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TREAT

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TREAT

by

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American University, 2010

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Theatre

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Cat Friesen for teaching me what selflessness truly means.

ABSTRACT

The contents included here consist of the research, editing, rehearsal and performance process of *TREAT*. There is also an analysis of how I plan to proceed with the work in the future. The full script is included. The solo show provided me a way to synthesize everything I learned in my Masters of Fine Arts program.

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SCRIPT

TREAT

MFA Thesis Solo Show

Location: A sidewalk near Central Park in New York City

Time: Early sat AM the sun has already come out and it's shining beautifully on

Her spot. The Year is 2014.

Props: She carries a cart with books, blankets, and a sweater. The contents of the cart are important since it is what she needs for the bare minimum that will keep her happy. She has chosen a life without luxury.

Rose: A Homeless woman by choice. She is brilliant. She is 25.

Penelope: Her best friend a teddy bear. Only Rose hears Penelope talk.

LIGHT CUE 1: Lights UP, SHINING LIKE THE SUN

(Singing off stage)

ROSE: There's a bright golden haze on the meadow! There's a bright golden haze on the meadow, and the corn is as high as an elephants eye (ENTER) and it looks like it's climbing clear up to the sky!

(Rose walks quickly to her spot. She is rolling a grocery cart with lots of stuff in it. Looks around sees a man in her area. She leaves the cart to the side. Takes out newspaper. She moves to a spot without the cart. She stops feels the sun on her face. She can do better. She moves a few inches over. Feels the sun on her face. Almost perfect. She moves another inch over. Perfect. She is at peace. She puts newspaper down, spreads it out

meticulously. She takes out a small notebook she was carrying in her chest. Looks at the man. Goes over to the trash bin takes the pencil, brings it back to the newspaper. She goes to shopping cart takes out a Penelope a stuffed bear and sets her down on the news paper. She notices a man headed for the bench she slowly watches him walk. Then whispers something to Penelope. She goes over to the bench. She sits down on the opposite side of the bench. The man is on the left side of the bench and she is on the right. She looks away from him. He clearly doesn't know it's her bench. She moves an inch closer to him to intimidate him. Then another inch closer. And then slowly shifts her gaze from away from him to right in his face. She makes a BIG NOISE! He gets up and runs. Victory.

Rose: High Five Penelope! Oh what a beautiful morning , oh what a beautiful day, I've got a wonderful feeling, everything's going my way!

Rose does her happy dance. As if she almost forgot why she needed that side of the bench she remembers. She looks around. The coast is clear. She reaches behind her and grabs her Mcdonald's breakfast sandwich which was attached to the bench. Making sure no one sees she puts it on. She reaches behind her grabs her breakfast sandwich, which was also attached to the bench. Rose throws trash out into garbage can and tip toes to Penelope and scares her.

Rose: You gotta watch that furry butt of yours Penelope. At first the infant, mewling and puking in the nurses arms. *(Twelfth Night)*
(She holds Penelope's head and rocks her.)

Penelope: Fletcher??

Rose: Shakespeare! I have said that quote numerous times. Are we going to have to

increase are Shakespeare studies?

Penelope: Yes

Rose: Good answer.

(It starts to rain, Rose sings the following song having Penelope chime in occasionally.

Getting the umbrella which is under the trash bin.)

Rose: When that I was a little tiny boy, With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, A foolish thing was but a toy, For the rain it raineth every day. And when I came to man's estate with hey ho the wind and the rain, gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate for the rain it raineth everyday. Act 5 Scene?

(Pause)

Rose: No! No.

(It stops raining. She gets up goes to her shopping carts. Digs through clothes, misc. stuff, and takes out her complete works of Shakespeare. (it has stopped raining puts umbrella down on ground or in shopping cart). An extremely large book, which she values and gives her utmost respect. She opens it to Act 5 Scene 1. Penelope is correct!

Rose looks at Penelope.

Rose: So wise, so young they say do never live long *(Richard the III)* You're such a smarty pants.

