascara, a small amount of pink blush and neutral lipstick. I showed Denise and she was very pleased with the colors. After this, I went into costume dressing room to put on my costume. The dress I wore was the same dress that I wear for Daughter in the play, it was not finished being altered. My dress has been recycled several times through the years it has been at the OST. Anne herring wore it in Nicolas Nickleby, last year's rep show, and Les Miserable a show we worked on September of 2014. They are still in the process of totally restructuring it so I put the bottom part on as well as the top. Another person working in the costume shop safely pinned me in along the waist. She must have used 20 or more safety pins but she was able to keep the heavy pleated shirt together with the top. They gave me a white bonnet to wear and gave me a piece of lace to put over the collar of my dress to hid the incomplete alteration. She finished it off with a striped green brown and black shawl and some fingerless wool gloves and my boots from the show. My boots, which I had been using in rehearsal were originally stark white, they decide to spray paint the white ones black to match my costume. I was surprised at how white they were. I never knew you could spray paint shoes and it has given me some new ideas refurbishing some of my shoes from home.

When I was fully costumed I went back out to the waiting area until I was given my next direction. I waited there for a little while and then Landon, our photographer and the marketing coordinator for the theatre. He usually takes the press photos as well as the photos of the dress rehearsal. When I met up with him he was so excited to talk about the work. He walked me up to the prop shop where he had set up a scene for the shoot. Similar to our play Landon our photographer wanted the scene to look like an old attic. He asked me to stand in front of a brown wooden bookcase that was filled with wine glasses and chalices as well as other cups. Hanging over the side of the bookcase were these gold painted metal bells attached to lengthy pieces of rope. The bells left a resounding sound if you knocked into them even just a little bit. Landon also asked me to hold a book as if I was reading the Christmas Carol and he asked me to look up as though something had just caught my eye. He took several shots here and then he said he was all set. Landon was very complimentary during our shoot and remarked that it seemed as though they all came out great. He turned the camera around to me and let me see the pictures he took. It was hard to see all of the photos because the display on his camera was so small, but they looked really nice.

Later we went back down to the costume shop. The rest of the actors, Tiny Tim, Scrooge and I finished getting into costume and Landon led us to the location of our next shoot. We went over to the scene shop and walked up to the top floor. The floor is see through and made of metal and as I walk up I try not to look down because I am scared of heights. At the top of the stairs, they were a scene that again very much resembled that of a closet. There was a small cushion bench that we sat on, and the scene was filled with clusters of furniture, mirrors, frames, books and a huge globe of the world and other pieces of furniture.

After briefly acquainting ourselves with the space, Landon adjusting his lenses for the new scene and we were ready and rearing to go. Landon asked us all to sit on the couch as a family and we did such. Landon seemed really pleased with our family portrait and made a few slight suggestions. Landon was totally emerged in the shoot and at one point slipped back off the ledge of the scene shop. Collectively we all rushed to our feet to try and help him. It all happened very quickly and was a bit terrifying for all of us who witnessed, but we were very happy he was okay. Landon quickly recovered from his near fall experience and continued taking photos. He was very happy with the final photos and soon after released us.

December 4, 2014

It's been such a joy working with my castmates and I'm feeling really excited to share our show with an audience. Today was our invited dress and it feels great to put all the elements of our show together. There were a few mishaps tonight. There was an issue with the slip stage and it did not fully eject during the Ghost of Christmas Past scene and then again during the Fezziwig scene. Also, Paul Bernardo who plays Marley fell off his seat when he tried to sit down. While playing Marley, Paul Bernardo walks as though he is blind and miscalculated his distance from his seat and slid off. Anne Herring and I immediately went over to Paul to make sure he wasn't injured, and Stacey, our stage manager called hold. This is a dress rehearsal so we can still call hold if we need to.

