

2019

A Mother Honors College Alternative to the Thesis

Amanda L. Ellenburg

Follow this and additional works at: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/theses_dissertations



Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ellenburg, Amanda L., "A Mother Honors College Alternative to the Thesis" (2019). *Theses and Dissertations*. 347.

https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/theses_dissertations/347

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at CSU ePress. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSU ePress.

A *MOTHER* HONORS COLLEGE ALTERNATIVE TO THE THESIS

Amanda L. Ellenburg
2019

THE ANALYSIS OF A MOTHER
COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

By

A MOTHER HONORS COLLEGE ALTERNATIVE TO THE THESIS

A Thesis Submitted to the
A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
HONORS COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS IN THE DEGREE OF

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS IN THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Signature: _____
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Thesis Advisor

Signature: _____

BY

Susan Tomkiewicz
AMANDA L. ELLENBURG

Signature: _____

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

2019

Signature: _____

Date: _____

THE ANALYSIS OF HONORS THESIS WRITING: *A MOTHER*

By

Amanda L. Ellenburg

A Thesis Submitted to the

HONORS COLLEGE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors in the Degree of

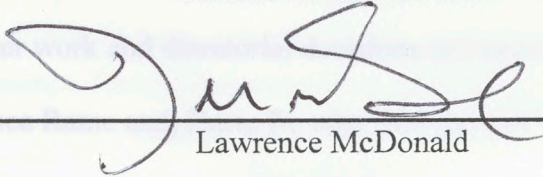
BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS

THEATRE PERFORMANCE

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Theatre Thesis Advisor

Signature:




Date:

30 May 2019

Lawrence McDonald

Thesis Advisor

Signature:



Date:

5/31/19

Susan Tomkiewicz

Committee Member

Signature:



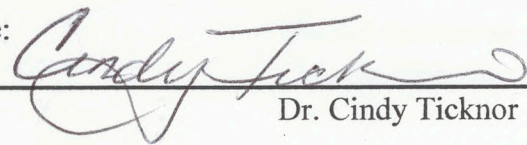
Date:

30 May 2019

Dr. Ryan Lynch

Honors College Dean

Signature:



Date:

5/31/19

Dr. Cindy Ticknor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thesis was intended to inform readers about the one-woman show I performed, *A Mother*. In addition, my thesis described job positions within my field and the research I conducted for my production. Essentially, this may allow readers without any experience in the theatre to understand the process an actor undergoes during a production. Typically there are many people on a production team performing various roles. Instead, my tremendous challenge was acting as producer, director, actor, event coordinator, part designer, and marketing director. This paper includes acting advice from classmates, my instructor, Larry McDonald, and details of my use of the acting methods of Sanford Meisner. The most significant resources I used for assistance with character work and directorial decisions are included. The script of *A Mother* was written by the late Franca Rame and, Dario Fo who won the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature.

- Tim McGraw
- Rachel Blackburn
- Krystal Kennel
- Sam Renner
- Chris Head
- Jeri Spradley
- Cara Chittenden
- Zanir Malik Griffin
- Dylan Schindler
- Jameson Osborne
- Austin Phillips
- Tauheedah Abdallah
- Cara Ann Chittenden
- Andrew Finley
- Xander Sackmann
- Nicole Sherman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Special thanks to Columbus State University Theatre Department and Honors College for their

INTRODUCTION

resources, assistance, and dedication to my education.

MATERIAL SELECTION

This production would not have been possible without the following people using their training,

PLOT

resources, time, energy, and talent to help my team along the process:

VISION

RESEARCH

Larry McDonald, (Theatre Advisor)

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Susan Tomkiewicz, (Honors College Thesis Advisor)

Ryan Lynch, (Honors College Advisory Board)

PRODUCTION REFL

Cindy Ticknor, (Honors College Advisory Board)

Jessica Tasse, (Projections/Sound/Lighting Designer)

APPENDIX A: REHEARSAL

Hannah Rice, (Stage Manager)

APPENDIX B: REHEARSAL/PERFORM

Tim McGraw

Rachel Blackburn

APPENDIX C: PRODUCTION RESEA

Krystal Kennel

Sam Renner

Chris Head

THERE IS A PERFORM

Jenn Spradley

Cara Chittenden

Zamar Malik Griffin

Dylan Schindler

Jameson Osborne

Austin Phillips

Tauheedah Abdullah

Cara Ann Chittenden

Andrew Finley

Xander Sackmann

Nicole Sherman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	iv
MATERIAL SELECTION.....	v
PLAYWRIGHT BACKGROUND.....	vii
PLOT.....	x
VISION.....	x
RESEARCH.....	xv
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT.....	xx
PRODUCTION REFLECTION.....	xxii
APPENDIX A: REHEARSAL LOGS.....	xxvii
APPENDIX B: REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE REPORTS.....	xxxiii
APPENDIX C: PRODUCTION RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTS.....	liv

THERE IS A PERFORMANCE DVD INCLUDED IN THE BACK

A MOTHER: HONORS THESIS

INTRODUCTION

For my Honors Senior Project, I did not undertake a “normal” Senior Thesis. Instead, I chose to complete the alternative to the thesis; I put my Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree in Theatre Performance to use and produced a one-woman show. Theatrical conventions allow individuals to discuss and grasp controversial concepts one might ignore otherwise. My thesis was intended to inform readers about positions within the theatre business, as well as showcase my acting process, production process, and the research I conducted for my production. This allows readers without any experience in the theatre to understand the process an actor undergoes during a production.

Typically, there are many people on a production team with various roles. Instead, my tremendous challenge was acting as producer, director, actor, event coordinator, part designer, and marketing director. Thereby, my thesis forced me to stretch myself as an artist beyond my self-diagnosed limitations. However, I did not conquer this feat on my own. My theatre advisor was Lawrence (Larry) McDonald, my honors thesis advisor was Dr. Susan Tomkiewicz, and my honors advisory board member was Dr. Ryan Lynch. My advisory board was required to attend either my public performance on April 17th 2019 or my preview performance on April 16th located in the Lab Theatre at the Riverside Theatre Complex at 7pm. In addition to my board, there were many other students and CSU Theatre Faculty members that assisted me in this

process. Their advice was desperately needed, partly because the script did not include anything other than the spoken text.

The script was written by the late, infamous, multifaceted artists Franca Rame and winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature Dario Fo and was titled *A Mother*. The dynamic duo proved their love for each other and respect for each other's work when Fo won the Pulitzer and shared the honor with Rame ("DARIO FO AND FRANCA RAME: A NOBEL FOR TWO" 1998). The playwrights' experiences and how they influenced my production were included in my thesis.

MATERIAL SELECTION

Originally, when I decided to complete the Honors College Senior Thesis, I was drawn to the idea of writing and performing a stand-up comedy show.

While I was enchanted by the idea of being by myself on stage, I did not want to graduate from Columbus State without showcasing more acting work. With a one-woman show, I was able to fully express myself through the lens of my character instead of myself. One-woman shows—at least in this particular story—are focused on invoking various reactions throughout a period of time rather than a specific reaction from the audience like in stand-up. The performer's freedom to make personal character choices, supported by the script, allowed room for creativity in my work. During stand-up routines, the comic can make eye contact with the audience and use them as an acting partner, but are fully aware they are in fact an audience of people in a theatre. On the other hand, performers and the production team typically prefer the audience to be dimly lit enough that most are not visible to the performers, if at all. Conversely, a one-woman show

required more creativity because I could not rely on reacting with the audience as they are. Instead, I created a world in which the audience is a very specific person or group of people, not an audience in a theatre, because I have to live as the character in the show. The audience became a part of the story rather than a group of people I attempted to force to laugh.

