

**FIGHTING MYOPIA:
FROM WRITER/PERFORMER TO
WRITER/DIRECTOR IN
*FREE RANGE AND
PALMS DOWN LIKE A RAINBOW***

by

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BFA Concordia University 2004

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

In the
School for the Contemporary Arts

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2008

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ABSTRACT

This document examines the processes used in the creation of my first year project *Free Range* – a solo theatre piece I wrote and performed – and my thesis project *Palms Down Like a Rainbow: A Folktale Eulogy* – a multi-character piece I wrote and directed. The discussion of *Free Range* investigates strategies for writing as a performer, engaging in improvisations with a director and a musician. The discussion on *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* focuses on writing with a director's sensibility, using creation sessions with an ensemble of performers improvising around a source. The challenges of shifting from writer/performer to writer/director invite questions about the playwright's authority, and the line between an open and closed text. This exploration of collaboration, decision-making, values and praxis, leads to a personal understanding of the relationship between process and product.

Keywords: Solo Theatre, Playwriting, Directing, Theatre Collaboration, Performance Creation.

To my family(s) in all their forms

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Free Range and *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* would not have existed without my incredibly intelligent and enthusiastic collaborators. Lisa Oppenheim, Eric Powell, Ally Colclough, Carmen Hung, Lauren Kresowaty, Brett Little, Scott Owens, Gina Readman, Josh Regnier, Natalie Schneck, Caroline Sniatynski, Ben Stone, Ryan Swanson, Cass Turner and Elliot Vaughan continually astounded me with their creativity, sense of play and willingness to trust in a process that was built as we went along.

Professor DD Kugler, with unwavering generosity and patience, pushed me to find my questions, and also taught me the value of not having the answers. His dedication to the theatre and to his students has marked me immeasurably.

Professor David MacIntyre, whose studio courses broadened my definitions of performance, provided both fiery discourse and emotional support as I negotiated shifting artistic paradigms.

Professor Laura Marks' passion and enthusiasm in the Graduate Seminar provided me with the opportunity to learn from the relationship between the theoretical and the practical.

Conversations with Steven Hill and Geoff Proehl – both inside the thesis defense room and out – challenged me to see how differing perspectives co-exist in order to create an environment of joyous disagreement

Penelope Stella allowed me to participate in her clown and mask course, and Robert Kitsos found space for me in his dance improvisation class. There I began to see the knowledge held in bodies. The atmospheres they created, where learning came from both participating and watching, were integral to the development of my perceptive ability.

I am also grateful for the assistance of those in the School for the Contemporary Arts who led me administratively through the completion of my degree and numerous artistic

projects: Noni Fidler, Heather Blakemore, Sheila Pineau, Andrew Curtis, Anil Chauhan, Gary Harris, Barry Hegland and Laura Sparrow.

Far from home, I have felt incredibly lucky to fall into a family of artists and creative thinkers who have been perpetual sources of support and laughter: Eric Powell, Meghan Armstrong, Tony Massil, Nick Bradford-Ewart, Davy Bisaro, Matt Griffin, Derek Hunter, Adrian Buitenhuis, Patrick Gauthier, Jenny Selgrath and Matthew Parsons.

Finally to my parents Jane Ellens and Dan Pearlman and my brother Josh Pearlman, who gave me a place to land each time they encouraged me to leap. Thank you all.

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INTRODUCTION

When I came to the SFU Contemporary Arts MFA program, my primary artistic practice was writing and performing solo theatre rooted in an oral storytelling tradition. I dabbled in directing other people's solo work, acted in the work of others, but preferred writing and performing my own texts.

I grew up in a storytelling community, where multiple generations of people crowded on pillows in living rooms to hear soft voices colour the room with narratives. I occupied long car trips listening to tapes of stories. Every January my family made audio recordings of our favourite sagas of the past year. These early story experiences were aural, made intriguing by languorous tellers who tasted their consonants.

Listening to stories turned into voracious reading, but even after I could quickly finish books by myself, I still sat by while my Mom read at bedtime to my younger brother. While I sped through pages on my own, she made the stories last longer. Pedagogical practices in many educational institutions often promote a change in attitude toward text. Mark Lord cautions:

Now you are reading a textbook. You read as quickly as you can. Your lips do not move and you are proud of that; they remain closed, pursed, and you remain, at your desk. You are not transported; you are reading this textbook the way that they taught you: *for comprehension*.¹

I fell into that trap with my reading: I proudly kept long lists of the books I finished, literary notches on the bedpost. *Listening* to stories however, was still about the present moment. The tellers set a pace that left time for imagining between the words. Intrigued by the act of telling, I started writing stories and reading them aloud to patient family members. When this led to acting out other people's words in the theatre, I saw an opportunity to be involved in a form that created a space for words to be *heard*.

¹ Mark Lord's "The Dramaturgy Reader" in *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A Source Book*, eds Susan Jonas, Geoff Proehl and Michael Lupu, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997, p88.

I started my BFA at Concordia University in acting, but some first year creation assignments² rekindled an interest in writing that was previously lost in the lure of the limelight. I dropped the acting specialization in favour of a BFA in theatre – which allowed me to take courses in playwriting and directing – and a minor in religious studies. If I was going to make theatre, I wanted to make theatre *about* something; I could look at the differing perspectives in my religious studies classes, and make work that explored my relationship to those perspectives through playwriting.

I read a lot of plays to see how other artists made work. Solo theatre texts were my favourite because they read well on the page. I knew how to read their structures because they shared characteristics of first person short stories. In class we read plays for action, theme, character and journey – which were useful – but we didn't talk about reading for theatrical possibilities; I read plays as literature and imagined how characters would live in the world rather than on the stage.

Although I *read* countless plays, like a lot of students unfortunately, I didn't *attend* many. I used looming assignment deadlines and ticket prices as excuses, but really I wasn't interested in the work I did see. Theatre classes required me to write play summaries of performances, so when I did go to the theatre, I watched for comprehension, and received high marks for understanding shows with Aristotelian structures or performed as slice-of-life Realism. When faced with productions of scripts that invited wild theatricality – like Suzan Lori-Parks' *Venus*, or Judith Thompson's *Lion in the Streets* – I was intrigued, but felt intellectually weak. I didn't know how to watch them because they deviated from the structures I was familiar with. I instead spent my time at rock shows, where it was acknowledged that we were in the same space, breathing the same sweaty air.

Immediately after graduation I spent the summer touring on the Canadian fringe circuit with my first solo show *Swimming Lessons with Paisley Kite*.³ I also saw seventy-six plays. I am hesitant to say the fringe is the best venue for theatre that pushes the

² Professors Kit Brennan and Rachel Van Fossen were especially supportive of my writing interest.

³ This piece followed a sixteen-year-old wanna-be punk-rock anti-hero as she escaped from a free "Discover Israel" trip. *Paisley Kite* let me grapple with my conflicted feelings about Judaism that stemmed from my mixed religious upbringing, and explore the spaces where spiritual experiences could exist outside of religious institutions. Although I held onto those ideas of what the show was "about," audiences identified with the show's coming of age themes.

boundaries of convention, because hit fringe shows often share similar structures and styles. Budgetary and touring restraints however, are excellent parameters for removing the props and wallpaper required to recreate the “real world” on stage. The fringe encourages making worlds with bodies. I considered myself first a writer, who made solo theatre to have my writing heard, but the majority of festival participants were performers first, who used solo theatre to spotlight their acting. While I was writing lyrical descriptions of things I had experienced in the past, other performers threw images on stage with their bodies for the audience to perceive in the moment. I was so wrapped up in the aural reception of the written word, that I neglected the other possibilities of the theatre. I was especially taken with the work of Australian Jonno Katz, who spun furiously between styles, from innocent clown to cynical comic, incorporating both capoeira and audience cookie breaks. I couldn’t quote any text from the show, but remember clearly the experience of being in the same room with a body constantly negotiating physical choices. The sweat in the room recalled the heart-pounding experience of the rock shows I had favoured over theatre.

I regrouped and wrote my next solo show *Radio Collar*⁴. Sitting at my computer, I kept in mind the physicality that engaged me in the summer, but the script had even more text than my first show. The play was mostly memories, so I added a thin plotline to create action in the present. My attempt to add physicality in the writing process included the stage direction: “she dances very earnestly while she dresses, doing a reverse strip tease.” I worked with a choreographer to establish basic dance steps, but my poor muscle memory forced me to improvise with joyous spins and leaps. The dance – “charming in its artlessness”⁵ – was the moment that people remembered. The process of improvisational dancing was like writing theatre without using words. Working within the parameter of my character and Doris Day’s “I enjoy being a girl,” I found my creative agency as performer. For the remaining part of the show, however, I returned to the talking head that I thought best highlighted the spoken words. I spoke with Jonno after the show. He said something like “Emily, you have to get away from this storytelling

⁴ An interest in the slow lifestyle movement was my starting point for *Radio Collar*. The show followed a woman on her mission to save an oldies radio station from being turned into an “80’s, 90’s, whatever” station, and subsequently re-connect with her father. I always considered the show to be “about” the relationship between nostalgia and fear, but audiences again identified with the parallels that existed between the character and myself, as we both grappled with learning to be independent of the support of family or educational institutions.

⁵ I decided to take this review from an Edmonton critic as positive feedback.

style; you have this great weird physical body – why don't you find more places to use it?" I wanted to. I just didn't know how.

NPR radio host Ira Glass speaks about the creative process and the amount of mediocre work you *need* to make before you can create the type of work you *want* to make:

[A]ll of us who do creative work ... we get into it because we have good taste... but for the first couple of years that you are making stuff, what you're making isn't so good ... it's *trying* to be good, it has *ambition* to be good, but it's not quite that good. But your *taste*, the thing that got you into the game, your *taste* is still killer. And your taste is good enough that you can tell that what you're making is kind of a disappointment to you. ... A lot of people at that point they quit. ... The most important possible thing you can do, is do a lot of work ... it's only by actually going through a volume of work that you are actually going to catch up and close that gap.⁶

I knew what work appealed to me, but I didn't know how to make it myself. I wanted to use my time at SFU to explore different creation methods that layered theatrical performativity and "weird physical bodies" into my writing process.

The following text documents that process through the creation of two works: my first year project *Free Range*, a solo show created with a director and musician that I wrote and performed; and my thesis project *Palms Down Like a Rainbow: A Folktale Eulogy (PDLR)*, a multi-character show created with an ensemble of performers that I wrote and directed.

The thesis examines my movement from writer/performer to writer/director and the challenges presented by each project. *Free Range* acts as a transitional project leading to the creation of *PDLR*. The chapter on *PDLR* moves through the four-phase process I set up for the development of the work – Material Creation, Mining/Scripting, Assembly/Rehearsal and Production. The questions explored in *PDLR* came out of the process, and are generally examined chronologically, but ambiguity about when one phase stops and the next begins, necessitates some leaps forward and backward. The appendix provides a timeline that outlines overall chronology.

I was not making this work in a vacuum. I took advantage of the required SFU Interdisciplinary studio course led by David MacIntyre, to make work that challenged my

⁶ Ira Glass' "Ira Glass: On Storytelling" August 12, 2006, online video clip, Youtube, accessed on Aug 17, 2008 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hidvElQoxE>>

habitual styles. Restricted by the small visual art-centric presentation space, my work took on a performance-installation flavour, focusing on the shared sensory space between performer and audience. I also dabbled in audio sculpture, hooking up a golden bicycle to an amplifier so that if peddled, it played stories about cycling – an examination of how hard people are willing to work for narrative. In MacIntyre’s interdisciplinary collaboration class, working with film-makers, musicians and visual artists, I began to see how the discipline specific language of my collaborators could be used to inform my theatre practice.

I was also auditing courses that would provide me with tools to make *Free Range* and *PDLR*. In my first year, Penelope Stella’s clown and mask class let me create physical images and characters with my body working from the present moment. In my second year, I prepared to direct my thesis by taking a directing class with DD Kugler. I started to understand how bodies in space could tell the story, but directing *Savage/Love* – an open lyrical text – I realized my propensity for privileging the spoken words, and came face to face with my hesitancy to make big choices for fear of misinterpreting the author. The following semester, in dramaturgy class with Kugler, I began to view working dramaturgically as a way of seeing how theatrical elements operated together to create the whole piece. As a dramaturg to dancer Davy Bisaro, I saw how her values for decision-making came from an interest in shape and line rather than narrative structure. While taking a dance improvisation class with Robert Kitsos, I also looked at performance from a less text-focused perspective, where structure came from formal qualities. Working as a teaching assistant for Issues in the Fine and Performing Arts, and taking the graduate seminar led by Laura Marks, made me think about the intersection between theory and practice – how art can make values and ideas tangible.

New concepts and methodologies were being thrown at me concurrently – a learning experience both rich and frustrating. These past two years have been a series of decadent meals served too quickly. I am just swallowing the last bite of breakfast and the maitre’d is already at the table with lunch. I am still digesting – even now having epiphanies about how to solve the theatrical challenges of both shows months after they have closed, indefinitely processing the process.

WRITING AND PERFORMING *FREE RANGE*

Prior to entering the program, my solo theatre work was largely created by writing the text and then moving into performer mode with a director. With this first year project, I wanted to work with a director and a sound designer on a process where the performance elements were developed in tandem with the script. By improvising around a source – bird flu – I would create text, physical actions, and sound for a piece that was less populated by nostalgic stories of the past, and more linked to a physical present. I wanted the head to talk less, the body and theatrical world to talk more.

Lisa Oppenheim came on board as director/co-creator. We had met the summer previous at the One Yellow Rabbit (OYR) Summer Intensive⁷, where I had completed a ten-minute piece about bird flu. When I introduced the idea of expanding that work into a one-act, she quickly agreed. Although Lisa was predominantly an actor, recently graduated from Studio 58, her performance career was on hiatus due to a musical-theatre induced knee injury, so she was eager to try her hand creating from another perspective.

I wasn't sure what I was going to add to the discourse on avian influenza, but I boldly plunged ahead searching for source material. I started reading about bird flu, disease, pandemics, and fear. Since I was applying for some Fringe Festival slots, I had a title and everything: *Free Range*⁸.

Fellow MFA candidate Eric Powell joined the team as musician/sound designer. When I visited the farming communities in the Fraser Valley affected by the H5N1 virus, Eric came along to make audio recordings. Together we touched the shiny egg sorting machines, stepped quietly into a barn filled with hundreds of day-old chicks, and were

⁷ This performance creation intensive is taught each summer in Calgary by members of One Yellow Rabbit. It brings together students from all over Canada and internationally to study movement and body-work with Denise Clarke, text creation with Blake Brooker and visual art/ways of seeing with Chris Cran. All of these areas are based around OYR's main principals of economy, precision and relaxation.

⁸ *Free Range* was remounted a year later at the Toronto Fringe. The production script for this version of the play is included as Appendix 2.

generously treated to personal stories by farmers from large and small scale poultry establishments.

After the initial accumulation of source material, the process went differently than expected.⁹ Scheduling prevents Eric's presence at many of the early rehearsals, leaving Lisa and I, two word-obsessed creators, to figure out how to make theatre that is less text focused. During our first rehearsal, we plan. We talk about bird flu. We gossip. We schedule future rehearsals to avoid creative work, but still appear productive. I give her some readings on process from artists I admire. We also write some haikus on bird flu. We had used haikus as a parameter at OYR, and it felt comforting to have common methodology. While she planned the next rehearsal, I wrote from the haikus and my bird flu interviews. The writing wasn't linked to physical or sound improvisations, but was connected to my sensory memory of the places I visited in the Fraser Valley and the interviewees.

I had been encouraged by my supervisor DD Kugler to write without pre-planning the outcome. I was not to worry about unity or characters or arc at this point, but rather to write to discover. Taking a cue from the surrealists, I engage in automatic writing, hoping to cultivate, as Roland Barthes outlines:

the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning (the famous surrealist 'jolt') [that comes from] entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible what the head itself is unaware of. ...¹⁰

I come to the next rehearsal with some scattered monologues. The voices don't feel like me. There are characters I had met and re-contextualized – farm people, lots of men – but none of them feel real. But there are some funny bits, so that is something.

I have long admired the work that stems from the relationship between director Daniel Brooks and playwright/performer Daniel MacIvor. Brooks discusses the process they used in the creation of the solo show *Cul-de-Sac*:

Our process was quite simple; Daniel sat in a chair, I sat in a chair. I asked him questions. Slowly, or quickly, he would assume a voice, a character, a name, a gender. ... As Daniel talked, I wrote down what was of interest to me. I would ask simple questions, sometimes leading questions and

⁹ See Appendix 1 for timeline.

¹⁰ Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Noonday Press, 1988, p144.

Daniel would answer. Often we would end up in a kind of conversation in which the creatures Daniel had created would tell intimate stories or flirt with me or insult me or spew out elaborate philosophies or state crude opinions...We would discuss what was funny, what was a possible narrative strategy, what seemed a fruitful motif.¹¹

Lisa and I talk about this strategy, and my interest in creating a character that is not just me in a different costume. She sits me in a chair, calls me a seductive lady egg farmer, and starts to drill me. Daniel MacIvor I am not. Uncomfortable improvising text in my mouth, I am so terrified of being “bad” that I can’t make any big choices. I spout clichés and am bored by my own work. Neither of us are comfortable in our roles, and we don’t want to disappoint the other. A few haikus later, I go home and write poorly in solitude about chickens.

Shortly after that, both Lisa and Kugler ask me “Why are you writing about bird flu?” I falter. I have no idea. I am in conflict about the word “about.” I am a grad student, and feel I should be making work “about” something of consequence, that will add to the discourse “about” issues. I don’t know why I feel this way. The solo theatre that engages me is filled with poetic language and images that I can’t always process in the moment. “And then you will float, or you will sink. And if you float you will be as if flying and if you sink, when you hit bottom, you will bounce like a man on the moon”¹² writes MacIvor. “You’re so beautiful. You look like great bunches of black grapes”¹³ says Linda Griffiths directly to her audience. Karen Hine’s Pochsy intones “There’s a squid where my heart used to be.”¹⁴ I can’t say exactly what these words are “about,” but they physically affect my body when I hear them. How can I let process dictate what my work is “about.”

“Write *around* the bird flu” Kugler suggests, strongly. I start to filter the concerns that come from the bird flu through the lens of my own voice and experiences. The farmer who fears losing his livelihood at the hands of a pandemic he cannot control, remains an

¹¹ Daniel Brooks’ “Forward,” in *Cul-de-Sac* by Daniel MacIvor, Vancouver: Talon Books, 2005, p8-9.

¹² Daniel MacIvor’s “Never Swim Alone” in *Never Swim Alone and This is a Play*, Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 1993, p70.

¹³ Linda Griffiths’ *Alien Creature: A Visitation from Gwendolyn MacEwen*, Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2000, p13.

¹⁴ Karen Hines’ “Pochsy’s Lips” in *The Pochsy Plays*. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2004, p34.

invisible source in *Free Range*, manifesting itself in the investigation of my own fears of loss at the hands of uncontrollable circumstances.

Concurrent to this process, I was taking a class from Penelope Stella in clowning and mask. We use the technique of river work to physically explore make-believe landscapes. She sets us free in the studio, often playing music, and lets us journey through places we create in our imagination. This is the first time I have engaged in a physical improvisational technique that allows me to explore places I have never actually visited. It is dangerous because it is unknown territory, but safe because I am less personally implicated. It taps into a part of my brain similar to the part I use during automatic writing; I feel more present, flooded by images that lead me past the limits of my own history.

Lisa, Eric and I decide to try river work in our own playmaking process. I mix the fantastic imaginings that come from river work, with personally filtered source concerns, and we begin improvisational exploration. Lisa looks at my previous writing for recurrent concerns and creates starting points. She is particularly interested in the tension between caged/free, which lets us begin all over the place. She sets up parameters in the form of location, goals, or previous circumstances, and then adds more elements when she feels I am lost, or need to raise the stakes. I start improvising as a sin-eater, sleeping in an apiary, escaping a closed tower. Eric textures the space on bassoon and mandolin, and Lisa makes mysterious jottings in her notebook for later exploration. After each improvisation I write. Sometimes I write what happened in my imagination: "Stars falling look like planes on black fields lit by flashlights. I try to catch them in the beams." Often it is things I hear: "Toes squeaking on the floor in a ritual." Sporadically it is questions I have as a result of the work: "Can you go deaf listening to the sound of your own skin?" Some seem like bits of monologue, some feel like images or sound, sometimes I am not sure which is which. Because I am experiencing the situation with my body, my writing is more tactile and multi-sensory, but it is also incredibly scattered. I am fearful that all the work will amount to nothing. All I can do is trust the process.

We continue until my brain feels empty; I scroll through seventy pages of thoughts, hoping there is a play hiding somewhere among them. I am fiercely proud of this writing; I feel like I am developing a new writer's voice. My concern now is how to establish rules and values for decision-making. Kugler has been reading my writing throughout the

process, pointing to what engages him and what he sees as tensions. With distance from the process, he can dramaturg the text without preconceptions as to where it came from. Lisa and I try to let go of the original context which birthed the text, but I have trouble thinking of the writing as separate from the source, and by extension – myself. I try to put this worry aside as we read through the writing. When we spot a tension, a theme, a motif, we label it on a post-it note and stick it on the wall above my bed: “eating/being eaten, sex/death, empty/full.” My dreams get crazy. People who enter my room nod politely.