A few days ago I was asked to do the curtain speech for our production. The curtain speech happens before the show and it details information that our theatre wants the patrons to be reminded of. The curtain speech was written by Jim and Anne is directing it. I start with a

welcome and then I ask every to turn off their cell phones. I go on to speak OST's upcoming season. Next season the OST will be working on *Monty Python's Spamalot* and it will star theatre veteran, Davis Gains, who played the *Phantom in Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway. He is originally from Orlando and he also played Javier in OST's *Les Miserable* last September. Davis Gaines is a local celebrity so hearing he will be coming back to the OST stage triggers tremendous applause. Next, I remind the audience that tickets for our new season go on sale January 3rd and I also encourage them to swing by the box office and purchase last minute tickets as Christmas gifts. Lastly, I inform the audience of our partnership with the Big Brothers & Big Sisters mentoring program during the spring production of *James and the Giant Peach*. There will be a Power 2 Give insert in all of their programs and that will give our audience detailed information on how to donate to the organization in order to give more kids an opportunity to see the production. I end by letting the audience know the show will begin after we seat and latecomers and standby ticket holders and tell them to enjoy the show.

Initially, when I got the email asking me if I would do the curtain speech, I was not very thrilled about it. I think because I had never done it before and it was another thing that I had to memorize I also wished that I had known I would be doing this from the beginning so that I could take my time memorizing it, but in retrospect, I am happy to have been offered the opportunity. I remember when Sarah Caroline did the curtain speech for *Les Miserable*, and she was very nervous at first. I can't remember the last time I had to break the fourth wall and look directly at an audience. Originally, when I first started performing I was doing public speaking competitions where looking it to an audience was acceptable. Acting in a play, however, is much different, because we are taught no to break the fourth wall---the invisible wall that separates the

actors from the audience and protects the world of a scene. Directly addressing the audience initially make me nervous but I have faith I will overcome this obstacle. Memorization of the curtain speech is key to being successful and confident in front of an audience. I believe if I approach this with fearlessness, grace and a belief in myself I will be just fine.

I find the use of flash cards have been a very useful way of memorizing my lines for the curtain speech. I have several points that I have to mention, and I found sometimes I was saying them out of order. I decided to make an outline of the thoughts and points that I wanted to make in order to correct this. Now that I have the speech fully memorized I use flash cards that have trigger words on them if I need them so I can remember what comes next. For example, I do the introduction, then talk about cell phones, then donors, and then *Spamalot*. I find writing the order of what is being said to be very helpful and the flash cards act as a guide keep me on track. They remind me of what's next and provide a bit of safety for my freshly memorized material. Ever since I have organized myself this way, I am referring to them less and less.

During my lunch break, I typed up outlines of the entire show from memory including all of my lines, and cues lines, as well as the lyrics I will be doing in the show. As an actor, sometimes the opportunity to do a full run through before dress rehearsal is slim, so I find that referring to an outline helps reinforce the order of scenes and things that I may need to brush up on. I started writing outlines for the plays I was cast in back in 2011 while I was working on the lead role of Sarah Maddox in Michael Bradford's *Living in the Wind*, produced by the Emerson Theatre Collaborative. While playing Sarah I found with my plentiful lines, entrances and exits, writing up an outline was a way to fortify the order within me and gave me greater confidence as to what

scene was coming next. In addition to this, I review my answers to the nine questions for each of my characters as I continue on the journey of bringing Dickens' words alive and creating the world of the play.

December 10, 2014

Today we performed to a sold out house middle and high schoolers. Our school show are always fun to perform because children are so honest with their expressions and we were aware early on that they were fully immersed in the show. Often times our younger audience member don't like something or if they find something amusing, they will express how they truly feel. The children's shows have been really lively and the kids seem to have a real appreciation for the spectacle of our show. They love when the Ghost of Marley comes up to the surface of the stage with his chains rattling. On several occasions, students were frightened by Marley, and screams and sounds of commotion would fill the audience. The sound effects mixed with the lighting and shadows told a truly chilling tale. The children seem to like all the special effects of our show but the Ghost of Future seems to be one of the paramount moments of the play based on audience reactions, and it truly is a sight to be seen. The 11-foot apparition envelops the stage and is a powerful image for audience members to behold. I was originally supposed to play the Ghost of Future, but the costume and stage director decided against it because I would not have enough time for the costume change. Initially, I was a bit bummed about not being able to conduct the puppet, but having the opportunity to witness it on stage every night left me in awe. It was a breathtaking image and it was apparent in our audiences' spellbound reactions that Future was one of the memorable parts of the play.