Once I decided to produce a one-woman show, I read several plays and needed to choose one within a short period of time. Larry McDonald, my acting coach and advisor, brainstormed different shows with me. He asked Rachel Blackburn, a theatre history professor, for some advice during the process. Rachel provided Larry with a volume of plays that introduced me to Franca Rame and Dario Fo's captivating work. Rame and Fo are infamous for their activism and are world renowned for creating such intriguing productions that push social limits, such as mental illness, gender equality, religious issues, political corruption, drugs, violence, and almost everything in between ("List of the plays of Dario Fo and Franca Rame"). Political and social activism are extremely important to me, so I was immediately captivated by their work. I could not choose between two of their shows, *Coming Home* and *A Mother*, so I asked Larry for his input. *Coming Home* deals with oppression as a housewife and a woman's incapacity to discover love in the male dominated society we live in. *A Mother* is about a mother who is processing the devastating news that her son is a terrorist. Out of the two, *A Mother* was the choice that challenged me more as an actor because of the subject matter and the number of decisions I had to make for the show, which caused it to be Larry's first choice as well. After I later reflected on Larry and my conversation, my instincts matched his from the beginning, but I was not sure if the Columbus community was ready or willing to listen to my message regarding terrorism. Many people might have chosen the easier option that was going to be less work. To the

contrary, I followed Robert Frost's suggestion and took the path "less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

Larry and I finished cutting material from the script in February. Though Larry and I made cuts to contemporize and homogenize various cultural colloquialisms found in the original script, we did not serve as playwrights, because my professor and I only modified the play by cutting lines. We met and discussed the script and he answered my numerous questions. After bouncing some ideas off of each other, we decided the script needed to be cut and we would individually do it and meet again with our cuts. My confidence skyrocketed after our meeting; we had almost all the same cuts, and he helped me clarify some moments in the script. I was set with the task of finding a stage manager who would run my lighting and sound cues and a designer who would collaborate with me. Playwrights create scripts that include situations with high-stakes, while creating a world in which nonverbal expression (i.e. sound and lighting effects, movement on stage, set design, costuming, and overall stage pictures can be fully understood). They lay the foundation for actors and directors in many ways. Most shows include stage directions of some sort. Tennessee Williams, an award-winning playwright, for instance went far in describing blocking/setting in great detail. However, Franca Rame and Dario Fo took it in a different direction, avoiding any written stage directions or setting in their shows which adds to the challenge.

PLAYWRIGHT BACKGROUND

Rame and Fo were, in many ways the perfect duo. Fo was a male playwright, "director, stage and costume designer, and on occasion he even compose[d] the music for his plays," who

won the Nobel Prize in literature on October 9th, 1997 for his work. The irony in this situation was that a male writing about women's issues won a Nobel Prize, yet his co-playwright, wife, fellow political activist and "leading actress" did not receive the same credit. According to nobelprize.org, "Franca Rame... has assisted in and contributed to the writing of many of the plays they have produced in their 45 years of theatre together. She has also assumed the administrative and organizational responsibility for the Fo-Rame Company," (Claesson). The Fo-Rame Company represented both of their names, yet Rame does not receive the accolades she deserved. Most websites speak about her acting and her role as Fo's wife. The very thing that they discussed fighting against, the inequality between men and women, was put on them. The strangeness of the situation is that she is listed in biography form on the Nobel Prize website, yet their website and every other website does not mention her winning the prize. The couple's work is world renowned with several exhibits in their honor in different cities throughout Italy, Spain, Denmark, Finland, and The Netherlands. The exhibits include "paintings, masks, hand- and string puppets, tapestries, sketches for stage design, stage machinery, direction notes and costumes," (Claesson).

The playwrights lived very interesting lives before and after fame. Dario Fo's father worked on the railways in Northern Italy. Dario was born in 1926, where he grew up surrounded by glass-blowers, smugglers, tellers and puppeteers, (vii, Hood). He started his theatre career as a set designer before deciding to perform. He succeeded greatly in the escapist entertainment of post-war Italy, comedy with women. During the beginning of Fo's career in contemporary Italian cinema, his work was preferred by politicians of the ruling Christian Democrat Party (Hood). His life was changed by a beautiful and well-known actress, Franca Rame; Fo later married her in 1954. They both put their talent to good use and had great success producing, writing, and

performing shows together. They were a powerful unit not only because of their talent, but also their political influence and fight for justice.

In the 1950s, Italians had a “right-wing clerical Christian Democrat government” which held film, theatre, and broadcasting with a tight grip and watchful eye. It was a government that claimed they care for their citizens but was socially regressive by trying to take women’s rights away, which led to the death of their citizens. The government also watched them with a very close eye, monitoring activity to indicate legality (Hood). During Fo and Rame’s prime, policemen would attend their performances to clear the government’s name by “following the scripts with pocket torches to ensure that there were no departures from the officially approved text” (Hood). Fo and Rame had a history of producing long shows. *A Woman Alone & Other Plays*, the collection of twenty monologues by the couple, were meant to be performed all together, even though they are not about the same subjects (Hood). However, the playwrights found it was important to watch the shows consecutively because they all deal with women’s rights and social issues. The show is meant to be a dark comedy; therefore, it required me to “play around” more and find the comedy in the tragedy. The laughter in the moments of the deepest sorrow may have helped audience members deal with their own life circumstances in a healthier way.

Besides the being a show of “Dark Humor,” this work is also easily seen as being a scandalous piece because it touches on the taboo subject of terrorism. Fortunately one phenomenon that still holds true is that it is easier for a scandalous piece to get approved in a theatre than on film. Fo started out in film and could have been quite successful if the arena allowed for him to test its limits and express himself. However, theatre had gotten away with more scandalous pieces because of the adjustments the audience has to make to believe what

they are watching in an unconventional manner is real life. It is much easier to equate film with reality, because it is not live in front of an audience in only one setting.

positions: a

PLOT I to delegate tasks and collaborate on designs. I held meetings with Jessica Tasse, who

goes by Tasse, the projections/sound/lighting designer, and Harold Rice, my stage manager.

A Mother consists of many flashbacks, which highlighted the significant people in the development of the overall plotline of the show. Elizabeth, my character, was required to impersonate people in her life, reflect on her son's childhood and the quality of her parenthood. She reenacted situations in her life before her son's crimes, to make her story known to the audience, and so the audience would understand her relationship with her son. My production showcased the mental process this mother had undergone in light of her son committing an act of terrorism. Throughout the entire show, my character struggled with discovering how she influenced her son to commit this horrendous atrocity. The show ends shortly after Elizabeth illustrates a recent dream she had about her son being brought to trial for his crime, but as a five-year-old child. At the end of the play, my character accidentally murdered her son in the dream sequence by hugging him so tight that he dies. The last moment is Elizabeth warning the judge that she "held her son too tight" and now he is "dead." It showcases to the audience how devastated Elizabeth has been since she discovered her son was a terrorist.

was to explain my

VISION an slang, including colloquialisms that were specifically Italian. All of which could

have confused an American audience, especially considering my neutral American dialect and

back of There were many avenues I had to explore with my piece in terms of all the different types of design, subject matter, acting choices, and the number of other technicians I needed, so I

researched several playwrights and actors in order to gain insight on how to approach this project. After a discussion with Larry, I decided to include two technical positions: a projections/sound/lighting designer and a stage manager. I worked with the designer and stage manager to delegate tasks and collaborate on designs. I held meetings with Jessica Tasse, who goes by Tasse, the projections/sound/lighting designer, and Hannah Rice, my stage manager, where we discussed the world of the show, my vision, and my goals in the process. Additionally, I informed Tasse and Hannah on what tasks I would expect them to complete during the rehearsal process before they committed to their roles. To have the pleasure of collaborating with such hardworking, talented, loyal, charismatic, and loving individuals was a huge blessing. However, I remained feeling as if the entire process was on my shoulders. Hannah was at every rehearsal with me, so I did not have to write down notes that I gave myself or that Larry has given to me. Hannah saved me a tremendous amount of time in rehearsal, so I could focus more on rehearsing the show and less on writing notes.

My vision for the show was for my audience to picture themselves in my position and learn that my character's situation can happen to anyone; one of my main goals in this production was to neutralize the setting as much as possible. The audience is more willing to disregard that I am a native English speaker because I am using a *neutral* American dialect. Beyond that, there was no possible way to add lines because of copyright laws to explain my vision to the audience further. The show was originally set in Italy, so there were many examples of European slang, including colloquialisms that were specifically Italian. All of which could have confused an American audience, especially considering my neutral American dialect and lack of a specific location in my setting. Lines that were too specific to the location and time period were cut. It is very important that the audience can easily picture themselves in my

character's position without immediate reservations based on time period or setting. In addition, the idea of who the audience was to me needed to change as I transitioned into multiple characters with different voices, which deepened my understanding of my craft. When I transitioned into other characters, I researched the location of those interactions and the setting became where the audience sat. Then, the audience became part of the setting each time I transitioned into Elizabeth. I hoped that my setting was noticeable but not distracting, so that my message was clear to the audience.

The audience observed an unknown tribulation because most have not experienced having a son who is a terrorist; however, I wanted them to feel like a terrorist could be anyone of any class, any race, any gender, any culture, any religion, and any age. Throughout my lifetime, I have heard many people assume that a terrorist attack was done by a Muslim before they even saw the perpetrator. Recently, when I was attempting to explain the premise of my show to my uncle, I mentioned that the mother in the show had a son, who was a terrorist, and my uncle replied "Was he Muslim?" This was an extremely disheartening response that I was not prepared to hear. It took an immense amount of restraint to maintain my composure. Instead, I replied in a calm manner, "No and that is part of the reason I am doing this show. Throughout this process, I wanted people to not associate my message with any one group of people—that is why I purposefully made my character's social status to be higher class." There was nothing he could say back to that.

