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Tal Como Eres

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TAL COMO ERES

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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DEDICATION

In memory of my Abuelita, Mery Carrasco, whose love made people become better people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my mentors and developers Steve Pearson & Robyn Hunt. I also want to thank my family, friends, and furry companions for all of the love and support during this cross-country endeavor. Ultimately, I want to thank my Creator for giving me the opportunity to share what He has placed inside of me with those around me.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to write my own theatrical production which would solely include myself as the actor. I drew upon my experience of traveling abroad alone to create a ten-minute solo show. I re-enacted the experience with the use of dialogue, singing, and dancing.

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INTRODUCTION

Epiphanies are peculiar things. They tend to show up when you least expect them and are masterminds of hiding when you are seeking them out. My epiphany showed up on Christmas break during an episode of Seinfeld.

In this particular episode, Seinfeld and his friend George had decided to write a television script. However, they were experiencing writer's block; an ailment I was also sharing at the time. While I was watching these two characters struggle on screen, a thought crossed my mind. If Seinfeld and George simply took a step back and looked at the bizarre yet incredibly entertaining happenings in their own lives, they would have a hit on their hands. Suddenly, I had an epiphany. I, too, experienced bizarre yet incredibly entertaining happenings in my own life. In fact, there was a particular event in my life during which strange happenings seemed to multiply like mitosis: the trip I took by myself across Europe. This is the story of how my solo trip became my solo show.

CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

Initially, our class began this search for our solo show topic by listing possible ideas or “threads”. My threads were listed as follows:

1. T-mobile
2. Disney Songs/Princesses/Dressing Up/Male Relationships
3. Bi-racial upbringing/Spanish as a first language/ Large, close family
4. Country Music
5. My Hair
6. Ireland Trip
7. God & I/ Being a P.K. (Preacher’s Kid)

Once I decided to write about my trip to Europe, I made an outline of the most interesting and memorable events that occurred on my trip:

Ireland-
Can’t get on plane
Plane Ride

Italy-
Arrive in Lodi
Bus to Milan
Have to ask in Spanish
People don’t speak Spanish in Italy
Milan is dirty

Arrive in Milan-
Tip Busboy

Scary streets
Locating "Hostelo"
Italian restaurant, people eating, party breaks up, everyone leaves
People take me to hostel
Price haggle
Restroom in Hallway/ shower in bedroom/ bidet in bedroom

Milan Day 1-
Explore- Subway to Duomo (Milan Cathedral)
Gelato/ Books/ The Door of Duomo
Buy bus ticket to Venice
Cappuccino/ Secret garden
Book hostel but don't print directions
Back to hostel/ get pizza/
Ask directions but don't understand because they don't speak Spanish
Go to bus/ Eat pizza

Arrive in Venice-
Lost/ Call Dad/ Bridges everywhere
Go to Bus depot and ask for "The Fish Hostel"
Get on bus/ Get off bus/ Meet two men
Take me back/ Ask the hotel workers
Find it/ He's mad
Gives me his card and tells me to come by his restaurant tomorrow
No towels/ Jacket

Day 1 Venice-
Early to go get tickets to Paris
Frustrated/ Don't have money/ Don't want to explore
Go to cathedral/ amazing
Not allowed to wear pants or t-shirt if you are a woman
Restaurant!!!
Back to depot/ Buy tickets
Try on dress
Try to book hostel/ doesn't work/ upset/ take a nap & plug phone
Game night at hostel!

Day 2 Venice-

4-cone gelato

White roses

Glad I looked around yesterday

Overnight Eurostar/ Brazilians with great skin

Day 3 Arrive in Paris-

Directions

Only enough money for hostel/ find 5 extra euros

Euros= He put it there

Walk through cemetery = Hamburger

Sleep in park

Go to Notre Dame and Arc De Triumph

Homeless woman but I have no money = Raining

Back to hostel/ get sandwich = it's bad/ exchange/ raining

Go to charge phone/ left adapter/

BREAKDOWN= Supposed to help

Call Abuelita/ Check bank account/ Talk to Mom to transfer money

Want to sit in room

Go to subway and go to Eiffel Tower

Gorgeous= Restoration= Beautiful

Waiting for text from Mom/ Peddler/ informed of Subway time

Get text and money/ We run/ wrong train/ switch/ no more trains

Freaking out/ Spanish speakers!/ Creeper follow them/ split taxi/ Get home

Day 4-

Leave early- flight to Ireland then shuttle to bus depot

Bus station

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH

Once I had made a concise list of the happenings of my trip, I realized there were several blanks I had to fill.