School performances take place at 10:30 am and there is a 10:00 am actor call. Anne Herring, director of education does the curtain speech for all children's shows. During her speech, she reminds the audience to turn off their cell phones and spends a little more time explaining to the kids about theatre etiquette. Many children may not have had the opportunity to see a play in their lifetime. She explains to the students that this is live theatre: the kids can see the actors and the actors can also see you. Anne also explains that there will be a talkback after the show and students will be able to ask cast and crew questions about the performance.

When the show was finished we did an abridged bow and the actors collectively found a place to sit on the stage. Anne facilitated the talkback and called on audience members. During every school performance we've done so far, students asked about the Ghost of Future and how it is operated. Deanna, one of our stage managers and the person who took over my role as the Ghost of Future, would come out and explain how she operated the puppet, and how she maneuvered the backpack and pole attachments. Many students spoke about liking the rising of the grave and watching Scrooge fall into it. Students also appreciated the moment when Scrooge woke up in his bed realizing that he was back in present time and space.

Other times we were asked how we learned all our lines and how we memorized blocking. As a cast, we explained that memorizing isn't always the easiest or most exciting part, but repetition and pairing our actions with blocking to create muscle memory seems to be the most effective. I include how I listening to recordings of my lines continuously--- even while I am sleeping helped me to overcome some of the parts of the play that were more difficult to memorize. I also speak of the outlines that I have created for myself and how knowing my lines and my cue lines

are crucial in the journey of memorizing for the stage. Often we were asked where we were from. The students seem to be intrigued by our diverse cast. Stephen Patterson and Anne Herring are from upstate New York, Paul Bernardo was from New York City, Chris was from Oklahoma, Parker Simms-Chin, Stephen Lane and Carly Swain was from Florida, Sarah Caroline is from Texas, and I'm from Connecticut. Carly and Parker were often asked how they were able to manage being in school with their rehearsal and performance schedules. Carly was home schooled and was often completing homework assignments backstage. Parker went to public school but his teachers worked with his schedule and were very supportive of his budding career in the performing arts.

Performing for the student shows reminds me of the importance of being a role model and having a positive impact on the lives of young students. I remember clearly when I saw my first play. My nana took me to see a production of *Annie* on Broadway. I was so enthralled by what I experienced while being in the theatre. Sharing the personal story of how I became an actor and the work and schooling it takes to solidify the craft is always a surprise to young audiences who may not fully understand the amount of time and dedication it takes to create a show.

December 12, 2014

Today Parker asked to work with him on his lines with him. He consistently has been saying his line as, “sticks of stealing wax”, as opposed to “sticks of sealing wax”, which is the actual line. A few of the other actors tried helping him as well. Anne Herring went over a very in depth explanation of what sealing wax was so that Parker could understand what it was that he was saying. For some reason, the idea of sealing wax was gross to Parker. I'm not sure exactly why; maybe he was simply being a kid. While working with him I ask him detail about the given

circumstances of that scene. Understanding the given circumstances helps give context and meaning to what you are saying and make it easier when navigating the lines. Parker has a short attention span though and his attention is quickly diverted elsewhere. I don't think he ever answered the question but I was happy to give him a glimpse into actor technique.

During the second Act, Parker and I have a 15-minute break before he goes on stage to say his "sticks of sealing wax" line. He approaches me again with his script and has me say his cue lines for his final scene.