It is a possibility that someone could know one of the terrorists involved in these mass school shootings and other acts of terrorism from the past few years. It is important that I shed light on issues we have at home. My hope was that all of my audience members felt as if they learned something new from my show. However, I did not want to throw all of my ideas into

their face. If the show did not blatantly tell audiences what I wanted them to learn, they might be more willing to discuss after the show and come to their own conclusions. However, fear caused me to reinforce to the audiences after curtain call (the part of the show after it is complete where actors bow) that I wanted them to take away that this could happen to anyone and to not automatically judge a criminal's family for their actions. That is why I chose to not have a pre-curtain speech before my show. Rather, my stage manager informed the audience before the show began that I would give a post-curtain speech and a Q&A session after the show, as she handled other housekeeping. My post-show speech pertained to the importance of avoiding judgement, by focusing less on cultural stereotypes, especially those associated with terrorism.

While preparing for my show I thought back to a book: *The Terrorist's Son: A Story of Choice*, which I was introduced to my freshman year at Columbus State, as part of my Freshman Learning Community. In the title of his book: *The Terrorist's Son: A Story of Choice*, the author, Zac Ebrahim foreshadows that terrorism is a personal choice. I also got the pleasure of attending an event at CSU, which showcased his story, and included a Q&A session. Opposite to my character whose son is a terrorist, Ebrahim's father was one of the terrorists who planned the first bombing of the World Trade Center, among many other attacks. Our stories (Elizabeth and Ebrahim) relate to each other. In the book, Ebrahim is aware that people wonder if he is like his dad; people wonder if he taught him to be a terrorist growing up. As Elizabeth, I dealt with people's theories on how my son transformed into the "Angel of Vengeance," (Fo and Rame, *A Mother*). The entire show consisted of my struggle to discover how I contributed to this fatal outcome. I explained how I tried my hardest to ensure catastrophes and smaller negative events did not happen. During this process, I was reminded of that book because he deals with the

similar assumptions from others. It is not the fault of the people who raised you or the people you raised. Like Ebrahim, my character was dealt a “bad hand.”

As I have stated, the show was originally set in Italy, but I wanted to make sure that audiences were not focused on the idea that this is far removed from them and their culture. I decided to be a wealthier woman from California, but the audience did not know that and hopefully assumed I was at least middle class because of my outfit and projections of my home. I imagined my uncle who assumed the show was about a “Muslim” terrorist, which effected how I crafted Elizabeth to be before her son became a terrorist. Thankfully Ebrahim’s *Ted Talk* produced a book which highlights the fact that it is a personal choice to be a terrorist, no matter what background you have. It is interesting that has inspired me to pursue activism theatre for years without me realizing until half way through this process, when I read his book again. When I opened the book, I was shocked to read the words of my eighteen year old self at the top of the inside bind: “Ask Zac to write a play.” Until this year, I never believed I could have directed and acted in a production so focused on activism at CSU. It has been unheard of for most of the department’s existence for someone to produce a one person show, especially concerning subjects as controversial as terrorism and politics (Ebrahim).

There were also a multitude of similarities between my character’s struggles and Eva Khatchadourian’s obstacles in the film *We Need to Talk about Kevin*. In the film Kevin’s mother Eva tries to love her child, Kevin, despite his strange behavior and the increasingly dangerous comments and actions as he gets older. But unbeknownst to Eva, Kevin’s previous acts were child’s play compared to his final act, which is beyond anyone’s imagination. Similar to Eva, my character Elizabeth spoke to countless doctors about my son and my concerns over his mental and physical health. Eva never could connect with her son, but she always tried her

hardest. I crafted Elizabeth to be the same way. Franklin Khatchadourian, Kevin's father, did not believe he was as evil-minded as Eva saw Kevin. Part of the issue is Franklin's naivety and the other half is that Kevin is typically behaving normally around his father. Eva notices it very early on and is concerned over Kevin's future, as is Elizabeth with her son. I crafted Elizabeth to be a combination of the two parents. She was naive while witnessing her son's erratic behavior because she convinced herself he was only acting up because he was a child. However, Elizabeth's first instincts typically recognized how potentially dangerous her son's actions were. She just assumed he only had the potential to hurt her or their family, and that he would never actually commit an act of violence (*We Need to Talk about Kevin*).

RESEARCH

An actor's job is anything but easy. There is much more work involved for actors than memorizing lines and having a good vocal quality. Actors are storytellers that truthfully take on the characteristics of an individual that is similar or very different to oneself. As Sanford Meisner, a late acting instructor who created the Meisner Acting Method, preached "[an actor] lives truthfully under imaginary circumstances," which allows the audience to go on an emotional journey with the actors (Meisner & Longwell). Although there are many tools an actor can use from the Meisner Acting Method, there are three pieces of advice that describe the entire method. The cornerstone of the Meisner Acting Method is focused around the "reality of doing," which means that an actor is not pretending to do something, but actually completing a task or "doing" (Meisner & Longwell). As Larry and Yoda from Star Wars asserted, "Do or do not. There is no try." In the beginning of my rehearsal process, I was "trying" to chastise his invisible

audience. As a result, I was not living in the moment or acting truthfully. I discovered that doing more research was not helping develop my character because I already had done enough to begin with. All I needed was to put all my attention onto my *doings*, which are strong, motivational verb phrases that an actor uses to describe what they will be doing to obtain their objective, which is their goal to get what they came for from their partner. Most doings start with the word "to" and ends with "them/her/him" because actors focus their doing around their partner. Some examples include: "to chastise," "to berate," and "to demean them," all of which were included in my show. The doings must strongly provoke the actor to do something and help them get in touch with the character's circumstances and objectives.

Next, there is a tool called "pinch-and-ouch," which means that actors must be present with each other and not hold back to create a *pinch* in each other and receive *ouches*. It was difficult in my process because I did not have another acting partner to work with, besides on a few occasions. The other key element in the Meisner Acting Method, which can be found in many methods, is to always tell the truth to avoid manufacturing anything or becoming "mechanical." I focused on my audience's reaction and my doings, while not attempting to push my emotions to stay truthful. Actors rehearse in and outside of rehearsal, do an ample amount of research on their characters, adapt to the director's vision, and much more depending on the production (Meisner & Longwell).

When theatre first began, the position of a director was not created. The actors did all of the "directing" work in their own productions, as I did with this project. Directors use their creative authority to guide all the designers and actors towards the way of their "vision" of the show. They have creative license and are the leaders in a production because they schedule the rehearsals, and monitor the progress of their designers' work, while tweaking what they find

necessary. Based on what I learned in my professor, Molly Claassen's directing course, if the director knows how to properly direct, he or she will start with broader notes and gradually give more specific direction to their actors.

The start of my project was educating myself on the positions I held which were unfamiliar to me, and discovering the nuances of my character's choices and how my technical work could showcase those choices. A significant amount of details were not included in the script, so many decisions concerning the play were demanded of me before we began. There were more details that needed clarity that I discovered as we continued the rehearsal process, so some decisions were made along the way. The playwright did not give any information other than the text of my character and the people I interact with. There was not an age, location, or even a name listed in the script. I invented names for all of the characters in the script. My name as the mother was Elizabeth. I did not include the other characters' names as that would have taken away from the focus of the struggle and turmoil Elizabeth was going through.

According to the Columbus State University Theatre Student Handbook, Producers usually choose the play, keep track of the budget, raise money for the production, and hire the production team. However, no budget was given to me so, I had my own finances that I could contribute as well as the assistance provided by CSU's Theatre Department.

An event coordinator organizes and supervises the theatre events, budget, employees, and other networking and finance-related tasks. If a theatre company does not already have a theatre, the events coordinator finds a venue for them within the given budget. That was my task for the show. I raised funds when necessary and worked with my professors and advisors to plan the location, and the budget for my performance.

The Marketing Director's job is to manage the advertisements for a production and the public image of a theatre company. Typically there is not one single Marketing Director, but I served as the only Marketing Director for my production. Usually, shows are promoted via billboards, emails, flyers, brochures, press releases, and most importantly, social media. The Marketing Director promotes the show in a way that appeals to their target audience. My audience primarily consisted of college students, so I needed to print flyers and post them at the restaurants downtown and multiple buildings on Columbus State University's main and downtown campuses.

As I went along in this process, I searched for how I could strive for a stronger and clearer message in all the positions I was fulfilling, because there were many aspects of this show that are important for audiences to hear. Experiencing Rame and Fo's message is especially important, because they were prevented from "entering the United States in 1980, 1983 and 1984," for political issues. Their activism was too progressive for that time period in American society. However, "Fo and Rame were finally allowed into the country," but they could only stay "for the opening [night] of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist on Broadway*," which was written by the duo (Taviano). They started to be allowed in the United States regularly once they were recognized for their talent in 1986 (Taviano).