Although much of the writing came from the river work, some of it came from Lisa and I discussing how to solve our current life problems. The serendipitous similarity between our disastrous love lives ends up strongly colouring the concerns of *Free Range*. My relationship of six years was crumbling under the pressure of long distance, which eventually led to a cancelled wedding. She was still recovering from breaking off an engagement. We abandon rehearsal and spend an evening eating cake and talking about the weight of emptiness. I justify our personal discourse by remembering Linda Griffiths’ description of her relationship with director-collaborator Sandra Balcovske:¹⁵

She was a friend but I had never worked with her before. You could call our process talking and shopping. The unwritten rule of improvisational rehearsal is that more than four hours of it is too much. We would meet for a scheduled four hours, talk and gossip for a while, I would get up and do some stuff, then ... we would go shopping. I consider the shopping time as important as the actual rehearsals, not just because I got some nice glassware, but because we were somehow always working.¹⁶

I feel that Lisa and I are always working too. Our personal conversations feed the play. There is only a small amount of writing from the cake night, but it plays an integral part in *Free Range*.

We bake together as one last go.
Just friends with some vanilla and shortening.
He measures out sugar from an oversized bag, lifting to pour rather
than scooping it out with a measuring cup.
The bag gets more awkward in his arms the more sugar he pours, and

¹⁵ Their collaboration resulted in the creation of *A Game of Inches* – a solo show about love and baseball.

¹⁶ Linda Griffiths’ “Process?” in *Canadian Theatre Review*, (Winter 1998): 60.

the space left in the bag is the space left in me.
Heavy with emptiness.¹⁷

It gets labelled under absence/presence, ingestion/diet and regret. As I stare at the yellow post-its on my wall, I can't help but wonder if this is material I am ready to explore. I don't know how I am supposed to create values for determining what stays and what goes, without judging my life experiences intimately connected to the writing.

Once we have labelled all the writing, we begin sorting and assembling. We first toss out the writing that neither of us are interested in – interest being, as Anne Bogart notes, “the primary tool in a creative process.”¹⁸ This basically eradicates the bird flu. Then we put aside pieces that don't seem to have a relationship to other writing. With the remaining texts, Lisa and I are faced with what Bogart refers to as the violent act of decision-making¹⁹. Surprisingly, at this stage, the violence is mostly amicable. The process, the gossip, the relationship we both had with the work, puts us in agreement much of the time when it comes to choosing the writing that will make up the play. If we are in agreement about a piece of writing, we don't spend too much time analyzing why it should stay, but trust that our accord is value enough. If we disagree strongly, then we find the words to defend our choices. We subsequently understand pieces of text on different levels. The choices we agree on are often those we feel attached to emotionally, because we understand, to a certain degree, the emotional heart of the play. The choices that we disagree on are pieces of text that create the plot and action. We don't know what sort of story structure is needed to contain the heart, and as we try to Frankenstein the play together, we disagree on which limbs will be most appropriate. We place pieces of text in different orders; we invent plot points and then read the texts through the lens of that new information; we change our minds repeatedly. The protagonist's best friend Andrew is initially a live brother, then a dead brother, then a dead ex-boyfriend, then a live ex-boyfriend; there are so many possibilities and by choosing any one, we fear we will close too many doors. We fear the finality of violent decision-making about plot because those choices feel immutable, and if decided upon prematurely, they might set

¹⁷ See appendix 2, *Free Range* script, p67.

¹⁸ Anne Bogart's *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p76.

¹⁹ Anne Bogart “Violence” in *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p43-60.

us back to square one if they reveal themselves to be inappropriate structures to support the story.

Plot is a challenge. I come up with a draft, am pleased with the text, feel that it contains something worth pursuing, but it is mostly a collection of memories not linked to any sort of present. The physical creation process has begot the same issues I had in my previous solo shows: I don't know what she is doing on stage at this moment or why she is speaking right now. Can't these be problems for the director? Can't we just trust that the playwright is brilliant and figure it out in rehearsal? The text is open enough that there is room for lots of physical exploration, and the performer wants to take over, problem solving on her feet. The playwright is frustrated, struggling to create work that is open enough for the audience to engage in decision-making, but not so open that it lacks entry points. She wants to move into rehearsal as well, to escape the playwright's responsibility to those questions. This transition to rehearsal, with the script still vastly unclear, puts a lot of pressure on Lisa, a green director, to quickly develop a concept that clarifies the world of the play.

I am having trouble negotiating the dual-dramaturgical roles being played by Lisa and Kugler, and subsequently can't properly hear my own thoughts. I am caught between the more closed narratives that I have written previously and the more open texts that I am attempting to explore. I hear Lisa's frustration at the lack of narrative as one extreme, and Kugler's encouragement to let process dictate content as the other extreme. The fact that the three of us don't meet together allows me to use my version of what one party said as a weapon in discourse with the other. I argue with them both in lieu of admitting that I can't figure out my own values. If I listened properly I might hear that they are both on the same side – the side of the play.

Lisa battles my reluctance to commit to decisions about what the text is telling us, by making choices about time and space and actualizing them through set. The play is fragmented, but the specific memories the character reveals creates something larger than its pieces. The protagonist struggles with balance between self and others, between giving and taking. She is also torn between the burning desire to have a baby to give her someone to care for, and the fear that she is not capable enough to look after herself, let alone another human being. Lisa conceives of the set as a dreamy outdoor space with two main pieces: a mobile and mound of grass-covered dirt. A mobile – an object associated

with babies, but always in rotating flux, searching for its equilibrium – is made dangerous by creating its frame from bits of pointy scrap metal. The mound of grassy dirt fits our preoccupations with fertility and ritual, and will allow us to use a haunting piece of bassoon music created by Eric during an improvised fertility ritual. These objects create a surreal dreamlike setting for the play, and we hope they will provide the protagonist with a sense of place – we don't know *where* she is, but the objects undoubtedly place her *somewhere*. The protagonist can dig objects from the mound and hang them on the mobile – two different actions that, when laid over the spoken text, create a present activity from which she can speak her stories.

We commit to these two set choices. I learn to puncture scrap metal with a drill press for the mobile. I make the grass mound out of spray foam and, neglecting to read the safety instructions, end up panic-stricken, biking the streets in search of acetone to remove foam from skin. I am too late, and spend a week looking like my hands are growing delicate yellow spores. I am going to use these set pieces if it is the last thing I do.

With set pieces as parameters, the play begins to emerge. Eric comes in once a week and improvises around what we have blocked. Lisa and I argue constantly in the rehearsal process because I am terrified of the personal material and am not willing to fully commit to each moment as an actor. Playwriting from the personal makes me feel exposed. Speaking that text aloud even more so. As I attempt to shift from playwright to performer, my vulnerability in each position cripples my ability to serve the play as a whole. As the piece is solo, I frequently speak to the audience directly, which strips off another layer. It seems obvious that the character is just me on an extra crazy day, which makes me fear becoming self indulgent. Lisa assures me this is just my inside perspective; there is enough magical fiction to create the necessary distance. But I can't see what is happening on stage and neither of us know how to use theatricality to clarify what is happening in the play; as a result I don't trust either of us.

This problem takes over rehearsal. We spend our time focusing on acting to give me the confidence to perform the personal. As a new director, Lisa is more comfortable focusing on performance technique rather than the bigger questions of the play that are unsolved by set alone – the same questions that the playwright is avoiding. She works me hard on annunciation, slowing down, and finding a place of presence – for all my love of words, I don't give them space because I lack confidence in the piece as a whole. We have a style

difference as well; she is pushing me to be bigger, fully extend my limbs and take up space, but although I talk big about wanting to be more physical, I am still stuck on oral storytelling. Negotiating the line between these styles, between an open and closed piece, frequently turns into raised voices and short sentences. There is the amicable violence of agreed decision-making; but when we avoid decision-making the violence takes the form of fighting for our own values.

There is no clear line between development and rehearsal. I don't stop changing the text, even after I swear that I have delivered the final draft. The playwright continues to work as she performs – work that mostly includes second-guessing. This continues into performance as I struggle to figure out if challenges need to be addressed through textual changes or acting choices. Lisa is still in Vancouver as the show premieres in Ottawa and I miss her perspective. As difficult as our disagreements were, they were an opportunity for us to articulate what we perceived was happening on stage.

Free Range gets mixed feedback in Ottawa. People are interested, but not sure what to make of it. “I had no idea what was happening, but I loved it” is a comment I get from strangers. Polite applause. The set, which we have clung to as our main structure, confuses rather than enlightens. We know she places things on the mobile, but are still unsure of her degree of agency in finding and naming objects, and we have not figured out what brings her to and from the mobile. We win an award for “Outstanding Concept” echoing audience feedback that shows an engagement in the work and its ideas, but an overall lack of clarity.

The final performance at an SFU noon show, however, is filled with friendly contemporary arts peers, many willing to live in the unknown. They receive the piece enthusiastically, and my actor ego glows. I make an assessment of the show based on that performance: “I like the show; I know there was confusion, but that's ok, I don't think I would do anything different next time.”

In truth, I didn't really *see* the show. My perspective as a performer made it difficult for me to watch the piece as a whole. I struggled so hard to be present in each moment that I couldn't see how the moments were related to each other. I understood the character, but didn't know what sort of theatrical world she lived in. I see this only in hindsight. When I re-visit the show a year later with Eric, I am shocked to realize how many questions are still living in the piece. We probe the questions further with the addition of

live music, the knowledge I gained from a year directing, and a bodily confidence that came from movement work with Rob Kitsos²⁰, but we never entirely answer them.

After the cocky noon-show assessment of *Free Range*, I begin the creation of my grad project. I still have questions about interdisciplinary sources for text creation, values for decision-making, process dictating content, and open versus closed texts, but I feel that as a performer of my own words I am too vulnerable to explore them. The raw text material that is removed from me on the page, is too immediate when I put it back in my body. I want to be able to distance myself from the material by having the benefit of other performers interpreting the work. I want to be able to see the work, but my perspective as a performer doesn't allow me to step outside and watch the piece as a whole. I am tired of fighting with myself and my collaborators; I want to play more in the process.

In the initial planning stage for my grad project, I speak with Penelope Stella about my interest in creating another solo work, but as a writer/director working with a performer/co-creator. I suggest some students as a potential collaborator. "Hell!" she says "You should write a piece for all of them!" Really? Is she suggesting that for an MFA thesis project I should try, for the first time, writing and directing my own work, *and* writing for multiple performers – none of whom are me? Kugler nods in agreement. "An MFA is a great opportunity to fail without consequence." Failure doesn't really fit comfortably with my control tendencies. But, this is school after all.

So.

Eyes closed.

I jump.

Arms flailing madly.

²⁰ Rob Kitsos allowed me to participate in his improvisational performance class FPA 325. The addition of a physical practice gave me the confidence to make the kind of physical choices that I had previously been resistant to in our first production of *Free Range*.

WRITING AND DIRECTING *PALMS DOWN LIKE A RAINBOW: A FOLKTALE EULOGY*

INITIAL INTENTIONS AND PLANS

For my MFA thesis project, I develop a performance creation process to help me move from writer/performer to writer/director. It will allow me to retain the autonomy of a playwright, while benefiting from the impulses of multiple performers engaging with source material. By leading improvisational creation sessions, inspired by the work done on *Free Range*, but as a facilitator of the process rather than as the performer, I hope to add a director's sensibility to my writing.

In preparation I take a directing course and direct Sam Shepard and Joe Chaiken's *Savage/Love*, originally produced as a piece for one male actor and a musician. Its structure of tiny theatre poems is incredibly open for interpretation, and requires big choices. I cast three women and together we decide who speaks what text by experimenting on our feet. Elizabeth LeCompte talks about her role as a director: "I make the frame. You have to make the picture within the frame."²¹ In *Savage/Love* I often gave the performers space to make choices on their own, from which I would start rehearsing. The ownership they felt of those moments was evident, and created energy similar to that which I felt in the improvisational dancing in *Radio Collar*. Their involvement in the creation gave them more permission to play in the moment because they understood it bodily.

I wanted to establish that relationship between performers and text in the writing process. By setting parameters within which an ensemble could explore and I could write, I hoped to grant them more agency in the process, and allow myself the freedom to watch their work in space, challenging my previously held myopic performer's perspective.

²¹ Quoted in Euridice Arratia's "Rehearsing the Wooster Group's *Brace Up!*" in *Re:direction* eds Rebecca Schneider and Gabrielle Cody, New York: Routledge, 2002, p336.

I envisioned three phases in the creation process:²²

Phase 1: Material Creation (November - December 2007)

An interdisciplinary creation-company would improvise around smell. A collection of writings²³ on smell would be source material. In each of the ten creation sessions, I planned to look at the source-material through the lens of architecture/space, light, object-relationships, physical vocabulary, sound, costume and audience. The outcomes of these sessions would act as a trigger and source for my writing/devising process. The ensemble would then experiment with the writing on their feet.

Phase 2: Mining/Scripting (January - February 2008)

This phase would provide me with time to look at the disparate pieces in collaboration with a dramaturg, examine how they fit together, and create a rough draft of the performance.

Phase 3: Assembling/Rehearsal (March – April 2008)

With the production company (which may or may not consist of all the members of the creation company), we would work with the drafts toward performance. I was not sure when assembling would become rehearsal, but knew I wanted to look at the text on its feet.

Phase 4: Production would not mean the end of creation, as we would bring the show to the Chilliwack Directors Festival (April 23-26), implement changes based on that production, and then present the thesis production in Vancouver (May 1-3).

By creating parameters in which the performance creation was to take place, I hoped to establish a theatre laboratory where each session would contain experiments into methods of creating performance. I liked the idea of playing in an environment where learning, creating, and teaching/facilitating happen concurrently, and felt that it would

²² The appendix includes both a detailed timeline and an outline of these sessions.

²³ These readings included Diane Ackerman's "Smell" in *A Natural History of the Senses*, New York: Vintage Books, 1991, pp5-15, 20-30, 37-54; Constance Classen's "The Breath of God: sacred histories of scent" and "A feel for the world: lessons in aesthetics from the blind" in *The Color of Angels*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp39-42, 151-154; and David Howe's "Odour and Power: The Politics of Smell" in *Aroma: A Cultural History of Smell*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp 161-180.

build on my ability to do all three of those things in a variety of roles – be it student, creator or teacher.

My interest in moving from writer/performer to writer/director included many “how” questions: How does one find strategies and techniques to write specifically for performance? How do you write without spoken words? How can a director’s sensibility be infused into the writer’s work? I hoped the laboratory nature of the project would result in strategies and techniques to add to my performance creation toolbox.

As the project progressed, questions arose that related to the development of my own aesthetic: What values dictate decision-making? How can content arise from process and form? What is the line between open and closed texts – between a purposeful ambiguity and a misleading confusion? These personal and subjective concerns necessitated a confidence in my own aesthetic values, and in my notions of what is engaging; they needed to develop concurrent to the creation process.

The theatre pieces that engage me as an audience member are those where I have a role during performance – where I must do some piecing together on my own. Mark Lord writes beautifully on this desire, making comparison to the moment when one learns to read words:

Your imagination was insulted by the pictures in your book. You wanted to know the shape of your own lips. As a reader you wanted to discover and to create for yourself. You did not want the simple revelation of being *shown* ...²⁴

I want to create the type of work that leaves a space for the audience to fill in the holes – theatre that allows the audience to finish an image, a storyline, or metaphor with their imagination and experience. Theatre that, in the words of the Living Theatre’s Judith Malina, “reveals for the audience their own decision making process”²⁵ by providing them with the active role of imagining.

²⁴ Mark Lord’s “The Dramaturgy Reader” in *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A Source Book*, eds Susan Jonas, Geoff Proehl and Michael Lupu, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997, p 89.

²⁵ Judith Malina quoted in David Callaghan’s “Still Signalling Through the Flames: The Living Theatre’s Use of Audience Participation in the 1990’s,” in *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance*, ed. Susan Kattwinkel. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003, p24.

In *New Playwriting Strategies*, Paul Castagno uses the literary theories of Bakhtin to make a case for the dialogic play, one where “the essence of the play is its staging of different voices or discourses and, thus, of the clash of social perspectives and points of view”²⁶ This clash is of interest to me, because it creates a situation where choice is necessary; if perspectives and styles do not live harmoniously, the audience must engage in the work by decision-making, or at the very least question-making. I incorporate multiple performers and their disparate subjectivities into the creation process, in the hope of inviting that clash.

Director Anne Bogart speaks to James Joyce’s delineation between kinetic and static artwork. “Kinetic art moves you. Static art stops you.”²⁷ My previous work often attempted to hit pre-meditated emotional notes to move my audience into sentimentality. By improvising and experimenting with disparate voices, styles and theatrical elements, I seek to create richer internal dialog – a piece that speaks both to itself and to its audience on a multiplicity of levels. I want to leave space for interpretation, for the audience to stop and then make a personal choice about how to receive the work – challenging their preconceptions of what should make them feel any given way.

This process and these interests eventually resulted in the creation of *Palms Down Like a Rainbow: A Folktale Eulogy* (PDLR) – a one act multi-character piece filled with colourful characters inhabiting a dystopic magic reality.

PHASE ONE: MATERIAL CREATION

Building an Ensemble – Finding Vocabulary and Polyvocality

Led a session in front of the directing class today. The feedback at the end was that there was a communication breakdown happening. They were unsure if they were supposed to do gestures, or topography movement or something else. Truth be told, I kinda don't care as long as they make choices and commit to them. I think the confusion is partially a lack of vocabulary on my

²⁶ Referencing Jonathan Culler’s *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, quoted in Paul C. Castagno’s *New Playwriting Strategies*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p2.

²⁷ Anne Bogart’s *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, New York: Routledge, 2001, p63.

part - it is tricky working with people who share a specific training. I often don't understand the implications of what I am saying, unsure of how it fits into their terminology. 26 November 2007²⁸

Before I can commence the project, a team must be assembled. I am looking for undergraduate students who are willing to commit to the Material Creation phase of the process with no promise of being involved in a product. I don't know what work will come from our improvisations, so don't want to commit to performance opportunities I can't provide. Maybe I will need all men. Maybe just small children. All I can promise is an opportunity to play and explore. Luckily, that seems to be enough. Aliya Griffin, Lauren Kresowaty, Brett Little, Gina Readman, Natalie Schneck, Ryan Swanson join the ensemble as performers from the theatre area. Ben Stone, a theatre performance major with an ear for the banjo, comes aboard taking on the role of musician. Davy Bisaro, from the dance area, comes into the project enthusiastically, but into the rehearsal hall more hesitantly, unsure of her role among the loud and opinionated theatre students. Caroline Sniatynski will dramaturg the project. Josh Regnier, the creation session stage manager, will document the phase one activities.²⁹

My delineation between the roles, especially singling out Davy and Ben, proves immediately detrimental. My theatre bias is obvious in the sessions and I am not sure how to create space to involve them in their "roles" or how to translate my theatre-specific exercises into cross-disciplinary language. I assumed that they would be immediately bilingual, able to hear my theatre language and translate it into music and dance equivalents. I am already having difficulty articulating myself to the theatre students who share a common training; they speak a different dialect than my theatre language. We need to invent a project-specific Esperanto from everyone's tongues.

Reducing my collaborators to their disciplines or training practices was in complete opposition to my goal of embracing different subjectivities in pursuit of a polyvocality that stems from "the divergent source materials that ma[k]e up the text."³⁰ Much of our early work in the sessions involved the creation of physical vocabulary and gesture scores based on source material such as lines of text, smells, or memories. While they worked,

²⁸ I started keeping journals as part of the directing class in September 2007. This became an invaluable part of my process, letting me track my changing perspectives of the work and how the work was created.

²⁹ Complete bios of the collaborators are found in appendix 5.

³⁰ Paul C. Castagno's *New Playwriting Strategies*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p2.

or after they presented, I wrote, taking my impulses from their bodies in space. Although Davy “the dancer” expressed herself physically in a way that was unique, there was as much difference watching the other ensemble members: Natalie – a swimmer, an Albertan – would move with abandon, taking up as much space as possible; Gina – a child caregiver, barely five feet – could command just as much attention with her razor sharp specificity.

Director Travis Preston discusses his relationship with dramaturg Royston Coppenger: “Royston is defined in the production process by the very fact of his presence. I do not think of him as a dramaturg. I think of him as Royston.”³¹ The more I knew my ensemble as individuals, the more I started to understand where their movements were coming from, what they might be hiding, what they could reveal. It was very intimate to sit and watch them, and the material that started to appear felt informed by their personal physical preferences, turning their bodies and experiences into co-authors.

I recall a heated discussion with a professor who works independently as a composer. I was struggling with the creation of a short solo piece, in part because I wasn’t working with an outside eye during the creation process. He asked: “What’s with these self-conscious performance creators who can’t seem to get any work done unless they have a director, dramaturg, and all those other development people holding their hand!”³² Although I was offended at the time, I also didn’t have an answer as to why the collaborative process was so integral to theatre production. Bogart starts to answer that question: “In the exquisite drama of time and space, actors are caught up in a very human drama – the drama of co-presence.”³³ It is hard to cultivate a sense of presence when working in isolation, there is nothing to push against, no conflict in the form of opposing bodies with different ideas and experiences.

³¹ Travis Preston and Royston Coppenger’s “The Way We Work” in *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A Source Book*, eds Susan Jonas, Geoff Proehl and Michael Lupu, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997, p173.

³² This comment, probably more tongue and cheek than my self-conscious performance creating self realized at the time, was meant to push a line of questioning rather than critique an entire artistic discipline. I hope.

³³ Anne Bogart’s *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, New York: Routledge, 2001, p67.