(She goes to sit down on newspaper. Opens up where she left off. There was a Mcdonald's French fry marking the spot. She lays on her stomach, and moves Penelope next to her. She silently reads the monologue to herself only saying out loud certain words. This is how she memorizes. Occasionally lifting her head up to picture the words in space. She is an extremely fast memorizer)

Rose: The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, **unsex** me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no **compunctious** (Repeats this word three times) visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

(She is memorized. She looks around the street corner for props. She picks up a can of soda, puts the break fast sandwich wrapper under the soda can, the soda can being on its side. She picks up the spoiled hard French fry.)

Rose: Ok Penelope you are the audience

(Sets Penelope looking upstage),

The Mcdonalds egg McMuffin wrapper is the grass. The diet coke can is the mound, and the French fry is Lady Macbeth.

(She starts her performance)

Rose: The raven himself is hoarse

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

Under my battlements. Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, **unsex** me here,

And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full

(She notices two boys staring at her)

A Dude-Yo check her out.

B Dude-Dude, who's she talking to?

Rose: Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;

Stop up the access and passage to remorse,

That no **compunctious** visitings of nature

(She look at boys again)

A Dude: I dunno man, but that's some fucked up shit

Rose: Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between

the effect and it

B Dude: Yo do you have your iphone, this is youtube worthy my friend.

(She Stops)

Rose- Excuse me sir, if you put this performance on youtube, you will have to pay me the rights.

Rose:

(Directed to Penelope)

Do you believe the language of our youth????!! (She imitates them) “ Dude, that some fucked up shit... yea dude, man shit's fucked, fucked up shit... fuck shit, fuck shit, shit fuck!!!...

(Scaring the boys away)

So, I thought.

(Rose attempts to finish the monologue)

Rose: Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances

(A woman interrupts her performance by offering candy)

Rose: No, Thank you.

You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,

To cry 'Hold, hold!'

(Rose finishes the performance without anymore interruption.)

Rose: So, what do you think?

Penelope: I think you need more rehearsal.

Rose: Thanks a lot.

(Pause Rose eats French fry)

What do YOU want to do?

Penelope: Let's read the news paper.

Rose: Absolutely not. Come on, let's people watch.

(Rose puts Penelope on her lap)

Penelope: I'm bored.

Rose: Sh! I'm watching.

(There's no one walking)

Okay fine but just the comics.

(Rose looks in the garbage for newspaper)

Rose: Sports, Sports , Sports, sports, sports.

(Rose looks at Penelope.)

Penelope: King Lear!

Rose: Scene.....

Penelope: 3!

(Rose smiles)

(Rose continues to dig through the garbage. She finds something that grabs her attention.

She reads intently. Moves on from it. You can tell that the content distresses her. She reads a little more and then..)

Rose: “Two horses left to die by eating wood, manure. The horses had no food or water for months , even though the lake was apparently visible to them from their stall, they could see the water but they couldn’t get it.”

(Rose is visibly distraught. She looks at Penelope goes over and hugs her.)

Penelope: Read more

Rose: Do I have to?

Penelope: Yes.

Rose: “Russia anti-gay law casts a shadow over Sochi’s 2014 Olympics”. The International Olympic Committee said Thursday that it had no grounds to challenge a Russian law widely perceived as anti-gay.”

(Another headline one after another)

“Poem gets high school football player suspended”

(She turns pages faster and faster reading the headlines)

“Nevada school shooting. Teacher killed two students wounded”

“Dozens killed by Bomber at Baghdad café”

“Miley Cyrus and her naughty antics are something to be worshipped”

“Sweat shops are the way to go”

“ The level of anti Semitism in the Europe over the last five years has considerably grown.

French Jews are increasingly facing violence. Many students are hiding their Yamakahs under their hats for fear of bullying.”

(Rose keeps turning pages. But she can't handle it anymore. She rips the newspapers.