Unfortunately, even thirty three years later, the way that American society thinks of terrorism has remained flawed. Researchers at Stanford University touch on American citizen's troubled view of terrorism. Their publication includes that there is a difference between a "simple assassination [and] terrorism," but their way of explaining the difference is contradictory. Researchers at Stanford claim that if an assassination was intended to "frighten a large number" of people, it is an act of terrorism. In that case, why is it that not all cases of

violence against a group of people considered acts of terrorism? The researchers mention that society cannot define something as terrorism without knowing the motive. However, finding the motive is one of the toughest answers to discover, especially considering most mass shooters have been killed after or during their violent act. The most important point the author makes is: “We [Americans] should resist slipping into a kind of rhetoric in which terrorism is simply a term of opprobrium rather than a definition of a particular form of violence,” (FSI Stanford, Crenshaw, & Feldman). Throughout my lifetime I have always seen “terrorists” as something worse than other offenders of violent crimes even though they may have committed similar atrocities.

Although I was not allowed to add lines to the script and I wanted the setting to be vague, I could use any resources that helped my acting process. Larry mentioned the books of Dr. Benjamin Spock early on in the process in my performance. He wrote a series of parenting books, notably *Common-Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (Britannica "Benjamin Spock"). I researched him and other parenting-based authors of the era, but I kept the information to myself and was not specific about Dr. Spock's work when my character discussed raising her son on stage. I did not include much of my character-shaping research in my journals in order to benefit my acting work. One idea that I used for my show was criticism Dr. Spock received because he was “blamed for having helped form the generation of young Americans that protested the Vietnam War and launched the youth counterculture movement of the 1960s,” (Britannica "Benjamin Spock"). I justified that it was authors like him that had a part in turning my son into a terrorist, because I listened to their “medical” advice.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

After I reflected in my undocumented private rehearsals on the character's life and discussed the subject with Larry, I decided to make the audience a group of middle-aged, educated, Christian Americans from the relatively wealthy neighborhoods of Los Angeles. This was chosen due to the amount of "*my kid is always right*," naive type of parents often seen in the media. Larry did not know any details other than it being a group of ignorant parents similar to Elizabeth before the tragedy of her son's terroristic acts. Unfortunately, the specificity of location started to hinder my performance, so I removed that detail.

This process forced me to overcome my crippling fear of being alone on stage and trust myself because I was going to be stranded on stage. To ensure my success, I hosted open rehearsals. These were open to any students or faculty that wanted to attend. I did not advertise as much as I should have, so only a handful of people who I specifically asked attended some rehearsals. In particular, I received the most feedback from a few students named Zamar Malik Griffin, Jameson Osborne, and Dylan Schindler after they observed each rehearsal. Zamar was in CSU's BFA 2019 class with me, and Dylan was a student director at CSU. I trusted their eyes and their opinions because of the work they had put out and the experience they had at CSU. Larry warned me about listening to student's advice because he was not there to explain whether he agreed with them or not.

Actors are required to work with other actors to truly act, which is one of the many reasons professionals expect a solo actor's audition to be worse than what they are capable of producing. Constantly speaking to a wall and searching to find acting moments while clearly not speaking to a person was one of the obstacles that made this thesis so challenging. Zamar helped

me rise to the challenge by being my acting partner on stage, during a rehearsal. It is very difficult to imagine someone that is not there, so in those moments, he would fill those roles. I planned on giving him a script and having him read the lines that are the other characters' I play in the show, besides the main woman. During the show, I spoke to a focal point that I had imagined to be the person I was talking to since, as previously mentioned, it is difficult to really feel as though you are speaking to another human when you are not. However, when an actor rehearses a moment like that with another actor, it is much simpler to recall the memory of speaking with someone and let that influence your work. Furthermore, since I would have to switch between characters during a conversation, when I react to the other person, I would feel more of a connection to the moment. It made the action clearer for my audience and let me focus more on the moment, and less on the fact that I did this by myself. It is difficult to not disconnect sometimes when you are talking to yourself.

There are several times that I transitioned from Elizabeth (the terrorist's mother) into other characters. I transitioned into the newscaster, my son, a psychologist, the mother of one of my son's friends, three different police officers, the courtroom judge, and in a mocking manner—the audience. It was difficult to come up with different voices, while maintaining a neutral dialect. However, I focused on thinking less and trusting my instincts more. That, combined with the feedback I received from fellow actors and Larry, made my character choices much easier and made the show stronger overall.

PRODUCTION REFLECTION

THIS REFLECTION WAS CONDUCTED AFTER THE SHOW WAS FINISHED

Although others have tried to convince me that the world of theatre is a “vicious beast” that I cannot succeed in, I have remained determined to turn my dreams into a reality. An actor is taught to allow themselves to be emotionally affected by other’s reactions to them. However, once that emotional muscle is worked out, an actor is faced with the difficult obstacle of not being as emotionally vulnerable in and outside of the rehearsal space. The criticism artists receive pertaining to their work is completely subjective, so one must not equate their value to the reaction they receive from audience members. Rather than being personally affected by an audience members’ responses, I allowed my reactions to them to be filtered through my character’s point of view based on who the audience was to my character.

After any rehearsal process, acknowledging failures and successes is necessary for personal growth and improvement of one’s work. There was certainly a mixture of both in my process. Mistakes in a process may help an actor discover new moments. Although the show is called *A Mother*, I thought, at first, that it was necessary to change the name for the performance, due to watching student productions in the past. We changed the name for my performance to *The Motherhood Myth*, hence why there have been documents with this name. Larry informed me that it was not actually necessary to change the name, so as to avoid infringement on copyright laws. By then, I had endowed deep, personal meaning to the title *The Motherhood Myth*, which was based on a line that I said in the show. The title would have cast a shadow over the entire show and foreshadowed the lies that are bound to come. Therefore, I remembered that

phrase in the forefront of my mind. It became one of the secrets I kept from the audience: my secret weapon.

Advertisements became an oversight, which is another mistake I learned from. The end of the process approached faster than I realized. Therefore, I started advertising too late. A multitude of the beautiful, professional flyers were not displayed. I did not discover how many posters we had left until right before the final performance. There was not enough time for all of us to disperse the ads all over the city. Another mistake that was made was not displaying my name on the advertisements. I was involved in many campus organizations, so more students might have been apt to come if they knew it was my performance.

On another note, I was beyond grateful for those that attended, do not be mistaken. I worked with some incredible professionals and students, who I was especially grateful for all of their contributions towards the production. Many lighting students helped, all the people on my acknowledgement list, as well as many others that encouraged me along the way. There really were so many wonderful people that I could have not produced a quality production without. I collaborated with several professionals to get a venue for my show, including my Theatre Department Chair, Timothy McGraw.

Since this was my first time processing the show more intellectually at the same time I was discovering the acting work, I have been able to reflect on my mistakes. The paper and research were being produced as I was attempting to focus on my acting homework, which caused me to overthink or not be as present in the moment as I could be. In fact, I learned that the journals were hindering me once I took a break for a few days. My acting work transformed and I was able to feel comfortable making acting choices without simultaneously focusing on my directorial and dramaturgical research. If I was given the opportunity to start over, I would have

not planned my show so close to the acting showcases I had and performed before spring break; in that case, I would have had an adequate amount of time to solely focus on the performance and research more individually.

Overall my three women team thrived! While I did assist with design ideas, it was necessary for my lighting designer to design, set all of the lights in the correct position, and program all the lighting cues in the board. She had to include light in the audience area in order for the actor to have something to work with rather than a wall and blinding lights.

Consequently, I could see all of the audience most of the show because we were in an intimate space. Audience members typically made me nervous to speak to during my rehearsal process, because there was usually one or two people. However, it was comforting to speak with so many individuals on show nights. Once I stopped only observing one individual's reaction to my character's story, it became easier to be confident while I was convincing the audience to agree with my thoughts. Facilitating a one woman show was a tremendous challenge, but I believed that the experience helped me as an actor and a human being. This show helped me to completely trust myself, as I was essentially acting as an entire theatre company.

IMDb. "Favorite Comedians Turned Actors." IMDb, IMDb.com, 26 May 2013.

www.imdb.com/list/ls023534701/

Meisner, Sanford, and Dennis Longwell. *Confidential Methods on Acting*. 1st ed. Vintage Books,

1987.

Mitchell, Tony. *Playography - List of the Plays of Dario Fo and Franca Rame*.

www.geocities.wvdariofoarchive/playography

New York Film Academy. "Stages vs. Screen: What's the Big Difference?" *New York Film*

Academy: Student Resources, 14 Aug. 2015.