I was unsure as to approximately how expensive it had been to bring overweight luggage onto the Ryan Air flight out of Ireland. I went to Ryanair.com and researched their luggage prices. I discovered that they would have quoted me a price of approximately 285 euros to bring on a 60lb piece of luggage.

I also forgot the name of the city I initially flew into on my way to Milan. I went to Google.com and used their maps to pull up a map of Italy. I scanned all of the major cities and Lodi seemed to be the most familiar.

When I was in Milan, I visited a beautiful cathedral in the middle of the city but I could not remember the name. I again went to Google.com, typed in "Cathedrals in Milano" and browsed through images. I recognized the image of a cathedral called the Duomo and instantly recalled seeing that name on the map of the city.

Finally, I could not remember the name of the kind gentleman who drove me back to Venice, spent an hour helping me find my hostel at 11pm at night, and then fed me amazing lasagna at his very expensive Italian restaurant. I went to Yahoo.com,

looked through my email and found a Christmas card he had sent me with a picture of his wife and daughter. His name is Ugo Negro.

CHAPTER 3

EDITING

Initially, I was hesitant to show my piece to Robyn Hunt, my MFA Professor. It wasn't because I was afraid she wouldn't like the script. She's gracious about everything we do. What made me most nervous were the humorous bits I had written. Serious topics are easily received because the perception of pain is pretty universal. However, comedy is highly subjective. Thankfully, she received it well and her editing notes mainly focused on tightening and specifying the action in the script.

My initial script was nine pages long and had a running time of twenty-eight minutes. Our allotted time was approximately fifteen minutes. I went home and cut several lines out of the script and tried to replace dialogue with movement wherever possible. I was successful and my final draft was only six pages long and had a running time of approximately twelve minutes. Besides shortening the length of the play, below are some of the notes she gave me after my first presentation of the solo show:

I initially had several poses I was planning to do in order to show pictures of different people I saw on my trip to Italy. However, the amount of poses was causing the show to run too long so Robyn suggested that I select just three poses and choreograph a small dance to describe my experience. I did so and used Lara Fabian's "Caruso" as the soundtrack. This ended up being my favorite part of the show.

There was a point in the script where I was “lost in Italy”. I moved from point to point across the stage with Maxim Rubtsov’s “Italian Polka” music as a soundtrack. Robyn had me simplify this into walking four swift lines which formed a square as I said the places I needed to go out loud. My initial idea had left me feeling literally at a loss for how to fill the time on stage while the music played. I liked how clean and clear this new movement felt.

During my first presentation, the only props I used were a suitcase, a teddy bear, a cell phone, and a French beret. Robyn suggested I add a watch to illustrate my time restraints when it came to catching flights and trains. She also suggested a camera to further solidify that I was a tourist. My favorite prop suggestion was a computer keyboard to use when I was calling my Grandmother on Skype.

Robyn suggested I make the Skype sound effects with my mouth instead of a sound cue. This was her advice for several of my sound cues so that the play could move at a quicker pace and give me more control over the action. I used The Delta Rhythm Boys “Allouette” to illustrate my trip to Paris and, at Robyn’s suggestion, instead of resuming the soundtrack at the end of my dance, I sang the chorus as I waved goodbye to Paris.

Finally, Robyn suggested that I speak Spanish throughout the play, especially at the end. I loved this idea the most.

CHAPTER 4

FIRST REVEAL

The next step was presenting my piece to my peers the night before the performance. Although I was nervous, the entire experience ended up being incredibly memorable. We performed late into the night and it was amazing to realize that we had spent the last two years together and were now presenting our final assignment. My play was well received.