December 17, 2014

Shows are going great. I feel like I have a good handle on my characters as well as differentiating them. Having a character analysis for each of my characters has provided me a process to help get myself into character. I refer to the details of the nine questions before every performance and they serve as my inspiration to help navigate the vacillation of playing Daughter and becoming my other characters. I feel gratified with my performances while incorporating Uta Hagen's questions into my work, and thankful for the structure it has created for me.

My cast is uniquely wonderful and I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to share the stage with them and perform this timeless Christmas story with an audience every day and every night. I feel like my actor stamina is being exercised and I appreciate the growth I feel from within, knowing what I'm doing on stage and working with a cast that feeds the ensemble nature that the show demands.

This time in my life has been a challenging in many ways outside of working on this show. Between writing my graduate thesis, teaching in-school workshops, taking graduate classes, working in the Education department, and rehearsals for *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* repertory shows, I often feel swamped. In addition to this, my personal life has been trying. I am still grieving from the loss of my mother and the expectation of being the confident well-spoken woman that everyone expects to see absorbed a lot of my energy. Inside I feel sad but the world is continuing and I have to keep up to speed and move forward with it. It is draining at times and has proved to be a true test of character. In an attempt to destress and take care of myself, I decide to get a massage. I'm trying to find a way to help myself relax so that I don't wear myself out with my rigorous schedule. I end up finding a really great Groupon and am able to get a two-hour massage for only \$60. It felt so good to lie there while someone rubbed my physical tension away. Due to my demanding schedule, I find ways to I must deal with things one day at a time. Also, I have to organize myself for success. The nine questions helped provide structure for me to do that on stage and now I must find ways to attain success off stage. Using google calendar helps me stay organized. My internship uses this platform for our schedules at the theatre. It makes figuring out what I have to do on any given day a lot easier and allows me to prepare for achievement in the show as well as school.

December 20, 2014

The curtain speech is becoming one of my favorite parts of the show. I really enjoy welcoming the patrons and preparing them for our show. Every audience is different, sometimes they are buzzing with energy, others are preoccupied with sending their last texts before the show starts, other times they are all ears. I love being able to assess and address the audience and present

information to them. I'm getting very confident and comfortable with directly addressing the audience. Anne and Jim's notes were really helpful in getting audience response and I feel like each time I am getting better and better at making them listen and getting their attention while on stage. I try really hard to make eye contact with as many people as possible so that everyone really feels like I am talking to them. I incorporate my curtain speech into my warm up for the show and I practice it several times each day before I go on.

I continue to feel very confident with my stage performance and maneuvering the migration between characters. The details of the nine questions, although I still refer to them before every show, are innately within me and I truly enjoy the bridging the traverse of my characters. I feel like I have found a technique that resonates with me and I have also applied these questions to other works outside of this show. Currently, I am working on a total of three shows. One of the shows, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I have minimal lines. I find applying these questions add to the emotional life of my characters even when they are not speaking.

December 23, 2014

Carly, Sarah, Anne and I have decided to get Christmas gift cards for our dresser, Shayna and Stacy, our stage manager. Holding true to the Christmas spirit and the appreciation of others we wanted to recognize acknowledge these individuals who have given so much to the success of the show. Shayna has been very accommodating as our wardrobe dresser and is there to serve our costume needs. She is pleasant and courteous and a joy to be around. You can tell that she cares and takes pride in the work she does and is dedicated to the success of the show. As our dresser, she helps us get in and out of our costumes for the show and is responsible for all of the quick changes. She also washes our costumes and cares for our wigs and accessories and preps

everything for the next show. To show our appreciation the women in the cast collectively decide to get her and Stacy a \$30 gift certificate to Trader Joe's.

In addition to those gifts, I decided to get a gift for everyone in the show, including all of the crew. I had such a great experience working with everyone both personally and professionally, so I wanted to give everyone a small token to show how much I appreciate their role in this production.