WORKS CITED

- Artfilms, "DARIO FO AND FRANCA RAME: A NOBEL FOR TWO." *Artfilms*, 1998,
www.artfilms.com.au/item/dario-fo-and-franca-rame-a-nobel-for-two.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Benjamin Spock." *Encyclopedia Britannica*,
 Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 11 Mar. 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Benjamin-Spock.
- Crenshaw, Martha, and Nicole Feldman. "When Are Mass Shootings Acts of Terrorism?" Edited
 By FSI Stanford, *Medium*, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, 11 Oct.
 2017, medium.com/freeman-spogli-institute-for-international-studies/when-are-mass-shootings-acts-of-terrorism-2bf08070b343.
- Dario Fo – Facts. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2019. Thu. 16 May 2019.
 <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1997/fo/facts/>>
- Ebrahim, Zak, and Jeff Giles. *The Terrorist's Son a Story of Choice*. TED Books, Simon
 & Schuster, Inc., 2014.
- IMDb. "Favorite Comedians Turned Actors." *IMDb*, IMDb.com, 26 May 2013,
www.imdb.com/list/ls053534701/.
- Meisner, Sanford, and Dennis Longwell. *Sanford Meisner on Acting*. 1st ed., Vintage Books,
 1987.
- Mitchell, Tony. *Playography - List of the Plays of Dario Fo and Franca Rame*,
www.geocities.ws/dariofoarchive/playography.
- New York Film Academy. "Stage vs. Screen: What's the Big Difference?" *New York Film
 Academy: Student Resources*, 14 Aug. 2015,

www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/stage-vs-screen-whats-the-big-difference/.

Rame, Franca, and Dario Fo. *A Woman Alone & Other Plays*. Methuen Drama, 1991. (Ford wrote the introduction.)

Sturges, Paul. "The Production of Comedy: The Joke in the Age of Social Media - Paul Sturges, 2015." *SAGE Journals*, 19 Oct. 2015, journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244015612521.

Taviano, Stefania. *Staging Dario Fo and Franca Rame : Anglo-American Approaches to Political Theatre*. Routledge, 2016. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=1480748&site=eds-live&scope=site.

"The Nobel Prize in Literature 1997." Translated by Paul Claesson, *NobelPrize.org*, Nobel Foundation, www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1997/fo/biographical/.

An important fact for readers to note was my process as an actor is generally similar in every production, but the specific tools I used during my Senior Alternative to the Thesis pertained to what specific acting tools I needed for this show. To remember my thoughts and concerns during the show and to know what to improve on or do differently, I kept a journal with

APPENDIX A

A MOTHER: REHEARSAL LOGS

Art is subjective and cannot be solved through a formula. It takes trial and error to create a production that will come with new problems for each production team to solve. As an actor, there are a lot of unconventional ways of processing one's work. The work is personal to the artists. In order to protect my artistic integrity, there were several portions of personal reflection and research for my characterization that were not included in my thesis. Actors must be secretive about their process, and I noticed how simultaneously reflecting on the process as I was still undergoing the rehearsals ultimately hindered my performance. I was not able to act without thinking the entire time, which meant I was not truly acting. Every bit of character information that one has shared with another individual will cause the performance to lose vitality. Part of the enjoyment as one watched the journey of a character included the ignorance, inference, and the ability to apply it to one's own life. Therefore, I had several outside rehearsals that I did not want to share with anyone. If audience members knew everything about a character and do not relate to most or all of their characteristics, they may be more apt to tune out and not receive the intended message. It is difficult enough to observe one individual on stage for forty minutes, so I wanted to avoid any reasons to not listen.

An important fact for readers to note was my process as an actor is generally similar in every production, but the specific tools I used during my Senior Alternative to the Thesis pertained to what specific acting tools I needed for this show. To remember my thoughts and concerns during the show and to know what to improve on or do differently, I kept a journal with

a log of each rehearsal that contained my notes for that specific rehearsal. The following dates/notes include some excerpts from my rehearsal journal.

Back story: I did everything I could for my **2/24/2019** *was the best idea. I put him in the*

Before we started: There were other times when we corresponded via email, text, or phone call to discuss the play. *details that will remain private to the artist.*

Goal: To discuss Tasse's Projections

Comments from today: We got everything moving in the right direction. We went through all the lighting/sound/projections designs for hours and worked together to change or add to the designs. We solidified most of it and cut a lot. There are only a couple maybes. I need to contact professors about our questions. *can believe. It was harder for me to say in it to (20) because there*

War in the 21st century: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09592318.2017.1307620>

What to work on for next time: Talk about rehearsal tonight & two phone calls with Tasse

above is in reference to my designer's original design plan *mother, the police officer, and the*

Cue E - going to crop out the two boys *aren't different. It is mixing together now. I used my*

script during parts today because I needed it as we got further.

Notes on *We Need to Talk about Kevin*: The setting changed to a mental institution when the mom is older but transitioned to her giving birth, which linked the two together. It foreshadows events that will occur. 21:38 minutes into the movie, the baby is crying non-stop and the mother keeps rocking it and trying to comfort the baby but nothing works. (How I imagine my son was as a baby) 26:41 him as a toddler w her. I never stopped screaming so he lost hearing and did not talk when he was a toddler. I imagine myself as a combination of the two parents. The mother saw her son was different in a concerning way and went to doctors to find out what is wrong and fix it. The father blames his son's issues on being a kid and acts like there is not an issue. I think

Elizabeth saw some of the patterns that led to her son being a terrorist, but justified his actions as something normal.

Back story: I did everything I could for my child to ensure he had the best life. I put him in the best daycare with the best. Everyone stared at her and hit her like I imagine people are treating me. There are more details that will remain private to the artist.

3/14/19

Goal: To trust myself and work for clarity.

Comments from today: I got $\frac{3}{4}$ through the show today. I remembered most of my blocking and moment to moment work from before. It was harder for me to stay in it in 120 because there are so many distractions and so much space. However, I was more in it than I have been besides the last rehearsal. I worked on my scream as the mother saying "damn him". I worked on my walk/speech for my son, the phycologist, the heroin addict's mother, the police officer, and the guard. I need to find clarity and make them different. It is molding together now. I used my script during parts today because I needed it as we got further.

What to work on for next time: *Update Tasse on new set. Find a scream that does not hurt your throat. Play around with different ways to say lines. Play around with your physical attributes. Discover some more masculine ways of moving for the doctor, son, and the police officer. Work on Molly and Guard Woman walk and voice. Figure out a way to have the police station set without it being in your way too much. I had a flip form today. Figure out how to have my stuff ready for the police station scene without being distracting or not making sense. I was sitting during the psychologist part and that worked well. I still need to find where it is best for

me to go during the Molly talk. Work on transitions. Learn my lines more so I can run what I rehearsed today off book.

3/15/2019

Goal: To take risks. Clarify the different character voices and walks. Get through the entire show.

Comments from today: We timed out the show to be about 30 minutes but I was rushing some moments and there aren't any technical elements added yet. It will probably end up being around 50 minutes. I am struggling to figure out how to work the blocking with the transitions in scenery and what activities I can do. I figured out when I can put my bags up and I need to get something similar to the bar in Studio B because it's shorter than the flip form so it does not get in the way as much. When I switch between the Mom and Son, I need to pivot on one foot so it isn't as distracting. The son voice, monologue, and walk improved today. It still needs work. I got closer to a therapist I wanted to be but it is still too nasally. It needs to be more monotone. There were some moments that got me really emotional tonight which was nice. I am still disconnecting from parts of my son and others and I do not know why. I guess it is too much imagination. I need to find something to be the body in the end.

What to work on for next time: Do particularization and relationship work, work on walks/voices. Find a game that can help you let loose and try more things. Watch *We Need to Talk About Kevin* over break again, War/Terrorism Movies/Documentaries, put together my props like the activism book. Make sure all the documents in the google drive are up to date. Talk to Tasse about her designs and update her. Solidify costume, props, how to handle the time period.