Source-work and Punctums – Focusing on Interests

I am having a hell of a time getting my writing out of monologue form. Every time I try and free-write for two or more voices, my writing style completely changes into something stilted and contrived. I have been resistant to introducing narrative into this process, feeling over-concerned about pre-meditation; I fear that working from story will make that the story. But narrative seems to have more than one person present, so in hopes of getting a little dialogue happening, I decided to throw caution to the wind and work from one anyway. I am really interested in this saint called Lydwine of Schiedam whose sweet smelling sores and body ravaged by disease was said to contain the breath of sanctity... 25 November 2007

Diane Ackerman writes of the ability for smell to catch one off guard: “hit a tripwire of smell, and memories explode all at once.”³⁴ I want to make theatre that has that same effect, that hits an audience and sends them off in different directions based on their personal subjectivity. To create a common jumping off point for the project, I decide to use smell as a source. I am interested in the relationship between smell and memory, in smell as invisible border, and the relationship between smell, alterity, attraction and revulsion.

Smell, however, proves to be a boundless and overwhelming source. I need a container for the work, an overall parameter. Based on Blake Brooker exercises at OYR – where scene titles and subsequent improvisations came from one source story – I commit to “Sacred Histories of Scent: Lydwine of Schiedam.”³⁵ Constance Classen recounts – in three sensory-language filled pages – the life story of Saint Lydwine. Plot elements in the text are fragmented at best, the events of her life itemized from what little facts remain after her death in 1433. At age fourteen, she broke a rib while ice-skating and her fragile body never completely healed. Bedridden, her only journeys were heavenly voyages led by the hand of her guardian angel. Her sickroom sores emitted a redolent odour, which grew stronger after her visits to paradisiacal meadows. When she vomited bits of her lungs and liver, her parents kept the sweet smelling pieces until Lydwine protested and the bits were buried. She neither ate nor slept, and only drank watered-down spice wine. These supernatural qualities brought her attention from the magistrates of Schiedam,

³⁴ Diane Ackerman’s *A Natural History of the Senses*, New York: Vintage Books, 1991, p5.

³⁵ Constance Classen’s “The Breath of God: Sacred Histories of Scent” in *The Colour of Angels*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp39-42.

who put her under surveillance “to ascertain the truth of her situation,” and from soldiers, who attacked her in the dead of night and “pinched her body until it bled.” Her body never decayed. “The hair belt used to chastise her body was found to be penetrated with fragrance after her death,” and, according to the Bishop of Tournai, was still redolent 200 years after her death. She was later canonized as the patron saint of ice skaters.

None of the characters, including Lydwine, are developed, and the narrative feels more like a timeline, but I can’t get the images out of my head. It has, in the James Joyce sense of the word, stopped me. Why was she blessed? What was her role in the world? How much agency did she have in her own miraculousness? My intention is not to adapt the story, but rather to use it as a creative starting point. Reading it aloud with the ensemble for the first time, it turns into vocabulary that we can learn together. The story connects with my original interest in smell, especially the tension between revulsion/attraction. The highly sensory events of Lydwine’s life, dictated by a magical logic that appears other-worldly, also seems to fit with the preliminary texts I have already written for the project.

Although I was interested in Lydwine, I wanted to make sure the ensemble would be too. Tina Landau, in discussing the work of Anne Bogart, describes their attitude towards source work: “The director has caught a disease, and somehow in those critical early moments in the process she has to make the disease contagious. Source-work spreads the disease. Source-work is an invitation to obsession.”³⁶ At OYR, visual artist Chris Cran introduced me to the Roland Barthes’ concept of the punctum.³⁷ He uses the term punctum as a name for that which wounds, or leaves a personal mark on the individual. “If you cannot say it, point to it”³⁸ Bogart sources Wittgenstein, and I feel the punctum is a name for that which gets pointed at. There is no pressure to articulate at that moment *why* the punctum caused you to lean closer, or look again, but it is a way of cultivating awareness of one’s own interest.

³⁶ Tina Landau’s “Sourcework, the Viewpoints and Composition” in *Anne Bogart: Viewpoints* ed Michael Bigelow Dixon, Lyme, NH: Smith and Krauss, 1995, p18.

³⁷ Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography*, trans Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

³⁸ Anne Bogart in *And then you Act, Making Art in Unpredictable World*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p21.

To help the ensemble find their own entry points into Lydwine, we read the text aloud, underline our individual punctums, and use them as springboards into physical exploration. That initial inarticulatable wounding was indicative of an element that contained a plumbable depth. Since something that one doesn't completely understand intellectually is ripe for multi-sensory exploration, we could continue our smell exploration from there.

After reading through the story and underlining punctums, we brainstormed punctum-inspired scene titles as individuals, and chose our ten favourites as a group. These titles – such as “mystical her,” “vomiting lungs and liver,” and “a libertine touched my rod” – were written on post-its and placed in an order across the back wall of the studio space. The ensemble made a tableau for each title, then linked the tableaus together into a fluid piece. I wrote while they worked, sometimes annotating, often using images or phrases at starting points for writing.

Months post production, I read through a list of punctums that we had underlined from Classen's source text:

- “She would never take a mortal man for her spouse.”
- “Impressed by the sweet scents emitted by Lydwine's many open sores.”
- “Vomited little pieces of her lung and liver.”
- “Lydwine's parents preserved redolent pieces of their daughter's flesh.”
- “Lydwine was said to subsist almost exclusively on an occasional swallow of watered down spiced wine.”

These punctums and many others, are clearly evident in *PDLR*, yet in the process I forgot their genesis. I lost track of how deep the relationship was between Lydwine and *PDLR*, until I re-examined the source. If I lost track of how the final writing was related to the explorations, then the performers – a source themselves – were probably more linked to the final product than they realized. By adding their subjectivities to the interpretation of the source, they re-contextualized it, allowing it to morph and accumulate new meaning.

Theatrical Lenses – Text as More than Spoken Words

Today we worked light. Carmen³⁹ came in as an observer and we all brought a slew of light sources and reflective things, then we turned off the lights and played. They came up with some magic, magic things. A lot of striking images Very rusty magic. Very inventive. They also really used the space and what was available in the room. Very disorienting and exciting. 27 November 2007

I have always been a literary playwright. I have been told frequently that my work sounds like short stories, which may be either a compliment or a gentle critique. As a playwright, I didn't think much beyond the words that would be spoken. I was unsure how to make work which welcomed additional elements that I viewed as the domain of the director – architecture/space, light, objects, physicality, sound, costume – how could these things enter into my playwriting practice? I didn't want just the polyvocality that came from the disparate voices and bodies of the ensemble, but also from the clash of those formal theatrical elements. What is the language of light and space? How can it bring something to the piece that adds to the spoken words, rather than merely affirming them?

My initial impulse was to write what happened performatively into the spoken text. I have an image of a character with a wooden arm, so write a scene in which they talk about the wooden arm. As I try to figure out why the writing seems contrived, I remember bouffon, which involves characters suffering from a physical or mental affliction. I was lucky enough to take an intensive workshop in Neo-Bouffon with Karen Hines⁴⁰ who reminded us that, although an affliction may seem bizarre to the audience, to the character it is completely normal. That nonchalance is what causes a short-circuiting in the audience, as they are forced to grapple with their own notions of the normative.

Dialogic tension also comes from a clash between the spoken text and theatrical elements laid against it – revealing more than what the spoken words dictate. To speak of love while clutching your heart brings little new information to the text, but to speak of love while fighting fits of narcolepsy, provides the viewer with a tension while deciphering meaning – removing the spoken words from their position of authority.

³⁹ Lighting designer Carmen Hung was present at the creation session when we looked at light, but stayed close to the process as we moved into phase two and three.

⁴⁰ My information about bouffon comes from an intensive course taken with Karen Hines in 2007 at John Turner's Clown Farm in Manatoulin Island..

Castagno points to the term “Ostranenie. A term from Russian formalism, a ‘making strange’, the dislocation in agreement, function, or content, such as that between word and object.”⁴¹ When writing text from our improvisations, it was important to keep the notion of ostranenie in mind, because often it was not the words that caught my interest, but their juxtaposition with other theatrical elements. How do I document this juxtaposition? Is it the specific objects that play against each other that are important, or the fact that there is something – anything – that causes a tension that is central?

In Holly Hughes’ two-hander, *Dress Suits for Hire*, a monologue about a childhood rape is performed while slinging a hula-hoop.⁴² The character never mentions the hoop, but its presence distances her from the memory, and allows the audience to reconsider their conceptions of post-traumatic behaviour. Is the hoop itself the important element, or could the same effect have occurred while playing with a yo-yo, or skipping rope? Does the delight of short-circuiting come from the meaning one makes from the relationship between *any* random objects – as the oft described work of the surrealists: “as beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella” – or the clash of *specific* elements? In *PDLR*, Ommadarlin speaks innocently about baking:

Carefully chosen ingredients are an important part of any culinary endeavour.
Choose poorly and you might find yourself with a baked good that’s below par.
One that won’t live up to the cute little muffin next door.
Problem is sometimes, when you think you’ve found that perfect piece of fruit that is going to give your baking that special tangy zip, when you get it in the oven, and peer through the little glass window it may look a little lumpy ...”⁴³

But when the monologue is performed as she sits pregnant, cutting apples with a large knife, suddenly the scene becomes about abortion. The knife is an important part of the stage directions, but could the scene have been equally effective with a hand blender, or a grater?

⁴¹ Paul C. Castagno’s *New Playwriting Strategies*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p12.

⁴² Holly Hughes’ “Dress Suits for Hire” in *From the other side of the century II: New American drama, 1960-1995*, eds. Douglas Messerli and Mac Wellman. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1998, pg706.

⁴³ See Appendix 4, *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* script, p94.

As the creation sessions progress, the playwright produces the most writing from the exercises that focus on bodies in space and their physical vocabulary. But I can feel the director begin to elbow in as we move into sessions that deal with light and architecture. They don't result in very much writing, because I am too enthralled with what is happening in the space. I think of the writing from those sessions as stage directions, mostly because I type them in italics:

*Light shot from above, tiny fingers look like the hand of god,
grasping to pick evidence off the cracked floorboards.*

My jottings while we explore architecture are more directorial:

*The joy of opening and closing doors.
Discovery of people hiding.
Discovery of ownership.*

It takes me a while to realize that this might not be text that will be heard in the play, but are instead notes for me as director. I am not just creating the script, but creating possibilities for the materiality of the production. These discoveries too, find their way into the show secretly, their path all but forgotten until I find evidence of their existence long after the show has closed.

The creation session that looks at architecture takes place in my small bungalow. I scrub the house first, knowing that they will be finding places that hold olfactory appeal, but I perhaps should have used more elbow-grease as ensemble member Aliya writes the following haiku to describe my shower:

warm sweet damp and hot
hint of something not so clean
fruity out of place.

Lauren, who will later play Lydwine in *PDLR*, sneaks around my bedroom possessively holding a box of batteries then writes:

box o' batteries
sharp and cool like brand new forks
lick them and see stars.

In response I write: “What is that moment when all of a sudden you realize you have possession of something worth hiding?” It enters the script later as Lydwine begs her sisters to hide her miraculous vomit from the family.

Compositions – Looking for Activity in the Present

I have been getting the ensemble to write physical scores of their compositions. I am interested in how they chose to articulate their actions, and wonder what can be inspiration and writing prompts after the fact. How can the textual articulation of movement become text itself? Gina sent in a score recently and described a physical gesture: “Left hand is curved, palm-down, like a rainbow.” Palm down like a rainbow! So shy, negative and hopeful all at the same time. It’s doing something active, but what? Perhaps it is a working title – Palms down like a Rainbow: Lydwine of Schiedam Live!⁴⁴ Awesome. Don’t know what that play is about, but I think I might want to see it. 27 November 2007

It took me a while to realize that I needed to be quiet. I was initially so concerned with planning elaborate creation sessions and leading them, I didn’t have enough time to write in, or out of, the rehearsal hall. My role in this phase of the creation process was part writer, part improvisation facilitator, but it became less about being an instructor. I still had to make frames so they could make the picture, but the frames didn’t have to be so fancy. The first creation session included eight exercises, as time passed they generally included three or four.

Caroline, in her dramaturgical wisdom, suggested composition work. We did some introductory exercises that dealt with source and our theatrical lens of the day (lighting, sound, gesture, objects etc), then the ensemble was given a set of restrictions, a text, and a short period of time to put it all together into a composition.⁴⁵I observed the work as

⁴⁴ *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* stuck, and I spent a lot of time figuring out how that gesture fit into the show. As the final image, it had specific resonance for me, as I had given it a lot of power, but for the audience, I don’t think it held that same weight. The second part of the title “a folktale eulogy” was magpied directly from Pedro Chamale’s description of Mansel Robinson’s *Ghost Trains*. I struggled with the eulogy part too, it was Later Matilda’s eulogy, but whether it was for a concrete loss of her sister(s) or a metaphorical loss of her youth was not established.

⁴⁵ Appendix 3 contains creation session plans and specific parameters used in phase one. These composition exercises were introduced to me from the work of Anne Bogart and Tina Landau in their work *The Viewpoints Book*, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005.

they built and presented. The trick with the compositions was to use Bogart's notion of "exquisite pressure"⁴⁶ – assigning an impossible task to be accomplished in a short period of time, in order to remove judgement and the threat of failure. Compositions often thrust bodies into conflict. The performers never have sufficient time to establish all the necessary creative choices in preparation, so in performance they are forced to make decisions on the spot that support the limited pre-existing group plan. You could see the conflict that came from their decision-making. A body at the moment before a choice is made is a rich source to write from; they are, to draw upon the work of Gilles Deleuze, surrounded by a cloud of virtual possibilities⁴⁷, filled with the presence of potentials not yet actualized. Can these possibilities become text that allows the audience see the range choices that exist for the body in the moment of decision-making?

After compositions were presented, everyone would write: the performers annotating their specific scores; Caroline the dramaturg, stage manager Josh, and I writing what we saw. All writing was sent to me; I would compare them, and write from them. These annotations made every performer the main character, and it was a great opportunity to see how all these myopic perspectives came together to create something larger. Composition work pushed my writing into a place that was more present. Rather than the languorous sensory descriptions toward which I have a predilection, these compositions forced me to write the actions that were happening in front of me. My writing still felt like short stories, but it contained events that could be re-contextualized into the bigger piece. The specific words below – written from a composition – never made it into *PDLR*, but similar action is evident in the two "Lungs and Liver"⁴⁸ scenes.

She undermines the barrage of advances from the women in the
baseball jerseys.
They are forced together to witness the big game.
A deer-like lady, large eyed-head, is throwing up into a bucket, as fast
as the sour milk allows.
Everything that exits her mouth is the consistency of lava, and as
soon as it contacts the air, it freezes and shatters into collectable
pieces.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p138.

⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet's "The Actual and the Virtual" translated by Eliot Ross Albert. *Dialogues II*, trans by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

⁴⁸ See Appendix 4, *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* script, page 86 and 125.

PHASE 2: MINING/SCRIPTING

Structuring – Finding the Whole from the Pieces

Mostly just writing and freaking out. That is what has been happening. I don't know if the play is about anything. There are pieces in place that come from the Material Creation phase but I don't know how they all hang together. It is so hard because if process is supposed to dictate project and I am not supposed to pre-meditate, then what happens if the process results in nothing of consequence? I am terrified I have nothing to say. Emptying my brain on a page and finding it...well...empty. I feel trapped by the process, afraid that if I am not doing what I set out to do - writing from people's bodies, writing from a source, then the project will be a failure. I know that is ridiculous - a scientist does not set out to PROVE a hypothesis, but rather to test one - I was never very good at science... 1 February 2008

As soon as you tell anyone that you have written a play, they ask, “What is it about?” This is a terrifying question to try to answer. In Daniel MacIvor’s *The Soldier Dreams*, a character hesitates to speak:

Words are like little cages for thoughts. So you trap the thought in the cage of the word and you look at it and you think: ‘Well, that’s not what I was looking for at all.’⁴⁹

I don't want my words to trap my thoughts. To what extent should I be able to articulate what the play is about? New discoveries are happening all the time, breaking our previously held paradigms. “Of course the thing they are building is the nest!” or “of course Small Matilda is not the manifestation of Tiny and Matilda, but just Matilda!” We are putting together the pieces of a map – but the country on the map doesn’t actually exist yet.

In the material creation phase, the movement from physical improvisation to script, contained an element of incompleteness that was structural; there was no broad sense of what came before or afterwards. This often led to a heightened sense of presence, and my challenge was to retain that presence while building a structure around it that would give the audience something to hold onto. As Bogart writes, quoting musician Alfred Brendel:

⁴⁹ Daniel MacIvor’s *The Soldier Dreams*, Toronto: Scirocco Drama, 1997, p27.

“There is a tension that goes all the way through a piece of music and never lets up. A long silver cord that one pulls on ... There’s always a force irresistibly pulling it from the first note to the last.”⁵⁰ The impulse was to write with hindsight in the structuring process, leaving a trail for the audience to follow, but often what made the moment special in the first place was its unexpected nature. I can try to be faithful to the present in writing, but the meaning that comes from these different bursts of presence change when the work is put in the context of the script. Structurally, each segment has a butterfly effect on the segment beside it. These pieces clash differently based on the context I create for them, and the order in which they appear.

Caroline and I spend hours together, she responds to the structures I have (sometimes arbitrarily) thrown into place. She looks for patterns and re-occurring tensions that I may have missed from my writer’s perspective. I avoid questions about “about.” I am insecure about making decisions too quickly, about pre-determining, then directing all the work toward making that decision come true. “Hold on tightly, let go lightly” is Caroline’s response, something she learned from Penelope. Be committed to an idea at any given moment, but be open to throwing it away when something else comes along that displaces the previously held notion. This gives me the freedom to talk concretely about ideas in a way that I have previously been hesitant to do. Talking about ideas is important for me, because they become real when I say them out loud. I test them in my mouth and figure them out as I say them. When ideas are incoherent in my head, the strain of articulation forces me to find their connection to the greater piece.

With Caroline I talk. To anyone else who will listen, I talk. I try to figure out ideas by putting them into words. I make concepts and interests real by pointing to them. I carry around water in a mason jar because I think it is beautiful and I love the sound of the liquid hitting the metal lid. I think it has something to do with the play, but I am not sure what. I hope that if I talk to people about it, I will figure that out.

Readings – Hearing Text, Hearing Characters

Hey! It might be a play after all. It was great to hear the text read by different people because suddenly I was able to get distance from it, all the pieces started to live less on my computer screen. I close my eyes and I

⁵⁰ Anne Bogart’s *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, New York: Routledge, 2001, p61.

could really see it. Really claustrophobic and dark, punctuated by shafts of light. The voices were clearer too. It became obvious when character is, or is not, written into the text in terms of vocal patterns. Where is that whole dialogism thing I was striving for? Right now they are all speaking in my voice, all that poetry makes it so damn poetic that I don't know who these people are. 20 January 2008

In the initial project plans, I had not envisioned the performers involved in the mining/scripting phase, but soon saw the potential of their collaboration. I am spending so much time talking, that I need to space to listen. As we go through drafts, they read it and move around; I listen and watch for knowledge that comes from their new relationship to the words, and my new perspective. My cast provides a great parameter for creation work that seems so structure-less. I need boundaries to start, and the boundary of their bodies is a good one. They have all worked so hard, and bring such different things to the table, that I need them in performance too. Davy has decided not to move past the Material Creation phase of the project because of scheduling conflicts; and I want to use Ben as an actor. Elliot Vaughan⁵¹ has agreed to come on board as a composer, and it is fitting that his initial encounters with the text are aural.

Hearing my own writing as a director, rather than speaking it as a performer, lets me encounter the text more like an audience member. In previous work, my impulse was to let the words stay front and centre, and not take into account the richer multi-sensory situation in which it would actually be performed. Paul Castagno has pinpointed “the language playwrights”⁵² whose work is characterized by liberal use of formal textual elements such as rhythm, repetition, dialect, and choral work.⁵³ These texts are often difficult to read on the page, unfinished works that acknowledge they are in a transitional space before reaching their target performance destination. Language playwright Suzan-Lori Parks works specifically with dialect in *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*: “I didunhnt quit that school. HHH. Thought: nope! Mm gonna go on-go on ssif nothing ssapin yuh know? ‘S-K’ is /sk/ as in ‘ask.’ The little-lamb-follows-closely-

⁵¹ Elliot Vaughan, predominantly a viola player, teaches me the importance of lengthy meetings. We chat ferociously, sprawled on his couch, surrounded by instruments. We cook and eat a meal together at most meetings. His curries are extraordinary.

⁵² Some examples include Suzan-Lori Parks, Mac Wellman and Len Jenkin.

⁵³ Paul C. Castagno's *New Playwriting Strategies*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p3.

behind-at-Marys-heels-as-Mary-boards-the-train. Shit.”⁵⁴ It is not until the words are read aloud that the performative essence can start being realized. When I listen to the ensemble play with one of the early drafts, it is not the long poetic monologues filled with images that make me lean forwards, but the jerky choral bits, the exclamation marks and capital letters.

As a writer previously creating predominantly solo theatre, writing multiple character voices was new territory. Castagno outlines playwright Len Jenkin’s process:

In practice, Jenkin often develops his characters by including actors in his creation process. In the workshop, the physically trained actor responds quickly and effectively to this external approach of characterization, providing real insight to the playwright in the construction of the play.⁵⁵

The performers brought differing perspectives, but also decidedly individual rhythm and speech patterns.

I did not cast the play immediately, but used the numbers as restrictions for the writing. I assigned parts in the first readings randomly, disregarding gender and type. I still didn’t know the characters that well and wanted to see what I could learn about them from different performer’s explorations. As they read the parts, gender became less important than individual energy. The choices the performers made in the workshops – sometimes playing characters they eventually performed, sometimes not – informed the character’s voices and energies.