January 4, 2014

Today was our last performance and I'm sad to have to say goodbye to all of my cast mates. As an actress, the closing of a show is a part of the job. Often times the show may last a few weeks, or maybe a few months. If you are lucky enough the likelihood of having a job that lasts more than a year is possible. I've had a great opportunity to share the stage with a bunch of wonderful people whom I've had the opportunity to grow and learn from on a personal and professional level. Each of them have left a lasting impression on me and I have grown a lot from watching their work. Now it is time to say goodbye. Some plays are harder to say goodbye to than others, and my time here on *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* has afforded me an opportunity and experience that will forever be dear to my heart.

When the show ended, I and the other interns had an hour break and then had to report back to the theatre to strike the set. I am happy to be able to help with the breaking down of the set, however, I do wish I could have attended the cast party that took place after instead of having to go directly to strike. It would have been nice to celebrate our success and put an official ending on my time spent during this show.

James Erwin, our scenic designer, is in charge of the strike and I confer with him to see what projects he would like me to begin. He started by having us rip up all the wood flooring from the set. All of the salvageable planks of wood are to be put in a pile and are donated to a local high school to help with their scenic needs. James asked me to stack the longer, good planks of wood and throw away the short planks of wood and any planks that were broken. Although I had help, it took a while to get all the planks up. While I worked on this James also instructed me to hammer down all the nails and staple in the stage platform. It was important for the all the staples to be nailed down because the platform was going to be reused, and we needed to make it safe enough to walk on. It took about two hours until I felt the area I was working on was safe. While working on this, I ended up with a few small splinters. I understand why the use of gloves and hard toes shoes are important when building and breaking down scenery. Strike took about four hours to complete and marked the official ending to *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*.

CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS

Here I will analyze my organic technique in manifesting and exploring of some of my characters, cultivated by the rehearsal process, movement and voice training. My analysis will focus primarily on my characters and actor process.

A production is like an organism. Acting truthfully requires taking in the moment, expanding the limits of imaginations, and committing to the unique circumstances of the story. As an actor in a production, I function with the other actors and my characters function with their counterparts. As a result, my character choices are determined by my characters' relationships and interactions.

The rehearsal process is invaluable in honing and creating the fine points of characters' physical and vocal life. I have always loved the rehearsal process because of the opportunity it provides to inhabit my characters' worlds and explore my choices in union with the other actors. For example, while I was rehearsing the beginning of her second scene I worked with Chris to establish the relationship between Belle and her husband. At one point in rehearsing the scene, Chris chose to grab me by the hand and softly pull me into him. He then kissed me and briefly took a moment to gaze into my eyes before we said anything else to one another. This moment was an unscripted organic development that we had not previously rehearsed. Given Belle's character analysis, it felt very natural, true to my character and the spirit of the scene. It represented the coming together of our characters' development and portrayal to find truth in the moment and as a result what worked best in the scene.

To continue Belle's growth based on her character analysis, I wanted her voice to give the impression of nurture and concern. Her speaking voice was soft, soothing and comforting in her

everyday life. Though I considered her voice to be gentle and subtly strong, it was passionate when connected to her visceral emotions.

My transitions out of Daughter to the character of Belle began with me sitting on a wooden chest on the perimeter of the stage. A few lines before it is my cue to enter the scene, I open the adjacent chest as Daughter conscious enough not to distract the audience or draw too much attention to myself while still retaining the narrative of the play. I pull out the costume piece for the next character and when I stand, I first reached for the shawl, carefully putting it on my shoulders and fastening it at the collar. I reached for my hat, securing the bonnet so that it fit nicely on top of my head, and I waited for my scene to begin. As I put on Belle's costume, I begin to think of Belle's given circumstances, this guides the transition to the character of Belle. Although the stage was bare, I allowed my imagination to transport me to Hoover's, a local coffee shop. Here I wait for Scrooge who is more than an hour late and contemplate breaking of my engagement. Sitting in the coffee shop decorated with Christmas renderings and the nostalgia of holiday season, it is here that I allow Belle's reality to sink in. Allowing myself to feel the joy of the season heightened the disappointment that followed; the weight of knowing if there really was no future with my dear Ebenezer. It is under these imaginary circumstances guided by the nine questions that I was able to transform into the character of Belle.