• Too ready for the news in my eyes 4/8/19

Zamar's Notes

- good transitions with characters, esp. son and story and narrator me
- When I stand up with my son- go further w his posture
- Bit w books- calling them out w their stupid theories - going for the mood of that area instead of doing it
- Show the cover of the books and go further with them taunting them and try more with the audience
- At the table - "damn him" felt empty - just let it be - take more time with before "damn him"
- I can take more time in general
- Disconnecting during the part where I am giving it to him about no tears no emotional display
- LET HIM HAVE IT
- Female guard make eyes down and stick it closer to the ground
- Judge character: start was muddy - not fleshed out from the beginning
- End was really nice
- try sitting and standing up with the son and see what happens

Jameson's Notes

- The books in the middle didn't work - it seemed very rushed - take more time
- Try sitting and seeing or standing and going one by one
- If I wanted to be in the middle slam the books on the table

- Too ready for the news in my eyes
- Let the news happen so I can have a reaction
- Posture with the son was good and can take it further
- Reserved on the guards tonight - didn't seem as defined tonight esp. male guard - need longer transitions or more prominent started flipping my hands back and forth
- Standing for naked search - put hands behind head
- When I was taking off necklace and watch and everything you saw the transition with Elizabeth and female guard
- Liked me having my hair down and then putting my hair up when I got my hair up - slick it back and redo it if you do it
- Going to the prison - put the cigarettes DON'T after talking to her and then pick up bags and then don't talk until I'm good and dine w the bags
- - first row in the middle go a row back
- If the show is the start of the show into the night before turn off the tv before you speak
- Practice putting my cigarette out
- Play with the beginning and the moments I can be out of the story and living it and when I can tell the story

Director's Notes:

- Look up Spalding Gray (*Monster in a Box*, *Swimming to Cambodia*)
- Turning on the television at the beginning to establish telling the story- explore the opening beat(s)
- Maybe music under entrance
- Look for more activities and props to fill the script when you feel it is needed (remote,

APPENDIX B

REHEARSAL REPORTS

A rehearsal report is simply a formal documentation generally done by the stage manager, to address legitimate thoughts and concerns as they are reported by crew and advisors during a rehearsal. I have included a large number of rehearsal reports so that the readers can see just how many things change during a two and a half month period of rehearsals.

The Motherhood Myth

Rehearsal Report # 3

Date: March 12th, 2019

Location: Studio B

Start Time: 6:00 pm

Breaks: none

End Time: 7:00 pm

Agenda: Run through first three pages with Larry

Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Larry McDonald, Hannah Rice

Late: n/a

Absent: n/a

Director's Notes:

- Look up Spalding Gray (*Monster in a Box, Swimming to Cambodia*)
- Turning on the television at the beginning to establish telling the story- explore the opening beat(s)
- Maybe music under entrance
- Look for more activities and props to fill the script when you feel it is needed (remote,

purse, etc.)

- Trust the conversational reality instead of pushing or throwing the role
- Pull in and tell the story
- Be conscious of not rushing, and take moments to breathe and gather your thoughts
- Make a choice about who gets the "It's you I'm talking to..." (Could be someone who looks like a parent, someone off guard, not paying attention, etc.)
- Find physical shifts for big shifts such as, "Today he is 21..."

Scenery:

Costumes:

Lights and Sound:

- Tasse: We are going to probably add a sound cue or two in the beginning to help Amanda have a longer start. (Maybe music or television noise, not sure yet)

Props:

- A book on activism, democracy, "family politics" etc. is needed

Special Effects/Notes:

Stage Management:

Next Rehearsal and Location: 3/13/19 from 6:30-7:30pm in Studio A

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

The Motherhood Myth

Rehearsal Report # 8

Date: March 27th, 2019**Location:** Lab Theatre**Start Time:** 7:00 pm**Breaks:** none**End Time:** 8:00 pm**Agenda:** Run and work pages 5 through 7, if we have enough time- start from the beginning**Present:** Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse**Late:** n/a**Absent:** n/a**Director's Notes:** n/a

- Have the snack plate struck after the beginning sometime. We are going to need a stagehand for this and the fog machine.

Larry's Notes: n/a**Amanda (acting):** n/a

- We may have to switch the two "side rooms" and blocking because of lighting conflicts.

- Find a new moment for the psychologist, and an activity for pages 5 and 6.
- Play with throwing books, find a way to drive in a less destructive way.

Tasse:

- **Lights:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a
- **Projections:** Can the money picture be more focused on the money itself? And could you make the money more green/ everything else more faded?
- People on the street/homeless pic: Can you try to see if there is one with more masses of people?
- Child: Can you fade his shirt out more?
- Judge room: Can this be more faded?
- Judge gavel: Can we use the picture with the gavel under "extra items", better than the one with the judge in it.
- House: Can you find something a little bit more upscale but homey, and off. Like it is trying to be comforting and homey but something feels off.

Hannah:

- **Props:** Have tablecloth, legal pad, and bookends by tomorrow.
- **Scenery:** Switching the books and scrapbook for now.
- **Sound:**

All: n/a**Next Rehearsal and Location:**

- Remember to distinguish between male characters
- March 28th, 7 to 8pm (Zamar and Dylan are attending)
- Potency w/ judge (hand gesture)
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

- Take your time
- Define what he did/his group did to put them in jail
- Define any other moments that you feel need more background
- Dream you can be more 'dramatic' and stakes can be higher in the dream

The Motherhood Myth

Rehearsal Report # 9

Date: March 28th, 2019

Location: Lab Theatre

Start Time: 7:00 pm

Breaks: none

End Time: 8:00 pm

Agenda: Work parts w/son with Zamar, get notes from Dylan

Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Dylan Schindler, Zamar Griffin

Late: n/a

Absent: n/a

Director's Notes: n/a

Larry's Notes: n/a

Amanda (acting):

- Remember to distinguish between male characters
- Potency w/ judge (hand gesture)

- Son - radiance (slouch more)
- Take your time
- Define what he did/his group did to put them in jail
- Define any other moments that you feel need more background
- Dream you can be more 'dramatic' and stakes can be higher in the dream
- The end is the moment where she can finally 'defend' herself, and her emotions are uncorked
- Could clench arms in imitation of choking
- Pace yourself in the "Shut up!" to the end, let it flow like you are telling a story, let it snowball naturally
- From journal:

3/28/19

Goal: To clarify my intentions with some moments.

- Get to work the scenes with an acting partner (Zamar)
- Have Dylan give me directing notes
- Have zamar give me acting notes

Comments from today:

- Today helped clarify things for me
- The dream sequence needs to be more heightened and less realistic
- I could hug myself like I'm hugging my child and get tighter on my arm when I am going to strangle him
- Strangling my son isn't as hard as I'm making it because he has burns all over his body and he's bleeding so not much touch will affect him a lot

- Find more specific gestures
- Judge: arm gavel; potent energy
- First cop: cowboy, holding belt buckle
- 2nd cop woman: stand straight up with hands behind my back
- Take more time with transitions into other characters
- Molly mom: hold hands together or cigarette, hold head down low and slouch more
- Son: slouch more, radiant energy, bouncy
- Psychiatrist: either potent or buoyant
- Mother of terrorist: radiant energy
- I don't have to talk to the judge like how I would in real life; it's a dream
- Don't take as much time taking in the moments and seeing what they do; go straight through it and let the emotion take me over if it does
- REMEMBER HOW MUCH TIME YOU STILL HAVE IN THE PROCESS
- Trust my connection to the character
- Definitely change my voice to be a lower pitch with the men but remember I am impersonating them, not being them
- Heighten the stakes

What to work on for next time:

- Find the comedic moments in the show, even in the tragedy
- Try standing on the chair when the smoke pours out and see what that does
- Squeeze your arms like you are squeezing the boy
- Let the rapid fire of the dream take over, don't slow down the pace, if anything it gets faster

- Define what my son did more;
- define my relationship with my son more;
- Define my family life, marriage, how I got to this point
- Daydream about life before and after
- Daydream the news story; watch more news stories
- Start with the dream and see what happens; be as free and dream-like as possible
 - HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!! YOU ARE AN ACTOR NOT AN INSURANCE BROKER
 - BE MORE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF AND THE PROCESS...IT'LL GET THERE!!!
 - FOCUS ON THE WORK FOCUS ON THE WORK FOCUS ON THE WORK

Tasse:

- **Lights:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a
- **Projections:** n/a

Hannah:

- **Props:** Bookends and tablecloth
- **Scenery:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a

All: n/a**Next Rehearsal and Location:**

- March 29th from 8:30 to 10pm
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

The Motherhood Myth

Rehearsal Report # 10

Date: March 29th, 2019**Location:** Lab Theatre**Start Time:** 8:30 pm**Breaks:** none**End Time:** 10:00 pm**Agenda:** Run show**Present:** Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse, Jameson Osborne**Late:** n/a**Absent:** n/a**Director's Notes:**

- Amanda bring your prop bag! (plain lighter, cigarettes, kettle)

Larry's Notes: n/a**Amanda (acting):**

- Work pgs. 8+9
 - You could shift into "looking at your son through the glass" and block that in the middle sitting at the table
 - You could block the "witness stand" on SR
 - Who is Elizabeth? Is Elizabeth intelligent? Are you mad at your son or do you still love him? **Work on struggle with love and hate, for your son both, showing through.**
- Cigarette- may be cool to add in a joint. Keep taking your time instead of rushing and forcing emotion. (2nd time saying "damn him" was better). You can show more dimension with Elizabeth.