Since there were only two “male” roles, I had initially assumed that if Ryan played Uncle Gingerbread, Ben would play the Boatswain. In the world of *PDLR* the women ran the household. I wanted Ryan, with his physically imposing body and tendency to be cast as romantic leads, to find the opposite while playing Uncle Gingerbread. Always inventing, Ryan consistently found active things to do on stage. As he worked busily tending plants, watching Ommadarlin or the kids, it became clear that he needed less text, not more. His few outbursts of flowery yearnings became more painful when they leapt beyond his otherwise short and obsequious sentences.

⁵⁴ Suzan-Lori Parks’ “Imperceptible Mutabiliites in the Third Kingdom” in *From the other side of the century II: New American drama, 1960-1995*, eds. Douglas Messerli and Mac Wellman, Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1998, p867.

⁵⁵ Paul C. Castagno’s *New Playwriting Strategies*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p79.

In an early reading, Ben was randomly assigned the part of Clementine. He accessed a sense of play and the bravado of youth that I had seen glimmers of taking the clowning course with him. He gave Clementine a confidence that I had not previously recognized which, when paired with a line Aliya had written about being “girl scout prepared”, led to her obsession with survival. If the audience could accept twenty-one year old Lauren as new born baby Lydwine, arriving fully grown out of an oven, I saw no reason why it was more jarring to believe twenty-three year old Ben was a six year old girl.

Natalie spoke afterwards about the difficulty in negotiating the writer’s vision of the character with her own. In hindsight, given the way I lost track of how the current product was related to source, I could understand where she was coming from. I was still surprised though. Her early reading of the Boatswain, long before the play was cast – leaping onto the reading table and pouring water all over herself – was integral to my understanding of that character as a spontaneous showman, oft taken in by his own excitement. As she swaggered and strutted in her female body, the Boatswain became a younger man, and her relationship with Matilda became deeper and less menacing.

I was not interested in asking the audience to think that they were watching a real family on stage, but rather in presenting a rusty magic that they would accept as the world of the play. In fact, my interest in theatre with gaps for the audience’s imagination, made me strive for elements that acknowledged the world’s theatricality – not just the untraditional casting, but a clash of styles, musical interludes, balloon pregnancy and mechanical popcorn vomit.

Physical Exploration – New Meanings to Text

This script is so abstract that it is begging for performance. I need to see the relationships on stage to figure out what is happening! 5 January 2008

Between January and early March, there were five readings of script drafts. The first two readings left me filled with ideas for writings. The reading of the third draft was disappointing. I was bored; the performers seemed bored; the discussion afterwards was stilted. I hadn’t started them off with any questions or context. The script had far to go, but I was so uninspired that a week later, when it was time to read the fourth draft, I hadn’t written it. I had spent the entire week procrastinating by staring at structure, making charts, and writing little poems about each character, for example;

For Matilda

eating placenta cause it sounds like dessert
coke bottle glasses
eye mom's coat-hanger collection
safety traps
body secrets no one told her
love doesn't exist like books
words trap
outside is dark
lonely for extra limbs
without fingernails

I decided to use the poems to re-approach draft four in a new way. I give a poem to each performer. They develop pieces of physical vocabulary to accompany lines they feel their poem's character would use to seduce, intrigue, or repel the other characters in the room. They have no idea who the other characters are, but as they move into space, relationships appear that I had not necessarily considered: Gingerbread on the outside, resentful of Matilda; Tiny and Matilda, circling like sharp-shooters, speaking each other's texts; Small Matilda cowering behind Tiny, looking for protection; Boatswain and Ommadarlin prowling around each other on the floor. The performers return to the table in these bodies and execute a colourful and engaging reading of the same draft that had felt flat and dead the week earlier.

If the final production draft of *PDLR* contained dense language, the earlier drafts were even more difficult, and lacked vocal variety to delineate characters. There were few clues for the performers as to who their characters were, and the poetry was a barrier to understanding what was going on. A fear of making wrong choices due to an uncertainty about what was happening in the script, created a hesitancy to make *any* choice. The new bodies and impulses that came from the poems broke them out of that pattern. If previously, the performers were perhaps worried about making wrong choices, the *characters* had no such concern. They started to make eye contact and speak to each other. This was a reading around a table, but I couldn't keep them sitting down. Things were looking up.

Castagno points to juxtaposition as a characteristic of the dialogic play.⁵⁶ As the performers moved into making physical choices, I began to see how open the script could be if opposing physicality was added over the words. Allowing the performers to work on

⁵⁶ Paul C. Castagno's *New Playwriting Strategies*, New York and London: Routledge, 2001, p11.

compositions for scenes that lacked textual clarity opened my eyes to the power that staging had to give the text new meaning.

I had particular trouble with a scene called “Conception.” The text came from instructions for how to work an EZ bake oven, with stage directions (and title) that indicated that Lydwine was conceived during the scene. I asked the performers to do a fifteen-minute composition on the scene that included the text, rhythm, a moment of passion, straight lines, and explored the question: what is special about this conception? Out of the strange text and parameters, they created a love scene of weirdly juxtaposed mechanical noises and romantic gazes that saw Ommadarlin and Uncle Gingerbread as parents to Lydwine. In the final draft, the text itself was actually dropped, while the actions they discovered in their physical exploration remained integral to the plot.⁵⁷

Since their physical exploration of the text helped me understand the play’s environment, we do a reading at my house. They have been asked to bring one costume piece. I have baked a cake, and that smell permeates the house. Things are slow to start, but when I ask them to find where their character sleeps in the house, they all turn into children, inquisitive, not fearing boundaries. Ben, sporting flak jacket as Clementine, sleeps standing up next to the folding ironing board. Natalie, as Boatswain, emerges from the tub in goggles and swim cap. Lauren, as Lydwine, curls up in a ball in the corner of the bedroom – a beautiful consumptive in her long white gown. Although Caroline and I planned on having the reading in the living room, everyone gravitated toward the kitchen, so we read there – the heart of the house, and perhaps the heart of the play.

Lighting designer Carmen Hung is present at the house reading. She sits with me in the kitchen and watches the characters gravitate towards personal nooks within a communal space. She and set designer Scott Owens bring a lot of images of dark shadowy spaces pierced by slivers of light, which look to me like individuals asserting their presence in a foreboding environment. I express an interest in turning the black box around to create hiding spaces for individuals, while capturing the sense of play that came from working in the house – to find the joy in hiding, in listening, in sneaking, and the danger in that too. I am interested in mason jars and rope for the set – the jars as containers that

⁵⁷ See Appendix 4, *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* script, p99.

preserve while halting growth, the ropes as a tool for both death and escape. Scott starts to plan how they can add to the claustrophobia of the world.

Collaborative Dramaturgy – Recognizing Values

Caroline and I talk obsessively about the notion of praxis – how theory can be put into practice. We are both well read, listen in class, and feel prepared mentally to engage in the task of making theatre, but when it comes to actually doing it, we are both finding it difficult to move the ideas into something concrete.

I am looking for praxis in my life outside of the theatre too. I feel that I have strong values and opinions about the way I should comport myself as a citizen. It's just sometimes hard to turn those values into actions. Louis Althusser talks about this disconnect in his critique of religion and ideology,⁵⁸ where actions take the place of values and ideas, creating a false relationship between the two. Holding a rosary becomes an easy way to create a bond between notions of the spiritual and individual actions, but it also removes the need for the individual to translate their adherence to a specific religious value to the general conduct of their life. I can talk a great deal about my values as theatre maker and citizen, but I am not sure how to create a real relationship between those values and my actions.

What values are related to my writing this play? The writing process is forcing me to face the contents of my own brain. I am sure it will continue as we move into rehearsal. Director Robert Benedetti quotes director Dan Sullivan who remarks "I can only *do* a play well when there is a strong connection between the play's life and my own."⁵⁹ I have been so focused on streaming everything through the actors, and being faithful to the moments they are working so hard to create, that I have forgotten why it is important for me to be writing. I have spent so much time staring at screens, that there is nothing in me to write about. I need to get off my computer. I take a printed version to Continental Coffee.

⁵⁸ Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)" in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999.

⁵⁹ Dan Sullivan quoted by Robert Benedetti in *The Director at Work*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1985, p11.

There is a three year old girl in the coffee shop. While her mom chats, she spins in circles and kicks repeatedly at a yellow “water caution” pylon. Spinning and infectious laughter. Her name is Ava; I find this out as her mom offers sporadic admonishments and hushing. Everyone in the coffee shop is watching her and she knows it. She is at that age when she is aware of her own power, but not sure where it comes from. As everyone watches her, I feel a sense of yearning for the pleasure that comes from exploratory play. Where do we lose that? How do I get it back? I think that is what I am looking for in process, and in the experience of theatre, and in my writing – the re-discovery of the dizzy joy that comes from spinning. Can the form of the process relate to that desire, and subsequently be evident in the production?

I was spending so much time struggling with structure and plot and who does what when, that I had neglected questions about values. What *do* we preserve from growing up versus what *should* we preserve? What do we tell children is true in hope that maybe it will be the truth? What is the relationship between truth/lies, protection/limitation? Why do we admonish discovery of the pleasure in aimless spinning? These questions come from the script in front of me, from Ava’s spinning, from my own pre-occupations, from the work we have done as a group – which actually includes a lot of laughter, more and more as time goes on and we get comfortable with each other, as we eat more cake together. But I still can’t enter the world of the play from a place of honesty when I don’t feel connected to anything except the play. I have been so focused on this process that I don’t feel engaged enough with the world around me to write anything real.

I get a call from the hospital telling me that my roommate Jenny has been hit by car. The play gets put away. I spend two days at the hospital with her, watching hospital staff treat her like shit, and then with beautiful patience and care. Later, at home, I watch her deal with the pain and confusion of a serious head injury. I clean up vomit. I give her showers. I sneak into her room at odd hours to check her breathing. I feel like a mom. I also feel connected to something other than this weird and privileged place where my job is study. I was not feeling like the show was about anything because I was not engaging with anything concrete. Jenny’s family was home in California and, at one particular moment, I was the only one around to make an important medical choice. When she was safe with family, I got back home and wrote and wrote and the next draft arrived.

Is there a specific place where you go to move from youth?
A circle you step into backwards that makes body hair grow in unique

locations?
Where you look around to figure out who is in charge of making
decisions and realize it is you.
Organs turn hard and stale, dizzy with responsibility.⁶⁰

I write these words for Later Matilda's closing monologue because they feel important, filled with the sense of urgency and passion that come from engaging in real-life actions that are concretely related to values.

Praxis and creative process requires balance too. Around this time I make a resolution to try those weekend things that everyone is talking about. I spend a day hiking. I am excited to start rehearsing.

PHASE 3: ASSEMBLING/REHEARSAL

The Split – Playwright versus Director

I am feeling the schism between playwright brain and director brain. Should I solve problems spatially or in the text? How many of the questions should the text answer anyway? How many questions should I provide answers to? Does the playwright have different answers than the director? How can I kill the playwright? She just won't shut up and is clearly a control freak perfectionist. 19 March 2008

Creating a script aimed at performance can benefit from a sort of theatrical bilingualism. Writer Umberto Eco speaks to the movement from context to context in translation: "If translation studies are concerned with the process of translation from a source text A in a language Alpha, to a target text B in a language Beta, then translation scholars should have had, at least once in their life, both the experience of translating and that of being translated."⁶¹ I have been on many sides of the text in the theatre, as writer, as director and as performer. In each of these situations my primary concern was faithfulness to the source text. "Am I misinterpreting the playwright's words?" I asked as director and as performer. The playwright had a similar concern: "Have I made myself clear enough in the text that my vision will be realized?" These questions privilege the playwright, but possibly miss an essence that exists beyond the lines.

⁶⁰ See Appendix 4, *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* script, p127.

⁶¹ Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, p5.

I was not prepared for the tumultuous collaborative relationship between my playwright half and my director half. The playwright purposefully left the text open to foster a role for the audience and collaborators, but she was also sometimes tired and bereft of solutions. She left problems in the script that she hoped the director would solve with the ensemble working on their feet. The director, however, was well acquainted with the playwright, and knew those large holes existed and didn't know if she should yell at her playwright pal to fix them, or figure them out in rehearsal.

In the rehearsal hall, I watched the ensemble tackle scenes and tracked my level of engagement with the work. The challenge was to identify which elements fostered engagement and which ones left me bored or confounded. Was there something in the writing that was not working – or was it the directing or the acting? The dual playwrighting and directing hats complicated this. I was unsure of where we were in the script, and wondered how I, a tentative director who puts text on a pedestal, could work with a script that I didn't fully understand or trust. What were the strategies to deal with this challenge?

Directing Table Work – Trusting the Ensemble

I am having trouble taking off my playwrighting hat and am subsequently terrified of table work. Especially since it is now clear that the first week of rehearsals will not be with a final draft. 10 March 2008

In dramaturgy class, the week before we start table work, I read about Suzan Lori Parks' involvement in the process of rehearsing *In the Blood*. It outlines the production team's reliance on the playwright for definitive answers, and yet the answers she gave often seemed to come from information that was not in the text, but in her head.⁶² I am looking for ways to avoid that. For ways to kill the playwright and let the text do the talking. Caroline's presence helps. I lean on her, especially in these early stages, to get her to step in with facilitating questions and discussions, maybe directing scenes that I am unsure about in order to watch without tying the ensemble to my preconceived understandings.

⁶² John Dias details the rehearsal process in his dramaturgical account of the production at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival in *The Production Notebooks Volume II* ed. Mark Bly, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001, p73-191.

As we searched for beats and named them, I was torn when some of the ensemble asked me for clarification as to what was going on. I tried to find the words to articulate my understanding of the text, until Caroline surreptitiously dropped me a note saying, "Don't over-explain!" Things moved quickly after that. Stage manager Ally Colclough⁶³— a perfect combination of hippy mom and drill sergeant — kept us amicably on a tight schedule so we didn't spend too much time overanalyzing, but instead committed to tentative choices and moved on. I decided that the best way for me to approach the table work was to look at the text with fresh eyes, and to add my two cents only when I made discoveries in the moment with the rest of the ensemble. This made the process feel less hierarchal, and I started to enjoy it more, taking pleasure in discoveries of the moment.

After beat work, instead of doing more text analysis at the table, we returned to compositions. I gave the ensemble a few parameters, fifteen minutes, some questions I was grappling with, and let them put the scene on their feet. This forced me to articulate questions rather than answers, and let me watch their problem-solving strategies. I was at first concerned that the ensemble would think these compositions were busy work to pass the time until the next draft was done, but their choices were very useful. During work on the final scene — Later Matilda's monologue — I asked: "How is everyone else still present?" and "Why has she decided to speak now?" They made a boat from their bodies and everyone echoed the bits of text that they saw as important to their characters. As they paddled forward, I began to see the links between memory and travelling. Nadja C. Seremetakis' writes of the Greek definition of nostalgia as "the desire or longing with burning pain to journey,"⁶⁴ and that is how I start to see the play. Later Matilda must journey back in order to see the present. These ideas flood in as I watch them work without leaping in to direct; they are simultaneously analysing the text and making choices without worrying about getting it wrong, my authority to dictate meaning happily absent.

Directing Theatricality – The Impossible Stage Direction

Even though I am doing 15-hour workdays, I find that rehearsal is the most energizing place to be. Where I want to be. It is problem solving; it is laughing

⁶³ Stage Manager Ally Colclough came into the process as we moved from workshop to rehearsal.

⁶⁴ Nadia C. Seremetakis' "The Memory of the Senses, Part 1: Marks of the Transitory," in *The Senses Still - Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p4.

and making wrong choices, it is focused watching. We are rough blocking the whole play in 3 rehearsals, so this just feels like a skeleton. A first draft where we can get out everything and edit later. 28 March 2008

Umberto Eco uses the term hypotosis to describe the process of imagining which occurs when a reader interprets signs: “Verbal texts often bring into play processes of hypotyposis; in other words, they lead the language to ‘stage’ something that the reader is virtually led to see.”⁶⁵ A performance text must be vivid enough to foster hypotosis so that the ensemble can add that which is unsaid in the movement from text to performance, and simultaneously rich enough to allow space for the audience to see things beyond the productions specific choices.

The playwright half of me wanted to invite hypotosis by writing stage directions that left the text open. This interest was sparked by the work of Naomi Iizuka. Her stage directions in *Tattoo Girl* indicate:

*The babies have turned into strange owl-eyed marsupials never before spotted in any hemisphere. They have fur. They have claws. Their eyes glow in the dark.*⁶⁶

The director must theatrically problem solve to make that impossible directive real. Do they need to first decide *how* to create marsupial babies, or first decide what *it means* to have marsupial babies? Can the image just speak for itself? During table work, we talked at length about the scene in which the stage direction states: “*Lydwine explodes.*” Was she dying? Was she entering puberty? We had to leave it until we were on our feet.

When were images metaphors, and when were they real? And if they were real, to whom were they real? In an attempt to write more theatrically, I had filled the text with impossible stage directions – *Lydwine vomits up lungs and liver, the Boatswain paddles up from the nest, Ommadarlin is stopped by zygote Lydwine, Tiny and Matilda disappear into the nest and arrive in the future* – but I was not sure as playwright how they would function in the world of the play. I assumed when the director found ways to achieve them, she would also find the space where they lived between action and metaphor. But the director couldn’t shake the playwright’s uncertainty, so neither ended

⁶⁵ Umberto Eco’s *Experiences in Translation*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, p31.

⁶⁶ Naomi Iizuka’s “Tattoo Girl” in *From the other side of the century II: New American drama, 1960 1995*, eds. Douglas Messerli and Mac Wellman, Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1998, p1179.

up answering important questions. Is Lydwine getting into a real oven, or a metaphorical womb? How would either of those choices change the circumstance of her death? Does the nest really lead them someplace geographically different, or does it represent their metaphorical growth? How might those answers change at any given moment?

As we rehearsed, the number of performers on stage made it difficult to watch everything at once. At first I made sure to give them all new things to try each time we ran scenes, but I soon realized that was exhausting. I was not going to see everything at once, especially not on the first day. At that point, I was learning to watch what was happening on stage rather than follow the text in my script and just listen to the performers. If I really wanted to get rid of the playwright in the rehearsal hall, I needed to focus on the stage. At home, in hindsight, I could invite the playwright back to look at the script.

Although, that said, it became easier to figure out how to clarify text when the performers were on stage working. One of my writing impulses was to have simultaneous conversation and action, which often split the focus more than necessary. Originally in the first Solarium scene, Uncle Gingerbread was trimming plants, Tiny and Matilda were building a nest, Ommadarlin's water broke, the Boatswain entered from the nest, and Matilda ironed Tiny's hands – all in the first ten lines. There was definitely simultaneous action, but there were so many new events that as an audience, even I couldn't follow. The performers couldn't focus and properly take in the events either. We did some cutting and restructuring in rehearsal, and suddenly were able to give each action the space it needed.

I also started to realize how tiny text changes can create big differences on stage. When we arrived at the stage direction "Boatswain enters," Natalie asked: "from where?" I told her "stage left," but had to go home and think about it. The bodies in space were opening new questions, and I didn't know if I should explore them on stage, or in the writing as well. Deciding where the Boatswain *entered* required thinking about where he entered *from*. I changed the script to "Boatswain enters *from the nest*" and a huge puzzle piece fit into place that shaped the kid's agency in calling the Boatswain, and the magical power that the nest contained. Later, as I typed up the production draft, all these choices seemed so important to my understanding of the play, that I didn't know which ones should be omitted to allow for new choices in potential subsequent productions.

Directing Actors – Vocabulary, Presence, Collaboration

We stumbled through this week, and I was shocked to find out that it was actually more 'through' than 'stumble'! Clearly there is still much to be done, but I had not realized how much working with them beforehand would actually translate into an understanding of the world and the characters.
5 April 2007

We are creating the language of the piece; but I still need to learn the dialects of the individual. In his article “Common Sense As a Cultural System”⁶⁷ anthropologist Clifford Geertz cautions against assumption and judgement of the other without first considering their individual context. I think of Geertz as I direct. Everyone has a reason for his or her responses and intuitive behaviour. Some of the ensemble is very receptive to images, others to intentions, others to shape or rhythm. One ensemble member struggled as I told her repeatedly to try things “more casually” – a terrible direction that didn't leave her room to find urgency. She finally asked “is this about being less presentational?” to which I leapt for joy – she had found the words I was searching for, and once we had named it *something*, we were able to take steps to address it.

One of the language struggles we faced at this stage was the poetic text. The playwright loved the words on the page, but the director saw they were not active enough to keep the performers doing anything. I couldn't completely give up all the poetic bits of storytelling, though I was starting to see the performance challenges that they created. In my history with solo theatre, I depended on storytelling to carry the play. From the position of director, I began to see how hard it was to keep long wordy monologues active and not fall into the trap of poetic recitation. I stressed that monologues are conversation, and that every sentence is potentially the last. We fought the trap of recitation by figuring out what physical action accompanied the monologue, and how it functioned in the greater structure of the play.

Recitation is a performer's enemy if they are striving to respond to the present moment – to keep an audience's role active. It is difficult to rehearse “presence” if the term rehearsal is seen as a synonym for repetition; as soon as “presence” becomes a technical element in a performance, it ceases to be true to the present moment. Using

⁶⁷ Clifford Geertz's “Common Sense as a Cultural System” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.

improvisational strategies in creation became an opportunity to rehearse staying present, and responding to impulses from the ensemble and the environment. This turned rehearsal into a creative learning process, rather than exclusively a means to an end. Bogart suggests, “the act of observation alters the thing observed. To observe is to disturb.”⁶⁸ In rehearsal, I watch and create an environment where the ensemble on stage and off, are also encouraged to observe.