After this first performance, Robyn had a few more notes for me to implement. Most of these were small adjustments such as bringing my camera out sooner to take pictures, pretending someone steals a kiss from me in my dance, and being careful not to bang my suitcase on the new marley. Some of her more theatrical notes included performing my dance pieces without “apology”, implementing a silent cry rather than dialogue, and “racing for the curtain” after I had reached the final quarter of my play. She was very impressed that I had managed to shorten the play by fourteen minutes yet still present a concise and complete story.

CHAPTER 5

REHEARSALS

I began rehearsing at home and in empty classrooms about two weeks before my first presentation of the solo show. This was easily accomplished since I did not have a large set or cumbersome props. The most tedious part of the rehearsal process was choreographing the dances. However, it was also the most enjoyable. I timed each movement so that it flowed smoothly with the music and still told a story. At first, I was not sure what I would use as a bench but then Steve Pearson, my MFA Professor, offered a solid wood bench he had made for a previous show. It worked perfectly to represent a bed, bench, bus seat, and other locations on my trip.

Memorizing the script was fairly simple since the dialogue came from actual situations I had experienced. It was basically re-telling a story.

My biggest breakthrough came when I was able to rehearse in the actual space the day before my first presentation. No one was in the building so I worked freely and creatively. Once I had rehearsed it in the space several times, I felt much more confident about presenting it the next day. The choreography and timing of the show felt natural for the first time.

Once the day of our actual performance came, I resigned myself to the work-room upstairs in order to rehearse. There was sawdust everywhere and the space was

much tighter than my actual performance space would be, but once again, the seclusion gave me a feeling of creative liberty. After about an hour of rehearsing, it was time to go downstairs, listen to the sound of my peers and teachers fill the empty seats, and wait for my turn to debut my solo show.

CHAPTER 6

The Play Script

Tal Como Eres

Cast:

Traveler- Yvonne Senat

Note: All people and locations referred to in the script, other than the Traveler, the 1st suitcase, and the bench, are imaginary. The only person who ever speaks is the Traveler. Actual physical props will come out of 1st suitcase.

LIGHTS: Lights up on Traveler standing upstage of bench

T: 285 Euros?? No, no, no, that can't be. For the 2nd suitcase? There must be a mistake. I checked online and it said I could bring a 2nd suitcase and it wouldn't be extra. *(to the lady in line behind her)* I'm sorry. Ok, a maximum of 20 kilos. How many kilos is the 2nd suitcase? *(Listening to Clerk)* 35 kilos... okay *(To flight clerk)* But I don't understand how it's so... *(Listening to Clerk)* yes, 20 euros...*(Listening to Clerk)* PER kilo?? *(Deep breath)* Oh Lord. Okay. *(Listening to Clerk)* No, no I can't afford that. *(to the lady in line behind her)* I'm sorry. Is there anything else I can do? *(Listening to Clerk)* In twenty-five minutes. *(Listening to Clerk)* Do I have someone who can pick up the suitcase? Oh yes, actually, my ride, I can call her to come back and get it. Ok, *(to lady in line)* sorry, you can go ahead.

Crosses upstage of bench , looks to left, crosses around bench once and stops downstage, Calling on her cell phone during the cross

(Calls. Gets Operator.) International code first... *(Calls. Gets Operator.)* What? International code first... *(Calls. Gets Operator.) (close to tears)* No, no, no, Yvonne you're going to Italy. Okay... *(thinking)* Okay... 35 kilos *(eyes land on suitcase.*

Decision) I'll just have to put all the clothes on. Where's a Bathroom?

Crosses upstage in a Box-pattern and ends up Upstage Right of bench, walks through imaginary door of bathroom. Places smaller suitcase against bench. Lays imaginary 2nd suitcase on the floor, opens the top and stares at contents

Ok, Underwear first.

Looks up as bathroom attendants enter bathroom.

Oh, I'm sorry ladies, did you need to clean in here? I'll move this out of your... you have a cell phone. Is it Irish? I mean, is it from here? Would you mind if I make a quick phone call? I can pay you! (*Listens to Reply*) Oh, ok, thankyou so much.

Crosses to bathroom attendant and gets her phone. Makes phone call.