Runs to Penelope. She has so much anger she cannot control herself. The boys interrupting her does not effect her like the world around her. They are minor compared to these stories, she hugs Penelope.)

Rose: Penelope, I need you to hug me, and put your arms around me and tell me what we are doing is ok.

Penelope: It's ok, it's perfect.

Rose: But why do I feel so numb? If we were out there maybe, just maybe I could have pushed the horses to the water!!!

Penelope: How do you know if you would have been near them?

Rose: But there's horses everywhere that need water. And that boy that wrote the beautiful poem that got kicked out of school, maybe I could have written a letter to the school board!

Penelope: You're being ridiculous.

Rose: But maybe retreating isn't the answer. Maybe fighting is?

Penelope: Stop.

Rose: Is this the right way?

Pen: Of course it is, we love our life together!!!!!!!!!!!!!! How can you question that!

(That's exactly what rose needed to hear)

Rose: No, no, you're right, you're right I just needed to hear you say it. I love our life too. And there will always be horses not getting enough water, we can't save all of them. So we must stay here together and create our own little world. The Rose and Penelope world. A world where the most important thing is finding the spot on the corner where the sun shines the brightest. Oh, Penelope I love you so much. You're not mad at me are you?

(Penelope is sulking)

Rose: Oh forgive me Penelope. You know that's why I don't like reading the Newspaper. It always gets me upset.

(Penelope is crying)

Rose: Penelope you mustn't cry. I didn't mean to imply that I didn't want to live with you anymore. You are the best bear in the world, and it's an honor to share this corner with you everyday!

(Rose rocks Penelope and starts singing the lullaby)

Rose: "Once upon a time and long ago

I heard someone singing

Soft and low

Now when day is done

And night is near

I recall this song I used to hear

My child, my very own,

Don't be afraid, you're not alone

(The boys are back she looks at them)

A Dude: Look who it is, the homeless star.

B Dude: Too bad we didn't get that video, maybe she would have gotten to stardom and had been able to afford some better cocaine.

Rose: Sleep until the dawn

For all is well

(She knows they are there but tries to ignore them. She can't. She calmly kisses Penelope, sets her down She picks up the umbrella to use as a weapon against the boys.)

Rose: If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge?" Merchant of Venice Act 3 sc 1)

(The following phrase in Hebrew)

May God bless you and guard you.

(She gets her composure. She turns around and finishes the lullaby)

Long ago this song was sung to me

Now it's just a distant melody

Somewhere from the past I used to know

Once upon a time

And long ago..."

Penelope: Can we go somewhere else?

(Rose nods, as she gathers her things, she exits singing the song.)

Rose: When that I was and a little tiny boy, With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, A foolish thing was but a toy, For the rain it raineth every day.

LIGHT CUE 2: BLACK OUT

DESCRIPTION

While working on *TREAT*, I had the privilege of collaborating with my fellow Masters of Fine Arts candidates along with professors Robyn Hunt and Steven Pearson. For an entire semester, I enjoyed the rare opportunity to brainstorm, to revise, and to think creatively and openly about the content of my solo show.

At first I was very pre-occupied with creating a well-made play that had a clear beginning, middle, and end as well as a theme. However, I started thinking outside the box, soon after beginning our solo show class. Robyn Hunt used free writing to help us escape the burden of our expectations. I never before considered myself a writer but found that once I forgot about grammar, spelling, and making sure people liked my work, I was proud of creation; I couldn't believe I could tell stories through my writing. During these free writing sessions, we read our work out loud, and I received a lot of positive feedback without even seeking it, and this was extremely rewarding. The free writing gave me confidence, without which, I would never have been able to write a fifteen-minute show.

During the free writes, I found a passion for subjects that I thought I could turn into a solo show. Two of these ideas were having artwork come alive in an art museum, or an audience member interrupting a theatrical performance and finishing the show herself.