Although presence was difficult to rehearse once we moved into scene-work, we continued to practice group kinaesthetic awareness and impulse recognition through warm-up play. Since the beginning of the process we warmed up by volleying a ball in a circle, each ensemble member working to keep it in the air for as long as possible. Performers had to negotiate when they needed to support the group and when they needed to step back. We wanted to reach one hundred volleys and threw ourselves into the challenge.⁶⁹ At the beginning of April, however, our five months of rigorous ball playing had left us no closer to one hundred, and we were a little bored with trying. Even play can get repetitious if it lacks variety. So I invent a new warm up that sees us stumbling blind in a field, pretending to throw up, and getting grass-stained knees. We have to stop because we are laughing too hard. It proves to be an excellent place to start the rehearsal – in a space where they are willing to jump into the ridiculousness of the game, willing to say yes and try.

As I struggled with the two roles of playwright and director, I happily found it easier to access my own pleasure in the material as a director, because the cast continually surprised me with their choices. As writer/performer, I had felt my acting explorations suffered because I gave too much power to my own script – a choice that was simultaneously timid and egotistical. Since I had written the words, I was less rigorous with my actor work, hesitant to explore because I valued, and subsequently privileged, the writer part of me more than the performer. I would omit exploration of theatricality in order to create a space where my own words could stand centre.

⁶⁸ Anne Bogart’s *The Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, New York: Routledge, 2001, p72.

⁶⁹ The first time the ensemble reached 100 volleys was a week later, when I was sadly absent due to food poisoning. Not only did they obtain the golden number, but they also pulled off an effective rehearsal with Natalie standing in as director. I felt proud and a little redundant. This victory, however, re-invested us in the game, and by closing night our final number was 240.

As a director, along with this new perspective on the work, I also found new confidence as a creator. Not being the body in the space allowed me to sense more intuitively when things were working, when they engaged me. This perspective removed the self-judgment of my own performance, and allowed me to move into problem-solving mode – my responsibility to direct the performers into a framework where the script’s challenges might be solved.

PHASE 4: PERFORMANCE

Audience Responses – Dealing with Judgement

I have never been so nervous to watch a show. This is a different type of nervous than that which comes from performing your own work. I thought I would be less receptive to the audience, but I was sitting right in them! Surrounded. 27 April 2008

Prior to opening the show in Vancouver, we brought *PDLR* to a director’s festival in Chilliwack. My goal was to watch the audience, see where they got lost and what engaged them, and subsequently fix as much as possible before our Vancouver opening. Sort of like the New Jersey preview before a show hits Broadway. I watched while wearing my fragile writer’s body – leaping to the negative, interpreting every nod and crossed arm as evidence that the show was not going well. Part of me forgot about my collaborators altogether; I wanted the ensemble to spare me the anxiety and finish the whole thing off quickly. Luckily they didn’t; their energy was extra-ordinary. Where I, as writer/performer, might have sped through, killing the piece, they worked hard to honour the work that we had done as a group. Sitting among the twitching audience, I was anonymous, and privy to honest physical feedback. I felt like I was seeing the play fresh and saw what flaws remained – it looked like the kids killed Lydwine, it ended too many times, and the conception scene made no sense at all.

I remarked to the cast afterwards: "It seems that trying to indicate that the adults were having sex with each other for the first time while the kids built a magic nest/portal to the future, was perhaps not best achieved by randomly yelling out Easy-Bake oven instructions." Brett, always sassy, raised an eyebrow: "It took you until opening to see that?" We laughed, and it broke the tension stemming from the disparate audience reactions.

I had to start examining my interest in “hole-y theatre,” and recognize it was going to result in audience reactions that were not always positive. If I consider the audience as a single unit, the work will speak to no one. Rather than attempting to find consensus in a theatrical work by aiming to communicate one specific meaning, can I instead embrace the alterity of each audience member and welcome their individualized meaning-making? This was my initial interest, but I had not considered that it might include audience members who disliked the show. Rather than see that as failure, I had to instead see it as a probable outcome of creating open work.

After Chilliwack, my re-writes sought to clarify the following questions: What is Later Matilda’s trajectory? What causes her to speak or not speak? How does Lydwine die? What happens with Later Matilda and the Boatswain? Three days before opening I give them cuts, additions, and a new song. I also tell them that Uncle Gingerbread is the father of all three kids – not just Lydwine as we have previously thought. The audience seemed to think that was the case anyway, so why not make it simpler. We are also making the jar barrier more evident. The kids need to feel trapped.

The cast is incredible. The endless compositions, our constant changes to the script throughout the process, and the mass shifting of previously understood paradigms, has made them adaptable to trying new things. At the very least, this keeps things in the present – after months with this material they still can’t sink into patterns because the script constantly changes.

In Vancouver, the performers admirably incorporate the final frantic changes, and that opens up further areas that need exploring. I am not done with this play. There is too much I still don’t know. But I am so pleased with my ensemble and the process. They have given me the confidence to keep exploring. I am exhausted, they are exhausted, but when they come up as individuals and ask: “So, when do we get to re-stage it?” my heart feels full. As a group, we spent six months together working on something, and we didn’t complete it. I am constantly reminded: “a piece of theatre is never finished, it is only abandoned.”

CONCLUSION

The end of *PDLR*, and my two years at SFU, has left me with a new relationship to process, and subsequently product. As seen above, I have wrestled with some of my initial questions about how to write a *play* rather than a *script* by experimenting with ways of creating material. But I have also left this project feeling that those answers are far from definitive, and the strategies that I added to my performance creation tool kit came specifically from this project, this group of people, and this source. I have places to start creating from next time, but no methodology that will always be appropriate.

I am still grappling with the bigger questions, about values for decision-making, about process dictating content, and about the relationship between a closed and an open text. In my solo work this became a matter of figuring out how much I could live with articulating questions rather than answers. As a director working with an ensemble, I probed how to lead a group without having answers.

I start to answer these bigger questions with the word “about.” With this project, finding individual pleasure and meaning during the process *became* what the final piece was *about*.

As a group, I feel that we built the play, but we also built the *process* to build the play. We tried a lot of things in creation and rehearsal that didn’t work for this specific group working on this specific project: the initial source was too vast, too many exercises in one session were overwhelming, too many hours of creation made people cranky, too much talk closed the work. Too much of anything is too much. I wanted to make work that provided a challenge for audience members; but for that to happen I need to simplify my own process. As a director, I was granted a perspective that allowed me to lean forward and observe, but I needed to be silent and *use* that perspective. To let the work happen in front of me so I can find the pleasure in recognizing my own interests – to discover the joy that comes from watching Gina as Matilda balance on her toes to hug her towering little sister Tiny, or Natalie as the Boatswain freeze perfectly still save for the frantic movement or her eyes. The dizzy joy that comes from spinning.

I came into this program, assuming that pleasure and pleasing are synonymous – that positive audience response would result in both pleasure and happiness on the part of the creators, and the feeling of success. I thought that working toward this degree would allow me to figure out how to make work that was deemed “important” to other people because it added to the discourse “about issues.” Now I am looking to investigate the relationship between process and personal pleasure.

It is difficult to remove oneself from inculturated notions of pleasure. We are presented with so many mediated signs that tell us what activities we should enjoy. Interpellated in the Althusian⁷⁰ sense, popular entertainment tells us “this Bud is for you” or “you can’t miss the premier of the season.” Really? The inundation of mediated definitions of pleasure make it difficult to recognize when something actually captures our interest. This leads to a resistance in presenting work that is open enough so that an audience can decide how they should react independently, rather than be moved in a uniform direction. In this process, I started exploring the possibilities that come from making work outside of this realm of commodity – practicing a recognition of things that delight me, and transferring that enthusiasm to collaborators and, subsequently, to audience.

When I was feeling exhausted with *PDLR* and searching for ways to reinvest in the project, the group’s inventions allowed me to keep ploughing away. Aliya’s allegiance to her crow’s nest; Ally’s redefinition of stage manager to include seamstress and photographer; Ben’s overall bib map to who-knows-where; Carmen’s endless piles of evocative source images; Brett making the apple cutting scene *just* sexy enough to leave me squirming; Elliot’s immediate bang-on response to my request for music that sounded like “the hopeful empty future”; Davy finding voice to yell out improvisational religious exclamations; Gina surprising me daily with new eye coverings; Josh’s enthusiastic involvement in a role that we defined along the way; Lauren finding just the right sound to accompany miraculous vomiting; Natalie sneaking unnoticed into the nest; Scott’s commitment to use *one specific type* of shipwrecked umbilical-cord rope, and Cass’s determination to find it; Ryan’s insistence on talking to his plants; Caroline – who would sit paying so much attention that anytime I turned her way with questions, she already had three possible answers. Everyone brought so much material to the table

⁷⁰ Louis Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)” in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999.

that I was constantly in response mode, engaged in the inventions that intrigued me, but I hadn't yet figured out.

It is difficult to find those points of interest unless you have cultivated a practice in looking and noticing. In their work examining creative thinking strategies, Root-Bernstein point to perception⁷¹ as an imperative tool in creative thinking. They acknowledge it as a skill that needs to be learned, even outlining exercises to strengthen perceptive skills. The role of director has allowed me the opportunity to practice perceiving in the creation process, but I think it has also made me a better audience member – both to other people's works, and to the world outside the theatre. It is my hope that the more open work – made of ostranenie, juxtapositions, poetic text, or rusty magic – will encourage audience members to lean forward, to follow their own interests, and to decide for themselves what makes their experience pleasurable.

I take pleasure in experiences that engage me in the moment and keep challenging me later. Harvard philosopher Tal Ben-Shahar speaks of happiness coming from a combination of present and future benefit.⁷² He notes the power in finding those activities that provide a balance of both types of benefit. This happiness does not necessarily mean joy. I am often engaged in work that is difficult to process emotionally and intellectually, but there is pleasure nevertheless in grappling with that difficulty. The process of creating the work was not without its moments of extreme frustration, but if my focus stayed on problem-solving in the moment, rather than concerning myself solely with the final outcome, I was able to find room for the pleasure that comes from recognizing my own engagement. When the show went up, I missed the rehearsal period, where solutions were suggested, attempted, and thrown away without being seen as wasted time.

I had not realized how much I focused on product both in my theatre work and life, how much I set goals and found self worth only when those goals were obtained. It was not that the goals were without merit, but finding value only in checking off the desire to “have a play produced at the Tarragon” or to “win a Dora” leads to a sense of failure if the

⁷¹ Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein in *Sparks of Genius: The 13 Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

⁷² Tal Ben-Shahar's *Happier*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2007.

goal is not achieved, or leaves the goal-seeker aimless.⁷³ I am starting to understand the implications of the quote attributed to civil rights leader Howard Thurman who urges: "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

When I think about what really makes me happy, it is making the work. Being in the rehearsal hall and problem-solving creatively with a group of people makes me happy. Product is short. Process is long. So I best trust my enjoyment of the latter.

The process of writing for more than one person was new. Creating a process with an ensemble in a leadership role was new. Directing something I had written – also new. These seemed like a lot of unknowns for a project that would fulfil the requirements for an MFA, but the process is going to be new for every project; you learn a new language each time. Working in dark territory, I feel less obligated to have all the answers. And working with an ensemble where there is enough space for trust, play and failure, allows me to think of process as an integral part of enacting values.

⁷³ Denise Clark spoke of the trap of such desires at OYR, and pointed to the goal they initially set as a company "to be undeniable."

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Time Line

September 2006 – November 2006

Interdisciplinary Studio Course with David MacIntyre: create two ten-minute solo performance installation pieces and one audio sculpture.

December 2006 – January 2007

Free Range readings on Avian Influenza and Pandemics.

January 2007

Free Range: First Meeting with Director Lisa Oppenheim.

Free Range: Interviews and recordings with members of the Fraser Valley Farming Community.

Free Range: Writing from Interviews and research

January 2007 – April 2007

Audit Clown and Mask Studio Course with Penelope Stella.

TA Issues in Fine and Performing Arts with Brady Cranfield

February – March 2007

Free Range: Creation Sessions with Lisa and musician Eric Powell 2x week, free writing time.

April 2007

Free Range Drafts: Draft One: April 10 Open Reading: April 23

May 2007

Free Range: Rehearsals

June 2007

Free Range premiers at the Ottawa Fringe

July 2007

Bouffon Course with Karen Hines

August 2007

Free Range additional rehearsals

Free Range tours to the Victoria Fringe

September 2007

Free Range tours to the Vancouver Fringe

September 2007 – November 2007

Audit Directing Course with DD Kugler, direct *Savage/Love*

TA Issues in the Fine and Performing Arts with Emily Rosamond

November 2007 – January 2008

PDLR Material Creation phase

January 2008 – April 2008-11-03

Audit Dramaturgy course with DD Kugler, dramaturg dance solo

Audit Performance Improv course with Rob Kitsos

TA Issues in the Fine and Performing Arts with Greg Snider

February 2008 – March 2008

PDLR Mining/Scripting phase

March 2008 – April 2008

PDLR Assembling/Rehearsing phase

April 2008

PDLR premiers at UCFV Directing Festival in Chiliwack

May 2008

PDLR premiers in Vancouver

Appendix 2: *Free Range* Production Script

Free Range

Written and performed by Emily Pearlman

Music performed and created by Eric Powell

Directed and co-created by Lisa Oppenheim

Dramaturgy by DD Kugler

A rectangular mound of grass waits. Wires hang above it. A water-filled mason jar and a blue plastic bucket sit on the mound. Upstage left, a musician sits playing a wistful mandolin as the audience enters. He is pale and wears a blue one-piece work suit.

A low bassoon drone calls the performer on stage.

She wears a bright jaunty dress, mismatched socks, a stethoscope and a tool belt. Her clothes are loud but her face is very pale, eyes ringed in black. She carries a scary metallic mobile and hangs it above the mound. The bassoon drones on. She speaks intimately to her stomach through the stethoscope.

While I'm waiting for you, I'm making a mobile that will spin until you see dizzy stars. As if someone has hit you.

Repeatedly. Over the head. With a mallet.

Every time your kick interrupts my dreams, I am going to get up and make that dream out of wire and cardboard and dryer lint.

So later, as it hangs above you while you are sleeping, you can learn to dream just like me.

If you arrived when I was 15, your name would have been Aurora or Skylark. Which might have left me feeling about you, the same way I feel about the dolphin tattoo on my lower back.

I was this close to being called Debbie, and even closer to Mafawnwi. Neither of those makes anymore sense than saying this (*shoe*) is a cloud, or that these (*ears*) are my lungs. Although it does make sense for me to walk on clouds and breathe in what I hear.

She rubs her hands together rapidly. Sound and friction. Places them on her belly.

Talk to me through heated palms – you in there.

Write answers on my stomach lining with icy fingers.

I'll listen to hands ringing from you, and you can tell me the name of the plane that brought us here.

She pulls a flashlight from her tool belt and searches for constellations.

Shooting stars look like planes

on black fields lit by flashlight.

I try to catch them in the beams

If I can catch the stars and slow them down before they disappear

I can also catch Andrew.

A toy piano plays. It sounds like a kid who wants to play on the swings but isn't allowed. This is Andrew's theme. .

I'll shine a beam of light that will carry him back to me like feathers
Live suspended above the sidewalks.

The beam from the flashlight lands in the mound. She sees something poking out from the hole. A pair of large broken glasses. She puts them on and sees the audience. She looks ridiculous. She leaves the mound and addressed them.

I was going to lose my virginity at the age of fifteen.
At thirteen years old that was the red carpet plan.
Cause two years is a looooooong way away.

An imagined history.

All ages rock show the first week in high school and the drummer's making that
drumming face – you know

She makes that focused tongue look.

- making it RIGHT in my direction and the next thing I know, I'm in power ballad love
and get to do it whenever I want.

As long as his parents aren't home.

Me and my best friend Andrew both wore overalls on our first day of grade nine.

Mine were Plaid.

Oh, no, not a plaid shirt, over a Kurt Cobain T-shirt, ripped up jeans and converse all
stars.

Plaid overalls.

Then we went to a Barenaked ladies concert. With my parents...

I was *going* to lose my virginity at the age of fifteen....

The bassoon brings her back to the mobile. She steps back on the mound. She tries to hear something in her belly through the stethoscope. Nothing. She looks up at the mobile to find a place to hang the glasses. She tests the balance, finding where they live. She listens again to her stomach. Nothing. A painful mandolin twinge from the arm brings her off the mound.

There! Did you hear it? Totally weird. Something IS going's on in there.

I was driving back from dropping Andrew at the airport departure deck.

Passenger seat empty, down a country road and I pass this toy-train set of a church on a
hill.

Peered forwards, searching for the tiny wooden train cars connected by magnets.

No where to be seen.

Breathed in and sighed disappointed, just as I passed the church graveyard.

Not to be superstitious, but now I think there's something inside me.

That sharp intake of breath? Something found its way inside my nostrils, and is living in
my stomach.

Like a tapeworm.

It's a good diet plan – a tapeworm. I got home, ate the entire refrigerator, licked the
cupboards and washed it all down with a bottle of ginger ale. This burp positively
undulated outta me. Mouth open, I hear this voice:

A tapeworm squirms out of mouth, into her arm and takes over her body. The tapeworm is confident, opinionated and slightly upper class in accent. His speech is always accompanied by a languorous mandolin version of "The Girl from Ipanema"

TAPEWORM: with cautious practice
 birds manifest your nightmares
 in watery song

Whoa. What the!
There's a psychoanalyst tapeworm living in my stomach, belching out advice.
Manifest your nightmares in watery song?
Manifest?
I don't get it.
My tapeworm is a pretentious fucker.

She taps her bones with a xylophone stick to calm her nerves. A glockenspiel ditty is heard that corresponds to her tapping. Like Andrew's theme, but jauntier.

I name him Warren.
No one else is telling me what to do, so I decide to listen
As long as I can keep eating this way, I'll keep listening.

A move to the dirt, she finds a lipstick. She checks her belly. Hearing nothing, she steps off the mound and applies the lipstick in liberal teenage girl amounts.

At fifteen I was going to lose my virginity at the age of seventeen.
Cause two years is a long time.
But as a back up plan, Andrew and I were going to do it. On my seventeenth birthday I receive a construction paper coupon, poorly spelled out "Enjoy the Memorable Andrew J. Fotheringham Experience: Good for three free intercoursess!"
We should have used them.

She touches her hair absentmindedly, and the NRC time council signal comes from her elbow. She repeats the movement and the beeps continue.

The beginning of the long dash followed by exactly ten seconds of silence indicates exactly one o'clock eastern standard time?

She counts off 10 seconds on her fingers, and moves her elbow slowly and deliberately to bring out the long end-note of the time signal.

Warren thinks I should get out more.
We go to this bar, which he says used to smell like cigarettes until the government ban. Now everything just smells like vomit.
Unlit cigarettes smell like raisins, and I love raisins.
Faded Health Canada sign in the women's washroom. "Drinking will arm your unborn bab."
Illustrated with a line drawing of a fetus, someone has used a black sharpie to give it chest hair and a cape. Using lipstick I arm it with a red assault rifle.
I stare at the baby's oversized head for a long long time.

A loud screech of mandolin. She clutches her side.

Ow. Warren pokes me right in the fallopian tube.

Table beside us, a group of five, all tight jeans and denim jackets: a Canadian Tuxedo for everybody. Except one. He is all in Gortex with an amazing side part. Peripherally, I can tell we are both focused on same screen above. I am a three time NTN Video trivia champion I give Gortex-Side-Part the eye. I trash talk “Team mostly denim.” Cause it’s 4 of them versus me

Tapewormy mandolin begs for attention.

Yes, and you Warren, but they don’t know about you. “You guys can’t scare me, I work for the National Research Council” Gortex-Side-Part looks right at me and says: “Oh yeah, well what time is it?” He knows! He may be the worst NTN Video trivia player ever, but he knows what I do! I melt in a fried egg kinda way.

She collapses to the floor in desire, a poor excuse for a 1950’s pinup girl. Limbs in all directions, Warren appears.

WARREN: jugular exposed
 make eye contact on all fours
 do not be dinner

Warren you said we should get out more! Here we are! Don’t mess this up!

She silences him and re-assumes her seduction pose.

On the floor, my moist breath leaves me blinded by love and condensation. Gortex-Side-Part tries to wipe off my glasses with his scratchy coat. “Careful! Anti-reflective coating!” He is the most handsome outdoorsman I have ever seen.

Gortex-Side-Part helps her up off the floor, and she walks right onto the mound. Bassoon plays. She hangs the lipstick. Is this the object that will make her belly sing? She listens to her belly. Nothing. Digs until she finds a dirty ribbon. She steps off the mound with it.

It’s hard to save money working the type of crappy job you get with a BA. But when Andrew and I each have enough, we take a trip to see things that are big. Big Nickle. Big Goose. Big Apple. The fiberglass one in Meaford. Negotiations at a country fair near Ferguson: “Why would I run if I’m not being chased? I am weighed down by airy cotton candy and the sight of the deep fired asparagus eating contest”

Andrew laughs with his teeth and binds us up like a starter wedding. The starting gun is a slide whistle.

A slide whistle is heard. She ties the ribbon around her leg and gallops around the room, pulled by Andrew.

He hears it in his bones first so we are off.

We have three legs. One racketball heart, one heart made from mushy peas.
He heaves me onto his hip, a lame parasitic twin, all the way to the finish line and comes
in first! But I still feel like I'm back at the slide whistle starting line, shirking away from
the fun and ribbons.

She backs up into the wall, and is surprised by a wolf whistle from within.

Is there something you want to say?

Warren enters and speaks to her in a way that is less than professional.