When I finished my scene with Scrooge I slowly walked back toward the wooden chest, giving the audience time to take in our Ebenezer and I, as we realize our final moments with one another. I leave the stage as Belle and then reenter downstage left as the older Belle brushing my daughters' hair and preparing my two children for bed. The transformation from Belle to older Belle is suggested through costume as I have removed my bonnet and turned the shawl I was

wearing over displaying a new pattern and signifying a change in the space in time. Her gait is a bit more relaxed and free flowing as the older Belle now has had two children and walks with more knowledge and ease of her body as a woman. Again I imagine myself in the given circumstances of the scene. Leaving this scene, I turn back to my position as Daughter, I listened on the sidelines and checked in with my brother to see if he was understanding the story.

Contrary to Belle, Quarreler #1 had a deeply resonant boisterous voice that was heavily weighted by the circumstances of her life and the knowledge of her intimidation towards others. While the Quarreler #1 is a much less sophisticated character than Daughter, the transition from Daughter to Quarreler#1 was similar in nature. Quarreler #1's physicality is slumped and unrefined. Sitting again on a wooden chest at the side of the stage a few cue lines before I enter the scene, I opened the adjacent chest as Daughter, refined and straight. I pulled out the long coat and stood up as Quarreler#1, shoulders dropped with the beginnings of a shallow slouch. I used the physical act of putting on the coat while walking backward into the scene to roll my shoulders forward into a slight slump. This provided a distraction when bumping into Quarreler#2 and helped bring a real sense of surprise in our scene. The transition was blocked so that I would "accidentally" knock into Quarreler #2 and a confrontation would arise. This conflict, though resolved almost immediately by a signaling bell, finalized my transition to Quarreler # 1 by bringing out my character's aggression. In the spirit of the story's magic, this bell brings a complete erasure of any sense of conflict or aggression.

When I finish with my Quarreler#1 scene rather than shift immediately back into Daughter I was instructed to walk completely off stage and then came on again as Daughter a few lines later using a different entrance. I thought of Daughter's lines and her super objective of getting her

brother excited about the rest of the story and helping him to understand a Christmas tradition of our family. As the lights begin to fade I reentered the stage as Daughter and take my previous position sitting on the wooden chest on stage.

Based on my character analysis of Daughter, as the oldest child and her desire for independence, and experimenting with different pitches and vocal patterns in order to adapt her voice, I gave instinctively gave her a smooth even tone voice. She spoke matter of fact: words distinct and with clipped consonants. Almost all of Daughter's dialogue focused on narration. Consequently, it was important to clearly enunciate her words so the audience could hear her effortlessly. Daughter's back is to the audience for most of her lines so maintaining consonant and vowel clarity along with carrying the volume to the ends of my lines was critical for the narration and audience understanding of the story. However, once we started rehearsing on the actual stage I received feedback that I was dropping the ends of my lines when I spoke. My vocal energy was not going through to the ends of my lines, therefore, I was not fully heard to the audience.

Kate Ingram, my voice teach at UCF introduced me to Cicely Berry's book, The Actor and Text. In her book, Berry describes actors as "interpretive artists" and presents her methodology of speaking "line to line," "thought to thought," and "sentence structure to sentence structure." She reveals the relationship an actor must apply to the text so one can adapt to the language while still being fully heard. Practicing Berry's technique helped me to script my breathing and find the most effective ways to communicate to the ends of the line, stress the right syllables and words to enunciate my lines effectively.