Both excited me, but I kept coming back to the idea of playing a homeless woman. I have been interested in homeless people ever since a childhood trip to England with my parents. There was a homeless man living outside my hotel, and he would spit on me every time I passed him. One day I decided to avoid him by entering the hotel on the opposite corner from him; he had changed sides and spit on me yet again. I had so many questions as a child encountering this man.

Some of my questions were: why did he hate me so much, and how did he know I would be coming around a different corner to enter my hotel? It was not until college that I had another memorable encounter with a homeless person. This individual lived outside a CVS, and she asked me to get her some food, so I went into CVS and got her a chocolate candy. I felt really good about myself for doing a good deed and proudly walked up to her with the chocolate bar and offered it to her. She looked at me and said she didn't like chocolate. I was shocked that a seemingly desperate woman would turn down free food. My parents always taught me beggars can't be choosers and she was literally a beggar. After this encounter I started to pay more attention to homeless people, even asking friends and family if they ever had an interesting experience with a homeless person. My college singing teacher told me he talked to a homeless person, who knew three languages.

I became fascinated by the homeless and found an article discussing how some homeless people choose to live on the street. Giving up material goods and forfeiting relationships in favor of a seemingly simple street life were concepts I wanted to transform into a solo show, an idea I came up with in college when I had the opportunity to create a senior cabaret show. Because of time and scheduling I decided against a

cabaret show, but I had actually written a lot of material for it and it was full of songs because I was a musical theater major. I always loved the image of entering as a homeless woman and opening the top of a piano as if it were a trashcan to grab a sandwich; it stuck with me over the years. For my MFA solo show, I was initially disappointed that the piano scene could not work the way I had envisioned simply because it is a solo show, and I would need a piano player to play the songs. I realized singing *accapella* could be just as effective and maybe even more so because my character Rose realistically would not have access to a piano or a piano player.

When I decided to definitely write about a homeless woman, I met with Robyn and compiled a list of questions to help inform my story, including: Where does she come from? Why does she choose this corner? Where is this corner located? How old is she? Whom does she interact with? What does she do with her time? How smart is she? Where does she go when she is not at this corner? What was her life like before she became homeless? These were important questions to ask because I wanted to develop as real a human being as possible. Very early on in the process I knew I wanted to work in Realism. Robyn and I developed the idea of Rose having a stuffed animal friend. Although I didn't know what kind of stuffed animal her friend would be, I knew this would be a great way for me to incorporate dialogue into my solo show.

I gave myself a timeline for creating Rose's story and writing the show, enjoying the structure of working to accomplish my goal. This timeline included the due dates for writing three drafts, memorizing, staging, rehearsing for Robyn, and assembling all my final props. After compiling a list of questions to inform my first draft I decided one night to just go for it. I wrote for about two hours and completed a full rough draft. I was able

to finish this stage in one night while sitting on the sofa at my boyfriend's farm. This first step was pretty intimidating and I'm glad I was able to write in a peaceful and supportive location. I emailed Robyn my first rough draft, and a few days later she emailed me with her thoughts and comments. One of the most important ideas Robyn gave to me was to react to the street intruders and listen to them without having voiceovers of the passers by. This suggestion was a game changer because it brought Rose's personality to life and forced me to think more creatively about bringing the street corner to life. Robyn also suggested replacing some long Shakespeare quotes with Rose's actual voice. There was a section where I was using lots of clichéd imagery, and Robyn pushed me to continue to discover Rose's unique voice. As I revised several more times, her character became much more developed, as did her friend Penelope. I chose the name Penelope in part because I liked it and because of my obsession with reality figure Kim Kardashian, whose sister just had a daughter that she named Penelope. During these revisions, Rose became more intelligent and even developed a photographic memory. She also began to enjoy performing, but Robyn didn't want her Shakespeare performances to look like I wanted to use this solo show as a vehicle to showcase how well I perform Shakespeare. Robyn had the great idea to have interruptions happen during the Shakespeare performances. During one of the revisions I really wanted Rose to have a breakdown and wasn't sure what could propel her into that breakdown. So I went back to the questions that Robyn and I compiled and settled on why does she live on the street? Because I decided it was Rose's choice, I had to think of a reason why. I decided that the world around her made her so sad that she wanted to isolate herself. I started reading some newspaper articles and sadly it was pretty easy to find horrible occurrences happening in

the United States. I then added a section where Rose reads these newspapers headlines and it makes her sick, resulting in her a breakdown and the show's a climax. Although I was no longer preoccupied with making a structured play, somehow through the drafts I naturally created a beginning, middle and end.