WARREN: hello small button
 red thread left dangling sexy
 like sentence fragments

Warren, you can't just say things like that. It's going to make things awkward!

I worry I'm falling in love with him. With Warren. My tapeworm Warren.
Sometimes I think he knows me better than I know myself.
When Warren, my ovaries and I were having a little cry over The Life Networks: "A Baby
Story" and he dried my internal tears, a light shone: I had a flash. I should have a baby.
And Warren might be the one to do it with.
We'd make awesome babies. Trivia buffs with a knack for haikus.

*Warren's clear sex appeal and husband potential is too much for her. She squirms
lasciviously under the spell of his movements and theme music.*

Warren sings to me at night. When I am restless I hear a warm humming and feel a
bossa nova beat from right about here
"Tall and tan and young and lovely, the girl from Ipanema goes walking."
Late at night I hear his voice from the inside out. Singing me to sleep.

She opens her eyes abruptly and the music stops.

But as he sings, he also potentially kills me slowly. Burrowing into my stomach lining,
heading for the blood stream.

She plays her glockenspiel bones nervously.

My babies are already going to be myopic and gangly, I don't want them to worry about
being 1/2 tapeworm as well.

An internet chat group suggests:
"Take a drop of milk. Put it on the back of your tongue, and the tapeworm will crawl out
to get the milk and can be slowly pulled out by wrapping it around a twig...or a toothpick
or something"
I'm about to break my 12 years of veganism with a drop – right here – and then I
remember. I'm lactose intolerant. Until I figure out what is going on in there, I don't
want my humors any more unbalanced.

A long shriek from the mandolin causes her to bend in pain.

I'm covered for all sorts of weird medical benefits. Sweet Government gig.
All you need is a referral from a clinic.

Dr. Haven't Found a Job at a Real Hospital is too handsome for me to feel completely at ease. He has long curly hair, razor blade cheek bones, and pants that are uncomfortable for both of us.

"I burp haikus, have melodic ear ringing and an irresolvable attachment to an undiagnosed parasite."

He raises his eyebrows. Judging. Doctor's are not supposed to judge.

"You have the cleanest ears I have ever seen, there is no problem here at all"

"But I hear strange things all the time. Dulcet but disturbing!
Isn't there some sort of acupuncturist that can unblock my hearing chakras?"

"Is this a big problem for you? Do you feel you can't function in the world?"

I raise an eyebrow at him, but he can't see through his locks of curly hair.

"I'm an exercising vegan. I don't even drink coffee. I believe you can heal yourself with the food you choose to put in your body.

Although, not always.

Andrew- my best friend- hated broccoli, a key food for healing. He feels it let him down. 'Cure your cancer with vegetables' so his sister ate it in vast quantities and died anyway!"

His turn to raise eyebrows.

*She distractedly takes out her xylophone sticks, and starts to play her bones.
The doctor looks at her quizzically.*

"This is my theme song. My Leitmotif if I'm feeling fancy. Can you hear it?

Warren is my new accompanist.

Why, Doctor Haven't found a job at a real hospital, let me introduce you!

This is Warren – my tapeworm..."

Warren, feeling protective, snaps at the doctor.

WARREN: tickle the ivories
 with goose down feather blankets
 warmer than whispers

She is a bit embarrassed at Warren's behaviour, and tries to change the subject.

"So I was babysitting my niece, trying to peer pressure my eggs into spontaneous fertilization, and-

She brandishes the xylophone stick.

-I'm holding these sticks. Just on impulse-

She displays her musical bones, first with single notes, then in a full physical flourish.

Each bone a different note!

There is a story about the breast bone of a pixie –who gets killed and her body washes up on the beach and decays. Out of her bones her long lost love makes a harp, and the harp plays the story of her murder.

I need to figure out what's wrong with me. If all your cells get replaced every seven years, when I turn 28, my body will have regenerated four times. I will be a completely new set of flesh and organs and cells. A new heart. New bones tuned with a fresh set of ears..... Gotta figure it out quick before these bones are replaced and the song changes.”

His eyebrows send me to any specialist I want.

She marches to the mound. Listens. Still nothing. She digs in the dirt, and finds a beer can. Lucky Lager. Not so lucky really, she steps of the mound in trepidation and opens the can. The musician opens a foley can behind her. They drink it together.

“Andrew we both need to become non-virgins. This is getting ridiculous. We are 22 years old. We'll do it on our big vacation! No, not with each other! Near the big goose in Wawa.”

Tiny bar in Wawa. He spots someone, I spot someone.
We will use our urban credibility as a seduction techniques.
We will meet back at the campsite later tonight. Or in the morning.

She tosses the beer can and follows the boy from Wawa. Loud ticking is heard that increases in speed and volume as she speaks.

The boy from Wawa has a clock in his room.
Old grandfather clock, ornate, carved swirls. Ticking so loud, the beat gets into his body. He starts doing it in time to the stupid pendulum. Tick tick tick tick tick tick.
Am I supposed to be moving too? Tick tick.
Does this really burn calories?
Tick tick tick tick tick. It stopped being sexy, oh, I dunno, about one minute and seven seconds ago. When I started counting.
It's coming on 11pm and suddenly he looks like he ate something bad and then “Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo!”
This scary animatronics bird voice is the soundtrack as these little sperms all swim up towards the egg. Cuckoo bird lays it's egg in someone else's nest and then lets the other bird take care of it, while they go off and work at The Big Goose Tourist Restaurant! Or wherever. Holy crap!

I push him off me, and do reverse handstands in the bathroom as an anti-fertility measure. Walking back to the campsite, hoping Andrew will be there too.

She picks the can up, and slams it on the mobile. It gets really dark. She uses her flashlight to find her way off the mound.

I wanted to show Gortex-Side-Part that I too am an excellent outdoorsperson.
A practice camping trip.
Just me. All alone. With Warren.
My tent is next to a farm. Can't sleep so go out walking after midnight. Edge towards one of the barns and push open the door.

The darkness opens into the light of the barn. The sound of chicks is heard.

The room is vast. The floor wall to wall carpet with thousands of day old chicks.
Under the biggest heat lamp, sit down, lie back.
Sawdust makes its way into my underwear and there is going to be a rash tomorrow. But I'm not moving.
This is the sort of place where I should write poetry. Lie right here in the middle, the tiny chick supplicants a tablecloth over the sawdust. Inspiration will crawl all over me like the bugs from the campsite, enter my ears and build a nest in my brain.

The poems I would write would be pillows for a baby to lie on, and irresistible, no force in the heavens could stop one from coming down to spoon me all night long.

Warren is aggressive. He takes threatening stabs at her belly – his home.

WARREN: is there such a chance
 to gnaw on paisley blue eyes
 with poached placenta

“Hey! Warren! I’m not moving!”
I’m going to lie exactly like this with the heat lamp’s tuneless ambience above me and the chicks scurrying around me until I get pregnant!
“Hey God! I’m in a barn filled with innocence down here, so come on down and we’ll get our immaculate conception on? What’ya say? Hot times?”

The chicks disappear, and are replaced with a slimy dance beat.

When Gortex-Side-Part and I were getting to know each other, we were always careful to use the rhythm method.

There is a short moment of carefully deliberate and rhythmic dancing. It ends in an instant, and then it is as if it never happened

It was drilled into my ear canal, how easy it is to get pregnant.

“Dear Cosmo Girl, I got pregnant from spooning while wearing pants, what to do?”

So now, that I think it might be a good time, shouldn’t it happen like that?
Whammo?

On the mound she checks her belly. Digs. Pulls out a bathing cap. Grabs her water and swims out from the mound, holding her breath until she hits the surface.

I’m in the pool with Andrew.
His bachelor apartment has no air conditioning, but a roof pool. I often leave the water covered in other people’s pubic hair but the underwater lights when no one else is around make it worth it.
His orange swim suit is a billowy pumpkin around hips once were bony.

“Ok, I’m gonna sing a song under water, and you have to name that tune”

She takes a large swig of water in her mouth and gargle sings out a tune. He doesn’t recognize it.

“Iron Man?”

We run out of songs we both know the words to.
We have already done handstands and underwater cartwheels and raced for miles so I tell him:
“Close your eyes underwater and squinch up your face real tight”
and I kiss him on the lips.
He pulls backwards, inhaling chlorine. The pool ices over. We dry off with new towels scraping off layers of sunburned skin.

She returns to the mound and hangs the cap on the mobile. It fades to black and her flashlight shows her the way to the campsite.

We went on a romantic camping getaway, Gortex-Side-Part and I. The site is deserted. There is this water tower over there, porta potties over there, and this swing set that should come with its own tetanus kit right about here. And this is where I want to sleep. In the grass under the swing set.

The lights up, Gortex-Side-Part speaks his dismay at her plan.

“But the cold - it’s gonna be cold.”

“Our sleeping bags are temperature rated for minus twenty-five. ‘Because when you go camping you need equipment.’”

“But the damp – from the dew in the morning”

“We will be so sweaty from the minus twenty-five sleeping bags, we won’t notice the dew.”

“And the bugs – they will crawl into your ears and lay eggs. You’ll get Lyme disease.”

“Doesn’t that sound like a good disease? Lyme? Tropical. Festive. Caused by too many Mojitos the night before, but completely curable the next day?”

I want the bugs to crawl in my ears and eat through the part of my brain that make me think that dating Gortex-Side-Part is a good idea. The part that made me buy the sleeping bag in the first place, and the part that keeps my body lying in the tent with my head bumping against a Nalgene bottle until he decides it’s ok to go to sleep.

WARREN: barnacle lover
 clamped hard on your trachea
 along for the ride

“Shut up Warren, I know.”

Gortex-Side-Part wears earplugs to bed. Doubt he’d hear if bears attacked.... Or the cry of a baby at 4am.

She falls to sleep. She lucid dreams to the sound of bees.

Beekeeping next door. An apiary.

Bee keepers. Walking through nature in dive suits. Speech turns to slow motion
“Heeeelllllllooooo beeeeeees, I’mmmmmm heeeaaaarr tooooo stttteaaaalllll
yooooouuur honnnneeeeyyyy.”

White dresser drawers in the middle of long grass. Open the first drawer to find
something to wear that is not an oversized bee suit....honey. Damn it. I can’t wear honey!
The next drawer is filled with keys, they’re for later. I throw them to the bees and they
nod in a giant jellyfish clump.

The trees flanking the field are playing my Leitmotif!

But locked in the branches, is a spindly ten year old boy.

I call to the bees in their bee language. It kinda sounds like Yiddish – maybe they are
kosher bees, making honey for Rosh Hashonna.

They fly over with the big ring of keys around their neck, and unlock the boy.

Thrown from the branches, the bees catch him, he lands on the floating bed of their
backs.

Only one sting. Accidental bite on the back of a knee.

It’s a shock to his system. Anaphylactic.

His heart beats really fast, and then really slow and I breathe into his mouth and press at
his chest one and two and three and four and, two and two and three and four and,
twenty nine and two and three and four and.

He doesn’t breathe. But pressing on his chest there is a series of notes and drones
audible and when I stop and listen, it’s Andrew singing my name underwater.

The bees fade out and are replaced by the sound of toy piano.

“Andrew, the airfare between here and Thunder Bay is more expensive than a trip to
Paris. I won’t be able to visit you halfway across the same country but I could fly overseas
to purchase a baguette on a seat sale.

He leaves me all his plants.

“Keep them alive or I’ll kill you.”

For how long?

I want to measure out the distance between here and there in string and make a tin can
telephone that will stretch over the mountains and along power lines where the buzzing
of electricity will power our conversations

*She unties the ribbon from the three-legged race from her legs, and hangs it on the
mobile. She listens. Sighs. Pulls herself together and off the mound.*

When all the specialists came up empty, Warren and I ended up here.

Undiagnosed Disease Wing. “UDWI” for those of us who trek in for weekly prodding and
inconclusiveness.

They have all the best periodicals here.

Chatelaine. Canadian Living. Canadian Family.

“Knit a trio of Luxurious Pillows” Exclamation mark.

“The Cupcake Comeback”. Colon. “Learn to ice like a pro” Double exclamation.

All good news. Things that I can handle.

Every week I come in and they call my name through the cut glass circle of the nurse's window. The more they call my name the more I like the sound of it. We are lethal with our incomprehensible bodies and knowledge of cross-stitching. They - with their miles of test printouts no one can comprehend - are a small country groping defensively in the dark for their rusty Kalishnakovs.

They stay protected behind the glass, hoping the germs they haven't named yet won't be able to find their way through the three inch diameter hole. They are looking for soul mates for our symptoms. They are searching the globe for someone who has the exact same problems and complaints. If they can find a match, whammo! We exist, and our diseases becomes real.

"Female, vegan, non-smoker, melodic hearing loss, poetic dyspepsia, and noisy skin inhabited by an opinionated confidant seeks same. Please reply with photograph."

The slimy beats return.

What do you call someone who uses the rhythm method?

A short moment of careful dancing.

Mom.

The beats cut out immediately, and Warren takes the stage.

WARREN: travel slippery
 coated with poison resin
 try not to swallow

"Warren!

How about morse code? Can you try that instead of the cryptic haikus?
I'm excellent at morse code."

I don't want a soul mate in Bangkok or Tajikistan or even Duluth. If this is going to kill me, I want it all to myself. This body is mine, my cells made the symptoms, so really what they are trying to diagnose is my lifetime. And when the ringing in my ears deafens my memory and I lie down and never wake up, they better not name my death after the doctor who couldn't cure me.

They should call the whole thing after me.

She listens to her belly.

Me and a belly filled with guts and beating hearts. Heart.
I don't even know.
It's so quiet.

She speaks through her stethoscope. A crowded sound-scape begins quietly. She can't hear the specifics from her belly through through the noise.

"Three's a crowd, so why won't you talk to me?
Either of you.
Warren careful what you are eating in there."

I have been eating yams.

Baked yams, puréed yam soup, yam fries.
My kitchen smells like a hut in sub-Saharan Africa.
Yam, the miracle food, is filled with estrogen.
The theory is that extra estrogen, causes you to release more eggs, and the more eggs you release, the likelihood of having twins flies through the roof.
If it's so hard to conceive in the first place, better to get two for one.
That would be perfect. Do you know how much fertility drugs cost? Exactly.
Yams? Forty nine cents a pound.

"I'll keep you in a drawer if I need to."

Top drawer. Socks: 19 pairs. Underwear: 14 pairs. Cotton
Middle drawer. T-shirts: 12. Pyjamas: 4 pairs (1 sexy. The rest. Cotton)
Bottom drawer (so they have no where to fall): Babies: 2. Slightly orange tinted.

"Hello hello?"

How awesome is it to grow a human being inside you.
I may not be good with houseplants. But it's only cause they are so damn quiet.

"Hey there? Speak up, I can't hear you?"

She moving the stethoscope, searching.

"Warren? Leitmotif? Hello?"

She checks her whole body for the sound she is looking for. Warren is silent. Her bones don't play. Nothing. She moves the stethoscope onto her head, and the music warps. It hurts. A lot. The pain propels her physically across the stage.

Someone is manouvering an oversized Buick inside my skull.
Edging forwards. Backing up.
Edging forwards. Backing up.
Edging forwards. Backing up.
The wheels dig into the soft parts of my brain and leave deep dirty ruts.
I think really hard and try and propel it out of my eyes, but it just edges forwards and backs up.
Again and again and again and again,
I remove the ignition key through my ear, but the motor continues to run.
Powered by memory and routine.

She moves the stethoscope back and forth over her body. Searching. Her belly is silent.

"Warren? Leitmotif? Come On!
Where are you! I know you are in there!"

I need a holiday. From this body.
My ideal vacation destination is a place where my torso is barred.

She digs frantically until she finds a dolls head. She steps from the mound. She looks at the audience. The head speaks.

"Quand j'étais un enfant, nous sommes seulement des tetes."

I was in love with a camp counselor who was supposed to teach me swimming in a frozen lake. Me and Andrew and two other girls who are unimportant.
4 spindly sets of elbows unprotected from the cold of 8:30am.
I have always been excellent at swimming.
No need for my ten year old nipple breasts to be subjected to icy water for the benefit of learning something I already know.
But I am learning something else from the awkward Franglais of Fragrant dreadlock, the swimming counselor from Trois Rivieres.

“Arrete ca, maudite complainers”

He loves it. He loves our spindly attentiveness.

“When I was kid, we were just heads. We didn’t get bodies until 1979. For serious!”

Choking on the water laughing. He tells us this every morning.

“Tu? Tres lucky for have camp to do. Mes jours? What I did with time?”

Treading water, pedaling with anticipation.

“A ‘armonica. I played it rolling my head back and forth. I make dizzy playing ‘armonica”

I have always been excellent at the ‘armonica.
I contemplate pretending to drown, but I don’t know if his accent actually floats.
And Andrew, attempting the butterfly stroke with his bird bones, is too distracted to save me.

She hangs the head on the mobiles, pushes it in circles until she is spit out in front of UDWI

The Undiagnosed Disease Wing just broke up with me.
Apparently I’m fine. I think they are just out of tests. Or cures.

To her belly.

“We’re all going to be fine. Feel ok with that team?”

Can’t they make something up at least? Chaos Syndrome, chronic burrowing disorder...
They had no idea how to stop the black death either. Not a clue! But they gave them advice anyway

Fugo cito
Vade longe
Rede tarde.

Flee quickly.
Go Far.
Come back slowly.

She goes directly to the mound to dig. She speaks from the mound.

The day before Andrew left, we baked together.
Friends as usual with some vanilla and shortening.
He measures out sugar from an oversized bag, lifting to pour rather than scooping it out
with a measuring cup.
He liked to do things even if he wasn't good at them.
Especially if he wasn't good at them.

She comes downstage centre holding her blue bucket filled with dirt.

"I don't think you should go."

Alone. I don't think he should go alone.

"But you did such a good job helping me pack"

The bag gets more awkward in his arms the more sugar he pours. The room left in the
bag is the space left in me. Heavy with emptiness.

She pulls a tiny cupcake from the bucket. She eats it hungrily and gets icing on her face.

Andrew left slowly and went far and I never told him he was carrying a piece of me in his
back pocket. There is a piece of him in me too, and I don't know how long its going to
keep me hiccupping and pushing stale air from my lips. So I'm trying to come back
slowly?

Carrying this silent crowd inside me like a tumor.

"Can you write a prescription with my veins?"

"You're turning into a tiny pixie. Selkie bones singing. Expanding like a balloon."

Every morning, everything dictated by a desire to
Catch the shooting stars before they disappear?
Learn to let them fall.

She examines the mobile.

This is to make sure you are ready.

She slowly pulls the mobile skywards.

There will be a time when all of a sudden things turn black and grey and the mobile
above your head dangles precariously, unexpectedly. I'm going to sing you the truth from
day one. Sing you a history of everything. Without brackets or ellipses, without things
unsaid. So when it all comes spinning down around you. You will be able to see all the
pieces. It will all just be normal. This is for you. To make sure you are ready.

*She listens through her stethoscope, nothing. Then, from her belly, her leitmotif. Tiny,
slow and hopeful. She looks up at the mobile, filled with possibility. Lights fade.*

The End

Appendix 3: *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* Creation Sessions

Creation Session #1 – Introductions and Questions

CA Theatre 6-9

Performers: Davy, Ben, Gina, Brett, Ryan, Lauren, Aliya, Natalie,

Production: Josh, Caroline

November 12/07

6:00 BALL GAMES

6:15 INTRODUCTIONS

Why this project:

Writing to devising, translation of physical to text and back, how to write the play not just the text.

Methodology:

No marks, not looking for anything specific therefore nothing you ever do is wrong. I will not be offended if you are not. This is a creative space and therefore you may have to go far into the realm of taboo/political incorrectness in order to find material that will give people the opportunity to say no.

Source questions:

What is the relationship between eroticism and alterity?
Are we attracted or repelled by the familiar or the exotic?
What are the circumstances for each? If smell triggers memories/emotions therefore “the unknown” triggers memories and emotions, how can we reconcile knee-jerk reactions to the unfamiliar – are they really just knee-jerk reactions, or learned reactions? Cultural learnings?
Experiential learning?
How do you put to words to the un-wordable?

Ensemble Intro:

What they want to learn, challenges, favourite smell/smell memory

Business:

Hand out schedules – any concerns?
Hand out new reading pack – assign “The politics of smell/po-mo smell.”

6:35 WAKE UP BABY MONSTER ⁷⁴

- Lie on your backs and close back eyes.
- Stress importance of keeping eyes closed. Listen to what is around them.
- Focus on the sounds that are outside the classroom, ones that are in the classroom. Bring the sound in so that you can only hear yourself.
- Start by breathing in a relaxed pattern. Feel the weight of you body, so it falls into the floor. Feel the heaviness of each body part.
- Listen to your breathing and explore how breathing effects your body.

⁷⁴ An exercise from Lib Spry, this not only allows the ensemble to get in touch with the environment using their senses, but also allowed me to see how their bodies worked in space.

- Where does your body rise and fall, how slow or fast are you breathing.
- Imagine you are a baby monster who is just waking up alone, what are you aware of? Smell and taste. How does your body react to other parts of you?
- Feel how you can move your body while still lying down.
- Begin to realize that there is space around you. Still keep eyes closed!
- Play with your body in the space. This new body that you have just discovered.
- Venture out. If you realize there are other beings, how do you react to that?