Lindsey! Oh my gosh, me quieren cobrar casi Quinientos Mille Euros para traer mi otra maleta! Do you think you and Phil could come back (*Listens to reply*) it leaves in 20 minutes (*Listens to reply*) I know, the traffic, I'm so sorry (*Ladies speak*) (*To Ladies*) Really? You're like... angels or something! (*To Lindsey*) Lindsey, there are two amazing bathroom attendant ladies who said they'll put my suitcase in the maintenance closet and you can pick it up tonight when the traffic's gone (*Listens to reply*) (*To Ladies*) Is 8 ok? (*Ladies speak*) (*To Lindsey*) They said it's fine. (*Ladies speak*) (*Going towards suitcase and giving it to the ladies*) Just call this phone when you get here (*Ladies speak*) Ask for Marie. Thanks so much Lindsey! I'll pick it up when I come back next week. Ok, I gotta go. Ok, thanks again, bye! (*Gives one of the ladies the suitcase, begins to leave, goes back and HUGS her then rushes to airplane*) Thankyou!

SOUND: On An Airplane

Dance- Flight to Italy= on an airplane trying to get comfortable and dealing w/ airplane people

After song ends, Traveler exits plane, looks at watch, runs in place to indicate running after a bus, arrives in time to get on bus, sits on bench bouncing

Everything's on water. It's like Disneyland. Wow.

Exits bus. Breathes, takes a picture. The following is done in a Z-pattern

Okay, so the directions said to turn left, cross one bridge, cross another bridge and then turn right. The Fish Hostel.

Enters Hostel. Writes down name, shifts, gives money, shifts, gets key.

Gratzi.

Oh wow, this room is huge. *Looks at watch, repeats z-pattern backwards.*

Ok, so I have to go to the Train depot and buy my ticket to Paris for tomorrow, one day there, fly back to Ireland, then fly home. What was I thinking?

Walks into Train Depot.

Jeeze, it's so packed in here. Okay, where's the ticket counter? Man, this line is so long.

SOUND: The Club

*The man in front of her turns around and she is face to face with heaven. =)
Traveler dances with mystery man.*

Hello

Oh yes, I'm American. California.

And you? Oh wow, Georgia.

Oh, I just finished a study abroad program in Ireland and felt like traveling for a week. Might as well, huh?

How about you? Oh, vacation, nice.

I like it too, it's kind of like Disneyland.

So where you headed to next? Rome?

No, never been. I've heard it's nice, I'll have to go someday

So, is this your first time traveling alone too?

Oh you're not?

Your wife?

That's so nice. Oh, I think Window #3 is open. Mm hmm, yep, nice meeting you too.

Walks down the street and takes 2 pictures. Stops at Mask shop. Walks in, looks around then gasps as she finds a beautiful mask on the lowest shelf (behind the bench). Puts it on and suddenly...

SOUND: *Caruso*

Dance: A Venetian mask dance exploring the different sights Traveler sees that day. Bridge view, Gondola, Gelato, cathedrals, a couple, walks back to bed, Lays down on bed. Removes mask and grabs Pooky the teddy bear.

LIGHTS: *Lights fade.*

Sound: *Alouette* **AND LIGHTS:** *Lights up on Traveler asleep on bench.*

Dance: Trip around Paris= waking up, checking time, putting on hat & scarf, exiting room, take a picture, walking by bench, paying for ticket, sitting on bench sideways, someone steals a kiss, exit train, Take 3 pictures, ask for directions to Eiffel, get on train, exit train, see Eiffel, attempt to take picture, get rained out. Enter room.

Just my luck, as soon I make it to the Eiffel, I get rained out.

Gets laptop out. Makes skype noises: log in then 3 rings

Abuelita? Abuelita? Si, me veas? Hola! Como estas preciosa? Si, soy en Frances. Si, increible no? Si, me encanta. Ahora esta lloviendo. Me ha mojado. Si. No mas quieria saludarte y decir que te extrano mucho y espero verte pronto. Te quiero mucho tambien. Ciao ciao. *kiss kiss*

Makes hanging up sound.

Okay, check Wells Fargo. Wait, what? Oh no.

Pulls out Cell Phone. Calls Mom.