When I conferred with Robin about my show's theme, she wondered if it even needed a theme. The audience will take away from the play what they want to take away whether or not there is a defined theme. Robyn said that this play is giving the audience an opportunity to see the world according to someone they may never have given second a glance. That is exactly what I set out to accomplish with my play: for the audience to see the world through someone else's eyes. After this discussion with Robyn, I quickly came up with the title of my show, which is *Treat*. I thought that Rose is a little treat for an audience and perhaps could change the audience's perspective of homeless people and maybe "treat" them kindly.

When I began rehearsing, Steven Pearson gave me some ideas for productive memorization, since I had been memorizing by rote. He gave me the idea to think about emphasis, imagery, and intention while memorizing. I continued to do this and by using this technique was able to find Rose's vocal tone, which led to her physicality. I continued to work this way and when I felt that I was ready I had Robyn see the full show. She said that Rose reminded her of a clown like Groucho Marx because of how meticulous she was. I took this under consideration and this helped tremendously with timing and how I interacted with the space and with objects. I was lucky to have Steve help me with my set, and he also had some pointers on how Rose could interact with Penelope. Steve showed me that I could move Penelope's head very slowly to have her

look around. This little gesture really brought Penelope to life, and I'm thankful that Steve had that wonderful idea. Amazingly and perhaps appropriately, Robyn found a Penelope in a Church market.

Rose and Penelope both continued to change and develop during my performances. Both nights I didn't want to get stuck in line readings, so I would do my best to listen to Penelope, to watch her, and to notice anything different that she did. I became very connected to Penelope and really saw her as alive.

This process of creating a solo work is one of my proudest moments. I never thought I could write, direct, and perform myself, and I am thankful for the mentorship I was given to inspire and fulfill this desire to create my work that came solely from my life experiences.

ANALYSIS

I had the opportunity to continue to develop my solo show with 1812 Productions in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania this summer but due to family circumstances was unable to accept this opportunity. 1812 Productions has a solo show residency where they invite women performers to work on their solo show for a week, are provided food and mentorship, and are able to invite an audience to see the work at the end of the week. Before I knew I wouldn't be able to develop my solo show with 1812, I started brainstorming ways to improve my show. I started thinking about making it a full-length play, but then wasn't sure how to expand it.

I really like its succinctness and the journey that Rose experienced in the fifteen minutes. As I thought about developing my solo show into a full length play or just expand it a little more to forty-five minutes, I thought I could write two more fifteen minute scenes that would come before or after *Treat*. Perhaps a woman takes over the corner to preach about religion or politics and slowly gathers a following or the man that Rose scared away returns and tries to enjoy reading his newspaper once again but continues to get interrupted. The idea is to have many snippets of what could go on, on a street corner. Perhaps all three of these people could end up interacting and I could change costumes and turn into the various people before the audience's eyes. I could also keep the solo show fifteen minutes and continue to edit and get feedback from peers, but again, I am really proud and content with the work that I put on in December 2013. I don't feel the urge to change it quite yet. I believe creating this solo work has made me a

more confident artist, and I don't have to depend on other people to create art. However, I also do not want to make further developments of my solo show a priority right now. I want to let it sit for a while, and if I change my mind and have desire to work on it and have people see it, of course I will further explore the lives of Rose and Penelope. I love that I could put on a piece of work whenever I want and will continue to think about *Treat*, and when the time is right, I will bring it out and continue it's story.

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