7:00 SMELLS IN TRANSLATION

- Everyone is given a smell (Butter rum mix) Where does it hit you physically first?
- First smell posture: Where does it live in the body? How does it move?
- What is the memory of this smell – is there one? Does it affect your movement?
- Go back to the smell.
- Where does it live in the mouth/breath?
- What sort of noise does it make?
- Make smell noise and gesture as greeting, curse, seduction.
- What is the first word this smell wants to say?
- Go back to the smell!
- Using the smell influenced movement, approach someone else and give them your word.
- Try a conversation. Really listen, use your words and gestures
- Name your smell like a perfume– adjective noun. (ie Turgid Anthropologist, Fretting Veterinarian)

7:20 MY LIFE AS THE ULTIMATE...⁷⁵

- In the centre of the page write “My life as the ultimate... (ie Turgid Anthropologist)
- Make a mind map from that name in the centre. Use a combination of words, images, sentences and fragments. Fill the whole page.
- Close your eyes and pick 10 of those little pieces at random and place them together. This is your “God Poem.” Gift from above.

7:45 BURNING QUESTIONS⁷⁶

- Take out the reading.
- Make a list of burning questions everyone might have.

8:00 THE ULTIMATE FRETFUL VETRINARIAN LIVES!

Ben and Davy create these, but can then move to music/dance to support

- How does your ultimate person move, walk, greet, seduce, or destroy?
- What is their job? Love life? Hopes? Fears? Aspirations? (gesture for each)
- What is their burning question?
- Call out the variety of questions, get them to answer with a gesture. Move the gestures from pedestrian to visible over the mountains.

⁷⁵ This exercise is from Karen Hines. I used it in the creation of a short Bouffon piece, the text of which became Ommadarlin’s “carefully chosen ingredients” monologue.

⁷⁶ This list included these questions: How to cultivate an appreciation for the senses so that a bite of banana can make us cry? To what degrees are good and bad smells socialized in us? What is the relationship between smell and source? What is the lifespan of a smell? What is the difference between masking and removing? How are we influenced by context? Why do we smell harder if we don’t like it? Can we smell emotions? How to turn off the senses? What is neutral? In smell or anywhere?

8:20 BUS STOP OKHAM'S RAZOR

- One sits at the bus stop with a question.
- One enters the room (not knowing the question). Behind the bus are bodies in space “the pathetic fallacies (incl Ben).”
- The one with the question can't outright ask the question, but the bus won't come unless they have an answer.
- The enterer has to find a way to find an Okham's razor solution to the problem. The pathetic fallacies can hint physically/aurally but no words. When a proper solution has been given, they get up on the bus and the other one now has a chance to have their question answered.

8:50 WRAP UP

For next session bring in a smell to share.

Creation Session #2 – Physical Vocabulary and Gesture

Small Dance 11-2

Performers: Davy, Ben, Gina, Ryan, Aliya, Natalie,

Production: Josh⁷⁷

November 18/07

11:00 WARM UP

- Ball games.
- Protector/enemy tag. Dance tag. Pass the hand clap.
- Sun salutations.

11:30 DISCUSS THE READINGS

11:40 SMELL STORIES

- Everyone goes around and tells a smell story.
- Own your story.

12:00 SCENE TITLES⁷⁸

- Write ten scene titles based on a chosen story that have conflict/action.
- Everyone contributes 3 scene titles.
- Find an organizing principal (ie summer).
- Put them in an order and stick them on a wall.

Using a story from Gina about wanting to drink pinesol because of its smell and being admonished by her mother for her desire, we decided on the organizing principal of “the Artificial Encroaching on Nature” and created the following 10 scene titles.

1. What’s he building in there
2. Forest Grove
3. The big growl of liquid fecal for he spirited smeller from the buckets of hell
4. Lucid barbarians dancing bucket style red Rubbermaid
5. Breath fresheners for dirty mouthed toddlers
6. Buckets of punishment
7. Old Milwaukee rust rim
8. Flowers on a bucket
9. Carcinogenically clean
10. Fresh air for stupid girls

12:40 PHYSICAL VOCABULARY

- Create one piece of physical vocab for each scene title.
- Working in relationship, use this vocab to seduce and repulse.
- Take on the seduction vocabulary of others in order to parody their seduction skills to another person.
- Choose another person and figure out what they smell like.
- Find a position where you can come to the audience and describe with physical vocab what the other person smelled like.

⁷⁷ Josh Regnier came on board as a creation stage manager. We were unsure of what that role entailed, but as time progressed he became an invaluable scribe, observing and recording the events that occurred. Much of the writing here comes from his annotations.

⁷⁸ I adapted this strategy from Blake Brooker at the One Yellow Rabbit Performance Intensive.

- Find one piece of vocab that evokes what they smell like.
- Write down textually what they smelled like, or the absence of smell.

1:20 COMPOSITION

- Create Scene using one of the titles.
- Parameters:
 - Something that starts repulsive, becomes attractive.
 - Someone speaks only in one word sentences.
 - Someone communicates only in gesture.
 - Choral Vocal moment.
 - Choral gesture moment.
 - A food.
 - A moment of silence.

Based on the scene “Lucid Barbarians Dancing Bucket Style Red Rubbermaid” I wrote the following text:

Rubbermaid scene

Instructions for better living. A war. Or maybe just a disaster will do.
 Take the op-op-op or the tunity to find the person best sacrificed.
 The one that you kind of had it out for a while back.
 Who wore the pants so much better than you on that fateful day that
 you both entered the room wearing those same pants.
 Find a way to cleanse the sin-sin-sin!
 Shove it in their mouth – Take your tunity to do so! – an orange, a
 beetle shell, a rubber boot, or the useless parts of a map – like
 northern Canada. Or Latvia.
 Talk to the people watching and convince them-
 -oh yes, convince them that they have powers of healing – or really
 any special powers at all will do, and merely by being in the presence
 of this sacred object (remember – the orange, kazakstan etc) they will
 imbue it with a power stronger than the power of 65 to the power of
 3...which is something maybe even as large as 1000 – maybe more.
 Maybe more.
 Take the object and your person best sacrificed, and stick ‘em
 together somehow.
 Preferably in a manner where they won’t be able to speak anymore –
 won’t be able to complain that what you are doing is ridiculous, won’t
 be able to pint to science or even (holy of holies) or even to a god.
 Cause they have a mouth full of Latvia and Valencia oranges.
 And when the drool starts to accumulate in their mouth and run
 down the side of their face,
 giving them wet vampire fangs,
 and the tears starts to run down the side of their eyes,
 giving them soggy crows feet, and they are marinated good in their
 own juices.
 Then.
 Only then.
 Are you permitted to eat them whole.

This text makes a clear appearance in PDLR in the following form:

#11 SEA RULES

TINY and MATILDA pull kazoos from their overalls, and march up the stairs to the LYDWINE's room. LYDWINE stumbles blindly behind. BOATSWAIN is getting them ready for bed.

LATER MATILDA: Three in a tub. Splashing water until they are sea sick and ready for slumber.

LYDWINE: Bathtime prune hands!

MATILDA and TINY look at their hands and sigh.

BOATSWAIN: When you are standing tall on deck and the waves are whippin' at you from every direction you get a whole prune body!

TINY: If you are on the sea, then you need to be prepared for a shark attack.

BOATSWAIN: Everyone on a ship is prepared for everything.

MATILDA: Like a flood, or storm, or earthquake, or spontaneous combustion?

TINY: Or a shark attack. Swimming backwards is good practice, because if they swim backwards they can't breathe cause their gills get flooded.

BOATSWAIN: Really any old disaster will work as an opportunity to find ... the person... best... SACRIFICED!!!!

BOATSWAIN pretends to chop them with an axe.

TINY AND MATILDA: AHHHHHHHHH!

Dissolves into giggles.

LYDWINE: Who is best sacrificed?

BOATSWAIN: The one who asks the most questions!

TINY: AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

BOATSWAIN: Every so often, you just need a sacrifice! Just keep 'em quiet by shoving something sacred in their mouth – an orange, a beetle shell, a drawer pull, or the useless parts of a map.

MATILDA: Like the mountains that are too tall to climb?

TINY: They don't exist!

LYDWINE: Or the oceans that are too deep to swim in.

TINY: Just work on holding your breath!

BOATSWAIN: Everyone on the boat would watch this sacrifice, and we'd say to them "YOU – yes YOU, by holding this sacred object between your teeth-"

MATILDA: Remember – the orange, the mountains etc.

BOATSWAIN: "You will be imbued with a power stronger than 65 to the power of 3." And who doesn't want that!

LYDWINE: But what about the sacrifice?

BOATSWAIN: Well they have a mouth full of drawer pulls and citrus fruit so they can't say anything like-

MATILDA: "This is ridiculous!"

BOATSWAIN: or-

TINY: "This flies in the face of all things scientific"

BOATSWAIN: or-

LYDWINE: "I don't want to be sacrificed thanks"

BOATSWAIN: And when the drool runs down their face, and give them wet vampire fangs, and the tears run from their eyes, giving them soggy crows feet, and they are marinated good in their own juices. Then. Only then. Are you permitted to eat them. Whole.

Creation Session #3 – Smell, Sound and The Breath of Sanctity

Black Box 2-5

Performers: Davy, Lauren, Ben, Gina, Ryan, Aliya, Natalie,

Production: Josh, Caroline

November 25/07

2:00 TALKING WITHOUT SPEAKING

- In partners, A leads the blindfolded B around the room physically.
- Establish physical vocabulary for start, stop, levels, turning.
- Do the same with sound – come up with directions for start and stop.
- Play with distance, vertical/horizontal, make it rhythmically interesting.
- Play with company in the space. An orchestrated sound ballet. Silence ok.

2:30 LIVE SMELLS

- Partners take turns introducing their blind partners to their smell.
- Each writes a first impulse haiku.
- That smell is going to dictate the space.
- Guided river to create imaginary environments (eyes closed).
- In partners, one experiences the other witnesses (for safety – establish eyes open before violence ALSO a gesture to return to smell).
- After each river, the witness tells the other what they saw happen physically in space, focusing on specifics rather than personal interpretation.
- Chose 3 pieces of vocabulary from their partner's journey.
- Learn all 6.
- Do a 5 minute writing dive on their space.

3:50 LYDWINE PUNCTUM COMPOSITIONS

- Read out Lydwine of Schiedam around the circle.
- Underline punctums (short and active).
- In duos chose a punctum and create a composition.
- Parameters:
 - uses 3 of the pieces of sound and gesture vocab.
 - the spoken punctum.
 - someone has the ability to smell a specific emotion (fear, love).
 - Rhythm.
 - sung text.
 - the source of one (or both) of your smells.

4:30 PRESENT AND THEN RE-PRESENT

Creation Session #4 – Re-directing Text⁷⁹

Black Box 9:30 – 11:50

Performers: Lauren, Ben, Ryan, Natalie, Brett

Additional Directors: Chris Walts and Nicole DeLaurier

Production: Caroline

November 25/07

9:30 WARM UP

- Ball rolling check in, value work with, protector enemy tag, sun salutations.

9:50 LYDWINE ACTION EXPLORATION

- Re-read Lydwine, in a group, listen/make note of *action*.
- Walk through space. Topography. Feeling feet on floor. Think about painting on floor with feet etc. We are going to establish the life story of Lydwine in 3 parts. What are the different materials you might find on the bottom of your feet? How do they change the way you move?
- What about environment/where you are at the different stages of your life are going to affect how you move through the space. Find a beginning middle and end for her. Think about transitions between 3.
- Write 3 action sentences for beginning, middle, and end using the first person
- Trade with someone else.
- Develop 3 pieces of physical vocabulary
- Bring them into relation with other people. Use vocabulary to:
 - To heal them, anger, revere, guilt, feed them etc

10:20 HAIKU SCENES

- Write 3 haikus, one starting with I, one with you, one with they.
- Read out favorite.
- In partners, make a scene using ONE of the haikus, 2 pieces (min) of the Lydwine vocabulary, and the title “beginning”, “middle” or “end”
- Run scenes in order

10:55 DIRECTORS CHALLENGE

- Directors are switched off to look at the composition and make changes to develop a) character b) location c) conflict d) relationship

11:15 INSTRUCTIONS FOR BETTER LIVING

- Using the following text, explore what physical set up and circumstances can be set up to explore one or more of the following questions
 - Where are they?
 - What is their relationship with each other?
 - What do they want from the audience?
 - Who is the audience?
 - What is the conflict?
 - Where are they coming from and where are they going?

⁷⁹ In the Material Creation phase, I was also taking an upper level undergrad directing course from DD Kugler. I was given a class to try out directing strategies with the text that had already been created. The small class consisted of many people who were already involved in the project, but it was interesting to have the insight of classmates Nicole Delaurier and Chris Walts who were coming at the work without any context about previous explorations, vocabulary or source.

Instructions for Better Living

ALL: Instructions for better living.
1: Find a war.
2: Or just any ol' disaster will do.
3: Take the op-op-opportunity (or just the tunity) to find the person who will make the best sacrifice.
1: The one that you kind of had it out for-
3: -had it in for.
2: - had it on for?
1: had it out for...for a while now.
2: Who wore the pants so much better than you on that fateful day that you both entered the room wearing those exact same pants?
1: Find a way to cleanse the sin-sin-sin!
3: Shove it in their mouth –
1: -an orange, or a beetle shell, or a rubber boot,
2: or the useless parts of a map –
3: (like northern Canada.)
2: (Or Latvia.)
1: Talk to the people watching and convince them-
2: oh yes, convince them
1: that they have the power to heal –
3: (or really any special power at all),
1: and merely by being in the presence of this sacred object
2: (remember – the fruit, kazakstan etc)
3: their presence will imbue it with that special power!
2: A power stronger than 65 to the power of 3!
1: Take the object and your person best sacrificed-
3: -and stick 'em together somehow! Preferably in a manner that ties their tongues
2: – where they won't be able to complain that what you are doing is ridiculous,
3: - where they won't have space in their mouth for science, or reason or religious, 'cause their jaws are busy with-
2: Parry sound and Valencia oranges.
1: And when the drool starts to accumulate in their mouth and run down the side of their face
2: giving them wet vampire fangs
1: and the tears starts to run down the side of their eyes,
2: giving them soggy crows feet,
3: and they are marinated good in their own juices.
1: Then.
2: Only then
1: Are you permitted to eat them.
3: whole.

Creation Session #5 – Light

Black Box 6-9

Performers: Brett, Natalie, Lauren, Ben, Ryan, Aliya, Gina

Production: Caroline, Josh, Carmen

November 27/07

6:00 WARM UP

- Ball, dance tag

HANDS

- Divide them into partners, they have to explore their partners hands.
- Write a CHARACTER haiku on their partners hands.
- Find their partner by touch. Listen to their breathing.
- Write a CHARACTER haiku on their breath.

6:30 DISCUSSION ON LIGHT

- Create a list of how we can use light? To delineate space, boundaries, hiding, create object, create distance, change focus, mood, shadows.

6:40 LIGHT EXPLORATION

- Using the light sources and reflective objects they have brought in, explore in the dark to figure out how they might achieve items from the above list.

7:00 – LIGHT STORIES

- In groups, use lights and props to tell the texts below.
- Let the story exist perhaps far away from you – like puppetry.
- No text repetition. No longer than 1minute.

He is making cookies, but rather than a cutter, he makes imprints in the dough with various unsavory parts of his body.

They give her their pictures at the end of the drawing session, and all the portraits of her look exactly like the man she is going to fall in love with tomorrow.

She cleans the counter like how she rocks him to sleep, like how she loosens the lid on his thermos.

7:30 PRESENTATION AND RE-PRESENTATION

- Everyone writes a haiku in response.

7:50 COMPOSITION

- Parameters:
 - One of the texts.
 - Shift in focus using light.
 - Something is discovered.
 - Clear spatial delineation.
 - Something is hidden.

8:20 PRESENT AND RE-DIRECT EACH SCENE

Creation Session #6– Architecture

3011 Woodland Drive (Emily's House) 2-5

Performers: Brett, Natalie, Lauren, Ben, Ryan, Aliya, Gina, Davy

Production: Caroline, Josh,

December 1/07

2:00 WARM UP

- Playing outside in the snow.

2:30 SMELL HOUSE

- Take a smell journey through the entire house.
- Think about different levels, and about the different smells on the levels.
- Try to find a space that you can explore further for smell.
- If you were a house elf, where would you want to live?
- Write a haiku describing the smell of the place you live.
- The smell around you is going to enter you as a character. What does the smell elf do when he/she gets up in the morning?
- How do the elves make their house as comfortable as possible?
- Is it a private place? How can you make it (despite being very smelly) inviting for other people?
- Guided by the smell of the place, come up with 4 gestures:
 - 1) Welcome to my house. (How is your house special)
 - 2) Get away from my house.
 - 3) Sorry my house is problematic. (Use architecture, objects, smell, etc.)
 - 4) Isn't my house great? (Make the person jealous. Use item above)
- Using between 2-4 gestures and haiku (spoken, or more language as well) create a solo scene to invite someone to your dinner party. 1min max.

3:50 COMPOSITIONS

- Use texts created by Emily in previous explorations and architecture parameters plus the following parameters:
 - Love lost and then found.
 - Something repulsive.
 - A piece of furniture.
 - Vocal harmony.
 - Moment of silence AND moment of stillness.
 - Object used as something it is not.

4:20 PRESENT AND RE-DIRECT EACH SCENE

Creation Session #7– Searching for Story

Black Box 10-1

Performers: Natalie, Lauren, Ryan, Aliya, Gina, Davy

Production: Caroline, Josh,

December 4/07

10:00 WARM UP

Aerobic Dance class, sun salutations.

10:20 LYDWINE SCENES

Establish Scene Titles from Lydwine Story in a group. ⁸⁰

- Each person takes a title and finds a gesture and sound to go with it.
- Moving into pairs, come up with a common gesture.
- How do they fuse, what is held on to and what is let go?
- How do they work together to make one gesture?
- Make one repeatable gesture between the two.
- Find a common gesture for the whole group.
- Make sure to be clear with intentions and find endings.
- Using the group gesture, call out the scene titles and see how that changes the gesture.

11:00 CHARACTERS AND TABLEAUS

- Each performer establishes five action sentences (signposts) to tell the story of one of the characters from Lydwine.
- In two groups, chose 6 sentences and create tableaus for each.
- Keep the tableaus rooted in space, but add one word and one gesture.

11:40 COMPOSITIONS

- Work from the tableaus using the sentences as text.
- Parameters:
 - Minimum 2 “characters.”
 - An incredibly loud noise.
 - A moment when people kiss (or almost kiss).
 - A dance sequence.
 - Object used as something it is not.
 - 10 sec of laughter.
 - The voice of God.
 - A fight.

12:15 PRESENT AND RE-PRESENT

⁸⁰Over the course of the session, these were the titles we came up with: Aromatic Veiled Bedclothes Prostitute, Vomiting Lung and Liver, A Libertine Touched My Rod!, Night-time Trysts with Heavenly Bodies, Baldwin Will be Absent this Week, and Mystical Her.

Creation Session #8– Object Relationship

CA Theatre 10-1

Performers: Natalie, Lauren, Ryan, Ben, Brett, Aliya, Gina, Davy

December 11/07

10:00 WARM UP

Ball Games, Sun salutations. Object pass around.

10:30 OBJESCT EXERCISE

- Find an object in the room that intrigues you and study it.
- Go through the 5 senses in your investigation.
- How does its rhythm, speed and weight transfer to your own body?
- Post-it notes with previously created scene titles are sprinkled throughout the room. Tour them and see how this body you have created reacts to the titles.
- Chose a phrase that you think fits your object body.
- Use the phrase as introduction. As dismissal. As secret. As seduction.
- What is the history of this object character?

11:30 PARTNER OBJECT TEXT COMPOSITIONS

- Parameters:
 - The object characters must be present, and their text.
 - The pre-written texts given to you by Emily.
 - An exaggerated wink.
 - An object as a character.
 - An accent.
 - A slap.
 - A double take.
 - 10 seconds of harmony.

12:30 HOT SEAT

- Everyone takes turns sitting in their character body in the hot seat.
- The collected ensemble can ask this body any questions they want.

Creation Session #9– Bouffon⁸¹

CA Theatre 10-1

Performers: Natalie, Lauren, Ryan, Ben, Aliya, Gina, Davy

December 13/07

10:00 WARM UP

Ball games. Vocal tree. Shake down.

10:20 TRICKS

- Show the group your tricks. Doesn't matter what they are; just do them proudly.
- After everyone does their trick, the rest of the group attempts to go them as well (ie hand to ear, nose to tongue, a song).

10:30 BOUFFON HISTORY

- Explain a bit of Bouffon history and rules.
- The lore of the bouffon is that all the ugly scared and broken people of medieval France were sent to the swamps, away from the "beautiful people." They were allowed out once a year to perform for those precious members of society, and their objective was to "kill their audience." Not literally, but in such a way that by performing, for example, such an accurate parody of a mayor, the mayor would laugh and laugh with the audience, go home, realize the folly of his ways, and kill himself.
- Bouffon Rules: Don't play the affliction – you know you have it, but it is completely normal. Soft voice, juxtapositions (short circuiting), tension of opposites. (presumption that physical malady = mental malady, or vice versa) . Get away with it.

10:40 BODIES IN TENSION – BALL TOSS

- Create an "afflicted" body with hoodies pulled tight and tied off arms.
- The afflicted bodies stand against a wall and the rest of the group all throw a soft ball at them.
- At the moment when they cower from the balls, yell freeze.
- Let them find voice as a group "Hello assholes, greetings from the swamp"
- Get away with it! Be charming!
- Get them to move in and out of their group and perform their tricks

11:00 PARODY

- One ensemble answers questions about a day-to-day item, relationship, school, work etc.
- Another stands behind them and physically takes on their characteristics and vocal patterns.
- The questions are repeated but this time they are answered by the mimic.