- In the first 5 pages we could be introduced to Elizabeth more and who she is, she didn't have a choice because what her son has done- has been done
- Keep officer as cowboy, female could be pushed more (physical changes)
- Elizabeth vs. her son conversation needs to be very physically different, think of who she used to be before this all of this happened (another layer of Elizabeth)
- There is a lot of describing, take your time when you are giving descriptive lines. Let the audience visualize it with you.
- Books are powerful, but you are describing during this, maybe stack books while you are listing and then throw them all (letting frustration out)
- Keep kitchen table casually set.

Tasse:

- **Lights:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a
- **Projections:** n/a

Hannah:

- **Props:** Some type of cover for the scrapbook, honey, microwave dinner
- **Scenery:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a

All: n/a**Next Rehearsal and Location:**

- March 31st (2:30 - 4:30)
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

The Motherhood Myth

Rehearsal Report # 13

Date: April 2, 2019**Location:** Lab Theatre**Start Time:** 6:00 pm**Breaks:** none**End Time:** 7:00 pm**Agenda:** Run show**Present:** Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse, Larry McDonald**Late:** n/a**Absent:** n/a**Director's Notes:** n/a**Larry's Notes for Amanda:**

- Protect your voice, you are not working yourself as hard
- You're not rushing yourself or the feeling
- Work on the emotion with your son when you are in the prison and your dream
- All the stuff SR needs more clarity and to be more centered
- One step or shift instead of facing two different directions (when changing characters)
(maybe sit down as the son, or as Elizabeth)
- When you go to the prison you could walk to see the prison from downstage (your back to audience)
- Keep using formality with the judge (all business)
- Go further with your son behaviorally to differentiate from Elizabeth
- Molly is not specific enough (find an interesting piece of behavior)

- May be more interesting to take out coffee pot (simplify) (find a less distracting and more theatrical way to strike your props)
- He likes that you take your time eating but the TV should have a little more of your attn. (check in a couple more times)
- Take the audience in and invite us before you start talking (rushed the first time you speak to the audience)
- Be particular about the "angel of vengeance"
- Be clear about "I'm sorry, I apologize" Maybe show a book to the audience, and genuinely apologize
- Keep SL for seeing through glass
- Move anything on the floor upstage so that the most of the audience can see you
- Last moment can be moved to center
- Work on clarity and telling the story as simple as you can keep it
- Make sure it's clear to the audience that you're dreaming
- Cut the fog and continue the theme of the audience using their imagination

Amanda (acting): n/a

Tasse: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse, Larry McDonald

- **Lights:** n/a

- **Sound:** n/a

- **Projections:** n/a

Hannah:

- **Props:** No longer need the lamp on SR or coffee pot

- **Scenery:** Ask Krystal about when we will have access to the projector and how to set it

up.

- **Sound:** n/a

All: n/a

Next Rehearsal and Location:

- April 3rd (6:30-8:00pm)
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

A Mother

Rehearsal Report # 18

Date: April 9, 2019

Location: Lab Theatre

Start Time: 6:00 pm

Breaks: none

End Time: 7:30 pm

Agenda: Run show and receive notes from Larry

Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse, Larry McDonald

Director's Notes:

- Run Time: 45 minutes

Larry's Notes for Amanda etc.

- Part most engaged was mother w specific - make others as broad as that
- Parts where it drags: son, guards,
- Go right into those transitions with characters

- Grab belt buckle instead of crotch
- Drill Sergeant- both can be rough but he could be louder
- She can be more sadistic *how many years is he going to get?" Look stage right and get*
- You haven't got children - make that a question
- Lost he was 21 *is I get into it*
- Stay in the light if the cue is delayed or cross and don't start text when you're in the light *see him and join him in the democratic institutions against me*
- Longer skirt
- Quicker in and out of son - he doesn't stand up to me and get worked up before he calmed down
- Make a stronger more specific choice with psychologist
- Character comes from point of view
- So use elements of people you know and behavior from them
- Male doctor- not getting that he's a male
- Take the audience's point of view and make fun of them more- ridicule them
- Season in hell book and pentagon papers and look at them as I'm saying things and find one point to show red book
- Make sure they heard injustice from the beginning
- Reading the wrong books in the beginning- show them the books and then hold them from that
- Really damn him to hell!!!!
- Snap right into the characters
- Create a more distinct voice with then guard and use my body to take off watch and

stuff

- Don't wear the watch and everything just pantomime it
- When I go to the glass "how many years is he going to get?" Look stage right and get onto the guards & shoot him in the head to them
- Judge is better as I get into it
- Do a little boy voice with the boy part
- Squeeze him and jam him on the democratic institutions against me

Amanda (acting): n/a

Tasse:

- **Lights:** n/a
 - **Sound:**
 - Rally sounds were too loud: visuals work though: loud at first is good
 - Some sound cues that take Amanda out
 - Fire sound is too loud
 - Creepy children music good but too loud
 - **Projections:**
 - Projections took him out
 - Picture of bed - could cut that
 - Put projections in moments you really want to punch up- news cast, prison, diner, shot of needle
 - Poo story was lost because of sound and images- cut those images - memory far away
- Director's Notes:**
sound

Hannah:

- **Props:** n/a
- **Scenery:** n/a

All:

- We need to start planning the audience seating

Next Rehearsal and Location:

- April 11th (8:30-10:00 pm) Run show
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

A Mother

Rehearsal Report # 21

Date: April 14, 2019

Location: Lab Theatre

Start Time: 4:00 pm

Breaks: none

End Time: 6:00 pm

Agenda: Run show (36 mins)

Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse

Late: n/a

Absent: n/a

Director's Notes:

- n/a

Larry's Notes for Amanda: n/a

Amanda (acting):

- Today instead of "I know you're thinking what I'm thinking..." on pg. 3, you went into "I can almost guess what you're thinking. 'Poor dear, she's beside herself..." on pg. 6
- You were grabbing your crotch as the male officer, move your 'belt buckles' closer to your hips/side of your hips
- You missed "He looked about five years old, no more than that" on pg. 10

Tasse:

- **Lights:** Review your notes from Cara!
- **Sound:** n/a
- **Projections:** n/a

Hannah:

- Memorize pre-show announcement.
- Bring light for backstage.
- **Props:** n/a
- **Scenery:** n/a

All: n/a

Next Rehearsal and Location:

- April 15th (5:00 pm - 7:00 pm) Second and final Dress
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

A Mother

Rehearsal Report # 22

Date: April 15, 2019

Location: Lab Theatre

Start Time: 5:00 pm

Breaks: none

End Time: 7:00 pm

Agenda: Run show (37 mins)

Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse, Larry McDonald

Late: n/a

Absent: n/a

Director's Notes:

- n/a

Larry's Notes for Amanda:

- Moments that are the clearest are when you are simply telling us the story
- Remind yourself that you don't need to push
- The quieter moments draw us in more
- Enjoy the work you've done
- Be able to enjoy telling the story
- Relax into the story, talk to the audience and not at them, draw them in
- Really ask questions
- Try to improvise with any technical mishaps, never speak in the darkness
- Better pacing with the son
- After insulting the audience you threw away the apology

- The ending is rushed, take your time with all of the moments
- Take in what you have done to your son
- Try jumping onto your chair for "What is it? A bomb attack?"

Amanda (acting):

- You said submachine instead of sub machine gun on pg. 3
- You said obviously twice in the same sentence (pg. 5)

Tasse:

- **Lights:** n/a
- **Sound:** n/a
- **Projections:** Turn the "TV" off when Amanda does.
- Add back in second photo of son.

Hannah:

- Memorize pre-show announcement.
- **Props:** n/a
- **Scenery:** n/a

All: n/a**Next Rehearsal and Location:**

- April 16th (DOORS OPEN 6:30, GO @ 7:00 pm) Preview Night
- Lab Theatre

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice

- **Projections:** n/a

Hannah:

- **Props:** n/a

PERFORMANCE REPORT

This is the formal documentation of notes following the actual performances of the shows.

A Mother Performance Report # 2

<p>Date: April 17, 2019</p> <p>Location: Lab Theatre</p> <p>Start Time: 7:06 pm</p> <p>End Time: 7:43 pm</p> <p>Run Time: 37 min 41 sec</p> <p>House Count: 25</p>
<p>Present: Amanda Ellenburg, Hannah Rice, Jessica Tasse</p>
<p>Director's Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - n/a
<p>Larry's Notes for Amanda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - n/a
<p>Amanda (acting):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forgot lines in a few places and improved
<p>Tasse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lights: n/a - Sound: n/a - Projections: n/a
<p>Hannah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Props: n/a

- Scenery: n/a
All: n/a
Next Rehearsal and Location: - n/a

Report Prepared by: Hannah Rice



APPENDIX C

PRODUCTION RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTS

This section includes a few of the research and documents used during the process.