My vocal sessions with Ginny Knopf, the dialect coach, helped to shape my characters' voice. She worked with me to fully grasp the British RP and Cockney dialects. The Ask List served as a great reference when translating my lines to British RP. The Ask List is a list of words one can refer to when learning the British dialect. In my regionalism, being from New England, I use the "ae" sound, similar to how you would say "mat", "bat" or "cat." When practicing the "ask list" in British RP dialect that "ae" sound is changed to and "ah" so those words become "maht," "baht" and "caht." Some defining factors of the Cockney accent included dropping the beginning "h" sound in a word, for example, "have" would change to "ave." Another distinguishing factor for the Cockney dialect was "ing" endings were switched to "in" endings and I used the glottalized "t." "The glottal stop is a plosive created by the complete closure and the opening of the glottis (vocal folds) (Brett 1)." While navigating this it was important to explore the negotiation between the audiences' understanding of what I was saying and staying true to the accent. In some cases, the glottalization was closer to the "t" sound for this reason.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The journey to the end of *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* was bittersweet. As the show closed I was simultaneously working on the repertory productions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Although I was sad to say goodbye to my fellow actors, I was ready to focus my attention on my upcoming performances. Working on *A Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, was an exciting, reflective, learning experience and having the opportunity to hone my skills, put theory into practice and learn while working, was priceless.

Although I feel all of my characters were fully realized, great attention was given to the relationship between Belle and Scrooge. The release of the engagement was a defining moment in her life, and utilizing the nine questions helped to successfully create realistic characters. I empathized with her story and complex emotional journey. Belle had more lines than all of my other characters, excluding Daughter. I felt I portrayed her consistently and as I developed her I identified with her pain, due to this, it became easier to bring her emotional life on stage each night. Belle was also a favorite because Dickens' story explores two different stages of her life: one where she breaks off her engagement with Scrooge and the other when she is happily married with children. I gauged my success by the audience's reactions, the feedback I received from my director, and through self-evaluating consistency in my performance each night. Although my other characters had fewer lines, I believe I was successful in playing them because each of their lines was connected to a fully developed backstory.

One area that I would improve upon is my willingness to take risks and give myself permission to make mistakes during the rehearsal process. For example, I would have taken more risks with my singing during the initial phase of learning our music director's versions of Christmas carols. I played it safe most of the time, allowing the other members of the cast to lead, due to my lack of confidence with my singing voice and wanting to get the notes right the first time. I love singing but am not always confident with the beginning stages of learning a song and memorizing harmonies. In spite of this, our music director was very helpful in facilitating my learning. He allowed me to record all my harmony lines so I could practice at home.

Due to the nature of my internship and schooling, I was overloaded while working on this show and sometimes found it difficult to find time outside of rehearsal studio to work on my characters. Because of this, I focused my attention greatly while in rehearsals and tried to get as much as I could out of the time I was allotted to rehearse. Furthermore, if I had the opportunity to perform this show again I would gladly do it with a much lighter schedule so that I would be able to focus all my attention on that one production.

In the end, I found that the transformation process changes for every role depending on the character and the setting of the play. While working on these characters I had to submit myself to the imaginary universe of the play. Furthermore using Hagen as an analytic platform allowed me the freedom to make the transition from playing the character to truly becoming the characters.

Uta Hagen's nine questions inspired a concrete framework for building and understanding my characters. It proved effective for creatively honing, expanding and individualizing my portrayal of each character. Internalizing the time frame, given circumstances and defining characteristics deepened my investment in each scene. This contribution to my actor process brought about each character's distinct emotional life. Further, Hagen's nine questions moved my acting forward by carving well-defined objectives in my range of characters. With clear objectives, I was able to focus my energy on becoming and then embodying each character.

The examination of self-identity led me to a deeper understanding of character development. A *Christmas Carol: Being a Ghost story of Christmas* immersed me in the nostalgia of past Christmas memories with my family. I worked on this production still reeling from the loss of my mother and grandmother, grieving through my first Christmas without them. Though I was no longer a daughter or a granddaughter, these questions helped me inhabit Dickens' characters to the best of my abilities despite being in the midst of grief. I was able to fully develop several characters that were very different from each other, and very different from myself, adapting to them physically, vocally, utilizing the techniques that I learned in graduate school and bringing each character's story alive on the stage.

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