Mom, no, I'm fine... My account says I'm overdrawn \$200. I don't know how... I've been budgeting but then the exchange rate makes it so hard to keep up. (controlling herself) are you sure? I'll pay you back when I get back. No, everything else is fine. I'll pay you back though. You get off work in an hour. Ok, no I can wait. Thanks Mom, I'll pay you back. Love you too.

Hangs up. Silent Scream.

Ok, I have an hour. I can't spend any money. Oh, my subway ticket.

Remembers subway ticket, gets it out of pocket. Looks out window. exits roomsits sideways on bench. Looks out window. gasps, the Tower.Exits.

She softly sings: Allouette, Gentile Allouette. Allouette, Gentile Allouette.

Walks... begins to look up until she's right under it. Takes a picture.

LIGHTS: Fade to Night

LIGHTS: Lights Up on Traveler standing upstage of bench facing front

Excuse me, when's the next shuttle to the Galway airport? 1:45am. Do you think I have enough time to go to O'Malley's across the street? Thanks.

Opens door, exits onto street, looks around, enters bar.

SOUND: Sigh No More

Enters O'Malley's, sits on bench facing downstage

A pear cider please.

Responds to someone at the bar.

What? Oh, California. No, actually I'm leaving today. Was here for three weeks on a study abroad trip and then just spent the last week in Italy & Paris. By myself. Yeah, it was scary but awesome.

SOUND: Music fades a little

This? My mom gave me this before I left (*shows charm*) . It's an irish prayer,
"May God hold you in the palm of his hand". He did.

Italy? Loved it. Do you speak Italian? Espanol?

SOUND: *Music gradually gets louder*

Yo tambien. Sabes, espanol y italiano son completamente diferente. De veras!
(laughs)

LIGHTS: *She continues talking. Song ends, Lights fade to black.*

FIN.

CHAPTER 7

AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS

My mom flew from California to South Carolina to watch me perform my ten minute show about a trip she'd already heard me re-tell tirelessly. Seeing her in the audience made me remember why I'm an actress. It's because of the love. Within the last two years, I had shared a stage with at least 50% of the people in the audience and a large amount of the remaining percentage had either directed, taught, or mentored me. They knew what went into the process of creating a solo show and they held my first attempt in their hands like a tiny crystal figurine. Both nights I performed, I stepped off the stage feeling accomplished and successful.

The feedback was positive too. Most of it came from world travelers who knew all too well about the tiny hostel rooms, the rare social customs, and the absence of sanitary toilet seat covers.

My "silent scream" was heard by those watching. This acting choice was a concern of mine but upon asking, I was reassured that this silent section was understood and appreciated.

Relieving my biggest concern, people laughed where I wanted them to laugh! Not during each and every section that I wanted and not in the same places both nights, but they did laugh... more than once.

As to the question of whether or not I want to expand my piece, the answer is no. The original script was already expanded and Robyn helped me chisel it down to a perfect gem.

As to the other question of whether or not I plan to perform it again, I can say that I am not opposed to doing so. To be honest, a part of me still doubts the value of my piece to an audience of strangers rather than my peers and family. However, because of that, I have considered performing my piece specifically for my large extended family who could not afford to fly to South Carolina to see the original performance. Who knows? Maybe after I have had my self-confidence boosted by my family's feedback, I will consider performing it for the theatre-going public.

Even just listening to my solo show's soundtrack again as I write this thesis reminds me that my creation, the first of its kind by me, is beautiful and worth being viewed by the world outside of the Center for Performance Experience in Columbia, South Carolina. I'm not sure how to go about this or if I even have time to focus on truly pursuing a revival with everything else going on in my life. I know that I sound uncertain and probably flaky but I am being honest about where I stand.

Before I finish, I just want to explain the motivation behind the title of my piece, "Tal como eres". It came from the final words my Abuelita (Grandmother in Spanish) said to me days before she passed away. "Dios te ama tal como eres." "God loves you just the way you are." This truth has picked me up off of the ground numerous times. Whether I perform my solo show again or not, I will rest in the fact that I used my

experiences to create art, my own art. And that people got a chance to see me “just the way I am”.

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