This is from the same time-period of my show, but from an American perspective.



PRELIMINARY CUE SHEET

This is the document with all of my lighting, sound, and projection cues on it. The cue sheet was not updated as a final copy, so this is from near the end of the process.

Number	Cue Label	Page	Cue Line	Description
1	PQ 1 / SQ	1	"A voice says..."	fade up image of newscast.
	PQ / SQ		"This is one of the terrorists..."	fade into different newscast / static
	PQ / SQ		"caught after the killing..."	fade into different newscast / static
	PQ / SQ		"Christian name, surname."	fade into different newscast / static
	PQ / SQ		"Ruthless criminal."	fade into different newscast / static
	PQ / SQ		"Record of violence."	fade into image of adult son's face / static
	PQ		"It's your own son."	black screen.
2	PQ / SQ	1	"Gun in his hand."	white screen / 1 gunshot
	PQ / SQ		"He'd been shooting."	two flashes white screen / 2 gunshots
4	PQ	2	"that is my son."	fade up image of adult son's face.
6	PQ		"...when they grow up!"	fade up image of baby holding finger
	PQ		"...brushed my skin against his,"	fade into image of toy chest
	PQ		"... stop him ending up neurotic."	fade into image of super messy child
	PQ		"...for as long as he liked."	fade into image of happy child
	PQ		"But he has turned out violent."	fade to black screen.
7	SQ	2	"A terrorist."	gavel pound once.
8	PQ	2	"I can't figure it out."	fade up image of pregnant woman.
			"Where did it all start? When?"	fade into image of mother and baby.
			"I run back over our entire life,"	fade into image of father and baby.
			"as if it were a movie."	fade into image of baby.
			"over and over again."	fade into image of running child.
9	PQ	2	"...the beginning but I can't find."	fade into image of adult man.
	PQ	3	"Student protest at school."	slow fade to black screen.
10*	PQ	3	"Everyone was involved in it."	fade up image of bedroom with posters.
	PQ*		"...he had all the posters..."	pan around room posters
	PQ*		"...big heroes of the movement"	fade into Mao Tse Tung poster
	PQ*		"Mao Tse Tung"	fade into Che Guevara poster
	PQ*		"Che Guevara"	fade into Ho Chi Minh poster
	PQ*		"Ho Chi Minh."	fade into image of room again.
11	PQ	3	"A Vietnamese."	fade into Vietnamese sub-machine gun poster.
	PQ		"Goliath, toppled by a young girl."	fade to black screen.

12/13	LQ	3	"So very simple"	fade up golden SR - for "goodies"
	LQ		"Equality and freedom."	fade up red SL for "baddies"
	LQ		"They're evil"	slow fade down SL
	LQ		"And good always wins!"	fade down gold SR & rest of red SL for back to neutral lights.
15	PQ	3	"For instance, one night he came.."	fade up image of livingroom.
16	LQ	4	"So I said:"	fade up gold SR.
	LQ		"and you tell him the truth."	fade out gold SR & slow fade up red SL.
	LQ		"he'd ever heard."	red SL @ highest intensity for moment.
	LQ		"off to a remote high-security jail."	fade out red SL & fade up gold SR
	LQ		"...honest and correct judges around."	fade down (not out) gold SR.
	LQ		"...believe that I said it. I said:"	slight fade up red SL & gold SR.
	LQ	4 / 5	"... why he comes to hide here."	fade down gold SR & red SL at highest intensity for moment.
	LQ	5	"...he calmed down and added,"	fade up gold SR & fade down red SL.
17	LQ / PQ / SQ	5	"...something, at any cost."	out colored lights / 3 flash white screen / 3 gunshots
19	LQ	5	"...psychologists would probably comment:"	fade into image of courtroom / background SR of SL (MTC)
	LQ		"...into violent, spectacular action."	fade back to normal lighting.
20	SQ	5	"I feel awful."	super slow fade up sounds of riot.
	SQ		"...powerless, sleeping, stupid masses."	out sound (abrupt)
21	PQ	6	"Injustice, I say injustice!"	fade up image of scandal
	PQ		"...unbridled corruption,"	pop up image of fired workers.
	PQ		"...workers thrown out of work,"	pop up image of homeless.
	PQ		"...thousands of youngsters"	pop up image of child in cuffs.
	PQ		"THAT'S ENOUGH"	BLACK
22	PQ	6	"...another example: another lad,"	fade up image of son with friend
23	PQ	6	"He was militant in the Federation."	fade into image of needle
24	LQ / SQ	6	"Two months ago, the police got him."	red & blue lights flash / police siren
25	PQ	7	"Molly-coddled him."	fade up image of coffee shop
	PQ		"Sstill creeps to think of it."	fade to black.
26	SQ	8	"I went to the prison, to visit my son."	jail bars closing.
27	PQ	8	"...murdered by my son's comrades."	image of flowers at gravesite/funeral home.
28	PQ	8-10	"...if you don't see them at first-hand."	police station montage or video sequence.
29	PQ	10	"...about him being brought to trial."	fade up & pan courthouse w dream-like frame
30	PQ	10	"The judge said to me:"	fade into image of looming judge.
31	SQ	10	"I have to question him."	gavel pound once.
33	LQ / SQ	11	"...you run the risk of a blow up."	Flash red SL & gold SR (keep gold up) / smoke sound effect
34	LQ / SQ / PQ	11	"...I said the word blow-up,"	red SL fade up / gavel pound twice & HM start low / fog
36	LQ	11	"...smoke started pouring out."	gold SR fade down.
	LQ		"What is it? A bomb attack?"	red SL fade up.
	LQ		"...steam from the radiator valves."	gold SR fade down.
37	LQ / SQ	12	"Where have you hidden your child?"	red SL fade up / gavel pound twice.
38	LQ		"...the smoke. I find my child."	gold SR fade up.
	LQ		"No, this can't be my son."	gold SR fade down.
	LQ		"What happened? What happened?"	red SL fade up.
39	LQ / SQ	12	"I'm going to report them."	gold SR fade almost out / heart monitor intensifies slowly
40	SQ	12	"Here you are sir."	flat line for heart monitor.
41	LQ / PQ	12	"I've strangled him."	gold light up, red out / black screen
42	LQ / SQ / PQ	12	"He's dead."	blackout / flatline out, 3 gavel strikes / baby, adult, baby

ADVERTISEMENT POSTER



A Mother

(a one woman show)

written by Franca Rame and Dario Fo

April 17th, 7:00 pm
CSU Lab Theatre

With a preview
performance on April 16th
at 7:00 pm

FREE ADMISSION

-Doors open both nights at 6:30 pm

*Located inside Columbus State University's
Riverside Theatre on the second floor



PROGRAM

A Mother

An Honors Thesis Project
by Amanda Ellenburg

Directed By

Amanda Ellenburg

Cast

Amanda Ellenburg

Technical Staff

Jessica Turner

Lighting, Sound, and Production Design
Mark Gorman

Harvest Film

Stage Manager

Tonight's performance will feature an intermission.
Performances will include lunch breaks.

Special Talk Show with Amanda Ellenburg after the show.



A Mother



Created by and Translated from:
Franca Rame and Dario Fo

Amanda Ellenburg's Honors College
Senior Thesis Project

April 17th at 7:00pm

Preview Performance:

April 16th at 7:00pm

Riverside Theatre Complex
Lab Theatre

A Mother

An Honors Thesis Project
One Woman Show

Directed By

Amanda Ellenburg

Cast

Amanda Ellenburg

Technical Staff

Jessica Tasse

Lighting, Sound, and Projections Designer
Board Operator

Hannah Rice

Stage Manager

Tonight's performance will have no intermission

Performance will include loud noises

Special Talk Back with Amanda Ellenburg after the show.

Theatre Advisor

Larry McDonald

Honors College Advisor

Susan Tomkiewicz

Honors College Advisory Board

Cindy Ticknor

Ryan Lynch

Special Thanks to:

Tim McGraw
Rachel Blackburn
Krystal Kennel
Sam Renner
Chris Head
Jenn Spradley
Cara Chittenden
Zamar Malik Griffin
Dylan Schindler
Jameson Osborne
Austin Phillips

And all the friends and family who have supported me along the way!

Enjoy the show!

PRODUCTION PHOTOS



This is from the end of the show when Elizabeth goes through a dream sequence in which she hugs her child too tight, thereby causing his death.



This is from the flashback of Elizabeth being strip searched before meeting with her son.



This is from the flashback at the beginning of the show when Elizabeth first saw the news report of her son and discovered he was a terrorist.



This is a moment in the show where Elizabeth is making fun of the audience.

This is the male prison guard.



This is the female prison guard character I portrayed.



This is the male prison guard.