11:20 JUXTOPOSITIONS

- One ensemble member does a monologue about something they are familiar with
- The monologue is repeated but with the addition of one or more bodies in space creating a new context for the scene (hospital, drug use...etc)

⁸¹ I credit most of these exercises to Karen Hines, although she has adapted/taken many of them from Phillip Gaulier in Paris.

11:40 COMPOSITIONS

- Use pre-written texts.
- Parameters:
 - One of the object characters from yesterday.
 - 2 tricks.
 - a moment of juxtaposition where you say one thing and do the opposite.
 - a moment where you say something and do it exactly.
 - an object as something else.
 - unison crying.
 - a freak out.
 - 10 seconds of mouth music.
 - 10 seconds of mirrored movement.

Creation Session #10– Costumes and Text

CA Theatre 10-1

Performers: Natalie, Lauren, Ben, Aliya, Gina, Davy

January 5/07

10:00 WARM UP

Ball games. Dance tag. Build a dance. Sun salutations.

10:20 IMPROV THEME GAME

Preservation. Attraction. Revulsion.

10:50 READ THROUGH

- Read through first four pages.
- Trade roles and re-read. Read for punctums. Underline.
- What are the first questions? What want answered?
- What are the tensions?
- What do you hope happens to each person?
- What do you want to ask each individual?
- Who has the power?
- Write a haiku that introduces each character you read for.

11:40 COMPOSITION

- Assign roles.
- Chose one costume item for their character.
- Put the whole thing up on its feet
- Parameters:
 - Each person's haiku must be injected at some point as a point of introduction.
 - A song.
 - Space must be used for multiple purposes.
 - Each costume piece worn 2 ways.
 - An anchoring set piece.
 - 2 people with an unspoken but visible affliction.
 - A physical action that defies the spoken text.

12:20 PRESENT AND RE-DIRECT

Appendix 4: ***Palms Down Like a Rainbow* Production Script**

Production Script May 3 2008

Writer and Director: Emily Pearlman
Dramaturge: Caroline Sniatynski
Lighting Designer: Carmen Hung
Set Designer: Scott Owens
Composer: Elliott Vaughan
Stage Manager: Ally Colclough
Production Manager: Cass Turner

LATER MATILDA: Aliya Griffin
OMMADARLIN: Brett Little
UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Ryan Swanson
MATILDA: Gina Readman
CLEMINTINE: Ben Stone
LYDWINE: Lauren Kresowaty
BOATSWAIN: Natalie Schneck

CHARACTERS

LATER MATILDA: Omnipresent.

OMMADARLIN: A mother.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: A relation. Older. A gardener. / MEDIC 2

MATILDA: An oldest daughter. / CUSTOMER 3

CLEMINTINE (TINY): A previously youngest daughter / CUSTOMER 2.

LYDWINE: A youngest daughter with magical powers. / PHYCHIC / MEDIC 3

BOATSWAIN: A Manny. Always carries a thermos. / CUSTOMER 1/ MEDIC 1

#1 LUNGS AND LIVER

Music plays in dim light.

It sounds like the future galloping closer like horses over the ocean.

Upstage there are stairs leading up to a windowed room. It is OMMADARLIN'S bedroom. Dirty, white, umbilical cord-esque ropes spill out of the window. They spread like vines around the perimeter of the playing area. Under the bedroom is an area covered by a scrim. Bodies can be seen in silhouette when it is lit warm and red. This is the oven/womb. It is LYDWINE'S space. Under the stairs is a small room covered in chalk drawings. This is TINY and MATILDA'S space. There are two haphazard bunches of glass jars in each downstage corner. The jars contain dirt, knobbly fetus-like roots, and a tiny light. Downstage left is a raised black platform filled with empty jars and ropes. The area above the platform is roped off, like a shipwrecked crow's nest.

LATER MATILDA (in jeans, a blue top and black vest) sits playing with an empty jar, examining its invisible contents. She spots something and opens the jar loudly. The music snaps off.

Enter OMMADARLIN (dressed in cream macramé like a 1970's angel) and UNCLE GINGERBREAD (in cream polyester with ill fitting jean shorts, a fanny pack and gardening knee pads). He leads in LYDWINE (In red one piece long underwear and a black blindfold). They speak to LYDWINE in whispers.

OMMADARLIN: Come on...

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It will just take a second...

OMMADARLIN: Like you mean it...

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Do it for us... please... Lydwine...

LATER MATILDA comes close to LYDWINE, surveying the action.

LATER MATILDA: Lydwine, Lydwine, gingerbread girl.
 You let us walk straight, and fall in love with the sidewalks.
 18 stories head over heels for the taste of the trees. We'll
 hold onto you forever. As we eat the world.

LYDWINE vomits. It sounds like a viola playing a miracle. Popcorn falls from the sky out of her mouth. The expulsion makes her weak.

OMMADARLIN: Gift from above and below!

Lights grow into a chaotic carnival. Music sounds loudly like a sideshow on acid. LYDWINE is displayed by UNCLE GINGERBREAD. OMMADARLIN proselytizes with her daughter proudly, displaying bits of vomit in an oversized glass jar. CUSTOMERS 123 enter behind the audience in white Hazmat suits. They speak in chorus.

OMMADARLIN: Magical Lydwine, purveyor of the finest in sugar glazed bits of lung and liver. Tell anyone you care to care for, this is the best cure-all this side of the century! You madam-

CUSTOMERS: Me madam?

OMMADARLIN: Come talk to me. Have you noticed the problems with everything around you?

CUSTOMERS: Pardon me?

OMMADARLIN: Telling them you are opening your heart, but really just opening your legs for anyone who looks at you sideways?

CUSTOMERS: My oh my!

OMMADARLIN: And you little Miss too busy busy busy to open your arms and invite a friendly stranger for dinner?

CUSTOMERS: Why my arms just aren't long enough!

OMMADARLIN: Excuses! Scared they might turn your household sinister? Maybe you yourself are choking to death on your own salty morals?

CUSTOMERS: I think you've got the wrong-

OMMADARLIN: Seeing everyone around you grey and monochrome!

CUSTOMERS: What have you got?

OMMADARLIN: I've seen you lying to people on street corners. Or in your own backyard. Let me just say that others are afflicted too. All around you.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It is beautiful. You are perfect.

OMMADARLIN reaches into the vomit receptacle and pulls out a morsel.

OMMADARLIN: 100% pure this one is. Soak one tiny morsel in brandy overnight and clean your conscious with it the next morning.

CUSTOMERS: One tiny morsel in brandy overnight and clean your conscience with it the next morning?!

OMMADARLIN: Magical Lydwine, never tells a saucy tale, sees the world through filmy rose, and you will too. A living miracle. Just a wiff or a touch. Just a taste of her precious bits and pieces.

CUSTOMERS: Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!

OMMADARLIN ushers the other two off. More work to be done elsewhere.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Come on Lydwine. Bring it up. It's best for everyone.

CUSTOMERS: Just a wiff or a touch. Just a taste of her precious bits and pieces.

Everyone inhales as LYDWINE leaves. LATER MATILDA snaps the lid back on her jar. Music stops abruptly.

LATER MATILDA: Away from there the world is my oyster.
An edible bivalve mollusk.
Slimy smoothness. Futile muscle.
The large chamber in the heart of the oyster is called the Auricle.
But it's the past I'll swallow whole to see the present.
The imprint of sticky fingers on jam jars,
a thumb in vanilla ice cream.
Swallow it whole to read the finger sworls to find what makes us hungry.

LATER MATILDA climbs to the top of her crows nest, and leaves the lid off her jar. Music that predicts the future will sound like a UFO permeates the playing space.

#2 VISIT

Enter a PSYCHIC with the body of a coin operated fortune teller. She wears a hazmat suit while she reads OMMADARLIN's pregnant belly like a crystal ball. MATILDA (in denim overalls and a blue shirt) sucks a soother.

OMMADARLIN: So... just want to make sure it's gonna be a-good one, you know?

LATER MATILDA: A monochromatic soothsayer sends advice like a whirlwind each time Ommadarlin faces a motherly decision.

PSYCHIC: It's hard to say. Little bit of cloudy condensation. Move around a bit. That works for magic 8 balls.

OMMADARLIN performs a languorous Magic 8-ball reading of her belly.

OMMADARLIN: Like this?

PSYCHIC: Excellent. Keep that up. *(To Matilda)* What about you quiet miss? Let's open the book on your future.

PSYCHIC tries to read MATILDA's palms

OMMADARLIN: Well? Puddles of happiness?

PSYCHIC: Hmmmmmm. Hard to read those small hands

OMMADARLIN: Tell us the truth, good or bad. Will she be swept off to be wed to pirates?

MATILDA: Pirates!

PSYCHIC: This is serious! Completely blank! Criminals sometimes burn off their fingertips to permanently erase their prints. Just smooth hardened flesh.

OMMADARLIN: I've birthed an offender?

PSYCHIC: When you were pregnant, did you take her? Out. There?

OMMADARLIN: She'd go wherever I went...

PSYCHIC: What about now, do you take her Out. There?

OMMADARLIN: Well, to the park... the grocery story...

PSYCHIC: Do you realize what is out...there?

OMMADARLIN: The ... rest of the world...?

PSYCHIC: Out. There. A simple medical lesson: You breathe the same air as those whose chests are filled with phlegm, and your own chest fills up with phlegm, which will melt into your womb, infecting your fetus. But a chest infection is the least of your worries. What about all the other sicknesses of the world? The need to make disaster at every corner! The erosion of morality in all its forms! The inability to love anyone other than herself! Do you realize that is what you have been exposing her to since the beginning!

PSYCHIC looks at MATILDA's hands.

PSYCHIC: I'm sensing-

OMMADARLIN: Yes?

PSYCHIC: I'm feeling-

OMMADARLIN: Yes?

PSYCHIC: There is nothing on these palms.

OMMADARLIN: Nothing?

PSYCHIC: Smooth and empty

LATER MATILDA: Nothing.

MATILDA: Nothing.

PSYCHIC: No future. Sullied already. From something. Out there. I don't think it's fixable.

LATER MATILDA: Nothing

OMMADARLIN: Nothing?

PSYCHIC looks at OMMADARLIN's pregnant belly.

PSYCHIC: I'm not convinced *this* one will fare any better. Try again later. When you are ready to keep them out of trouble.

OMMADARLIN: Sullied already.....

MATILDA: Pirates.....

OMMADARLIN: Keep the trouble out.....

LATER MATILDA: For safety. She seals the window cracks. Tight as a drum. So nothing gets out, and nothing comes in...unless invited.

OMMADARLIN works with purpose to create a barrier from the jars that will block her house from the outside. The jar wall that comes between stage and audience will be added to throughout by UNCLE GINGERBREAD. .

#3 A BEDROOM

MATILDA is older. She dreams alone.

MATILDA: I am the size of two people and have a baby the size of a big toe. Really squooshy. Plasticiney. I want to keep it for later in a Tupperware container, but when I open it the next morning, its leg is caught under the lid. Sorta drips down the side like leftovers.

LATER MATILDA: Shake her awake, so she doesn't have to hold the blankets so tight!

MATILDA wakes. Blinking to adjust to the dark.

LATER MATILDA: Wondering if someone stands outside her window at night and empties out the dustpan of the world.

MATILDA: Dirt flying in between the sheets, exo-skeletons, loose change, blood stains. I can't sleep on sweaty pillows.

OMMADARLIN and
LATER MATILDA: Sweat on a pillow means dirty nightmares.

TINY (in overalls, a cream blouse, combat boots and a red knit toque) has been sleeping on the platform above the stairs. She wakes and attacks her sister

TINY: It's not dirt from the outside, it's poison star particles!

LATER MATILDA: Wake up Tiny, a little sister. All terrain boots glued on tight. Protecting toes from exo-skeleton storms. Or anything else that might proffer a fight.

MATILDA: What do you know about the stars?

TINY: I'd know more if you told me about the outside. Tell me about the outside.

MATILDA: Later. I've already told you a million times.

A loud, rhythmic, violent and sustained noise is heard from the bedroom. Both girls hear it and shudder.

TINY: Ommadarlin's at it again.

MATILDA: This is not good for sleeping.

LATER MATILDA: There are towers of glass jars to the ceiling in her cupboard. Little vials of tiny half moon fingernails. Sealed up as evidence of their existence.

TINY: Night time exercising? Or midnight stork catching?

MATILDA: Maybe they are star particles?

TINY: Indoor volleyball with cabbages. She's probably in training. "Be Prepared in Body by making yourself strong and active and able to do the right thing at the right moment, and do it." Be Prepared!

MATILDA: Right. Where is Uncle Gingerbread?

The noise stops. The girls scan the room for UNCLE GINGERBREAD. They watch as he gets booted from OMMADARLIN's bedroom and walks meekly to his solarium (Downstage Right) where he tends to his plants.

LATER MATILDA: Uncle Gingerbread sleeps in the old backyard solarium. Vines grasping at his blond curly tendrils.

TINY: If she exercises all the time, why is she so fat?

MATILDA: She's just big-boned.

TINY: She should try digging work like him. I bet he weighs about 12 pounds. Do I look like him?

MATILDA: Maybe. If you grew a moustache.

TINY: Is he my uncle?

MATILDA: Like a big disguised droopy one

TINY: Cousin?

MATILDA: Everyone loves people in disguises.

LATER MATILDA: He waters them constantly. Whispers into their ears in confidence.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I knew she was the one immediately. Parades of stars flashed until my sockets were filled with bright white light and her voice singing in tongues. That's how I knew. It's not the exact same for everyone. Sometimes it's more like a persistent tugging of magnets. But you WILL know when you find the one person in the world for you. Without a doubt. It's a guarantee. And if you wait long enough, they will know too.

MATILDA: Without a doubt? It's a guarantee? Like my pirate...?

TINY: Is he related to us at all? He is always around, he bought us birthday presents, he comes to holiday dinners – family dinners.

MATILDA: That's just what gardeners do.

LATER MATILDA: He lies by his plants to help them get through the night when the lack of sun makes them unable to produce glucose, carbohydrates and oxygen.

TINY: I would grow a handlebar moustache. They sound the most useful.

LATER MATILDA: His head in their leaves as they reverse the process of photosynthesis and breathe by burning carbohydrates and oxygen. Floor to ceiling filled with water and potent amounts of carbon dioxide.

TINY: I can practice my moves super fast until she comes down.
She runs zigzags all over until she is stopped by the glass barrier

TINY: Zig-zags will save you if you are ever chased by a crocodile. The crocodile will follow you exactly but is really terrible at changing directions. The more turns you add, the more he will slow down.

MATILDA: You don't need to be fast to escape a crocodile, just faster than the person escaping with you.

TINY: I'm pretty fast. I'm BP. Be-prepared.

MATILDA: You are still the slowest in the house. Maybe you need to find someone who is strong enough to wrestle a crocodile.

TINY: Ommadarlin?

MATILDA: No.

TINY: Uncle Gingerbread? *(She laughs)*.

MATILDA: This is serious Clementine. I can't wrestle a crocodile! And you can't outrun anything.

TINY: But I can "Be Prepared in Mind by having disciplined yourself to be obedient to every order, and also by having thought out beforehand any accident or situation that might occur-

MATILDA: There are so many accidents or situations that may occur, but we don't even know what they are! How are you going to prepare for that!

TINY: Ahhhhhhhhhh!

MATILDA: Quiet! No one stronger or slower is going to come anywhere near here if you make it all jelly. Be polite. And you have to stop smelling like poop. No one is going to come to a poop house.

TINY: I haven't gone to the bathroom in two weeks!

MATILDA: Clementine!

TINY: I don't want to waste all the information. My brain will die.

MATILDA: You just get rid of the bad stuff. That's why it smells gross.

TINY: "Dear slower and/or stronger, please come stay with us. Place: here. Time: soon. Cookies will be served."

MATILDA: An invitation no one will be able to resist. Right here and lovely, just in time for tea cakes. Domo arigato very much they will say. Thank you very much for the invitation.

TINY: I can be quite polite.

MATILDA: An excellent host?

TINY: Mints on the pillows.

MATILDA: We need to make them comfortable.

They think and stretch really hard.

MATILDA: How about a nest! To be prepared.

TINY: Tools! To make a nest.

MATILDA: Right here, out of dirt and exo-skeletons, and decorated with the sparkles from people's teeth and the snow.

TINY: Tools! To make a nest! I'll ask Uncle Gingerbread

MATILDA: Dear slower and/or stronger. Please come and stay with us. Place: here. Time: soon. Cookies will be served.....

The girls retire to their room. Exhausted from their planning. UNCLE GINGERBREAD works on the jar barrier.

#4 PIE

OMMADARLIN stands on the stair platform and performs her magic-8 ball baby goodness check. Her pink balloon belly floats and glows through her dress. The psychic music from before is loud. UNCLE GINGERBREAD watches. OMMADARLIN decides the baby is not a keeper, and proceeds to collect all the materials required to change her situation – a wheeling cart holding a large knife, cutting board, apples and garbage pail. UNCLE GINGERBREAD tries to distract OMMADARLIN.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: This seed! See? Instructions for how to start a whole new plant. Right in here. Someone in there has all these directions and everyone else just listens. "You there, Mr. Epicotyle head north and shoot straight up, Mr. Radicle go south and dodge around any obstructions. Cotyledons! Spread out and cover the ground between the other two" Incredible. This packet has more information than a whole university degree. That's why you need to eat your vegetables and whole grain toast. So your brain doesn't die of starvation.

OMMADARLIN begins chopping the apples, sitting astride the wheelie cart. Throughout the next monologue, the light grows from the oven behind her, revealing the undulating body of an unborn baby.

OMMADARLIN: Carefully chosen ingredients are an important part of any culinary endeavour. Choose poorly and you might find yourself with a baked good that's below par. One that won't live up to the cute little muffin next door. Problem, is sometimes, when you think you've found that perfect piece of fruit that is going to give your baking that special tangy zip, when you get it in the oven, and peer through the little glass window, it may look a little lumpy. Or the smell might be off. Why once, I made a loaf and the top split clear in two, like a little brain! I don't want any mediocre baking coming out of my oven! So, before the timer dings its' special ding, quick as a whip – out comes the pan, scoot

'round the edge just a smidge with a knife and into the compost it goes. Because I am working on the best, the best blue ribbon baking I can manage.

She rests her hands on her belly, feels a kick.

OMMADARLIN: Hmmmmmmm... Excuse me.

She walks around the cart and dumps all the apples into the garbage bucket below. Oven lights snap off. OMMADARLIN exits with cart.

#5 DINNER TIME

UNCLE GINGERBREAD calls the family to dinner by loudly shaking a bunch of carrots that he has gathered for their eating enjoyment. They are passed around to each family member, including OMMADARLIN who is no longer pregnant. The family clinks carrots and commences eating.

No conversation.

TINY makes faces at MATILDA to OMMADARLIN's annoyance.

MATILDA remains stone faced.

TINY pretends to fall asleep in her dinner.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD coughs.

A look from OMMADARLIN.

TINY blows her middle finger at MATILDA

MATILDA may explode.

OMMADARLIN: I don't give warnings.

TINY chews up a lot of carrot and opens her mouth grossly at MATILDA.

OMMADARLIN: You are going to destroy your beautiful face. Permanently.

TINY pretends to die.

MATILDA cannot resist responding. She pulls the worst face ever.

OMMADARLIN: ENOUGH!

Everyone straightens up. MATILDA tries to but her face is stuck that way. PANIC.

TINY: Matilda?

MATILDA frantically tries to fix her face.

OMMADARLIN: Matilda!

MATILDA: It was only for a second!

OMMADARLIN: I try and try to tell you these things. Important things and.....

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: You should listen to your mother.

OMMADARLIN: Someone should listen to your mother.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD fixes the problem by fashioning a face covering for MATILDA out of a gardening mask.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Done

OMMADARLIN: Make yourselves useful please and thank you.

OMMADARLIN, pleased with UNCLE GINGERBREADS resourcefulness, leaves the kids to clean up after dinner, and leads UNCLE GINGERBREAD up to the bedroom. MATILDA is glum with her new face problem, until TINY points out that she looks like a pirate. Joy! They make pirate noises and hook hands.

The rhythmic noises start from OMMADARLIN's bedroom.

MATILDA: You know the only thing more useful than a handlebar moustache?

TINY: What?

MATILDA: A nest! To be prepared.

TINY and MATILDA rush off stage and return pulling a large shiny chicken wire nest and an assortment of nest building supplies, including metal odds and ends and a vintage iron. They sing their invitation to whoever might hear.

TINY AND MATILDA: Dear slower and or stronger,
please come and stay with us,
place here, time soon,
cookies will be served.
In case of attack by a crocodile,
Will you tackle it down while we run a mile?
Or become it's dinner, but with a smile?
Slower or Stronger.
Don't wait much longer.
Soon, don't delay
Oh please come and stay.
In our nest, in our nest!

#7 KITCHEN

UNCLE GINGERBREAD exits the bedroom. He sees the nest, and it makes him feel strangely powerful. OMMADARLING exits the bedroom, and stands on the stair platform doing her magic-8 ball baby check.

OMMADARLIN: Hmmmmmmm

UNCLE GINGERBREAD watches. The kids remain unseen behind the nest. OMMADARLIN brings out her wheelie cart. LYDWINE lurks. OMMADARLIN turns and sees UNCLE GINGERBREAD.

OMMADARLIN: Excuse me.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It smells good in here. I think you have a winner.

OMMADARLIN: I'm exhausted.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Please.

OMMADARLIN: So tired I can barely see straight.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I could help. Look after- I'm just waiting for you to let me-
OMMADARLIN mounts her wheelie cart and begins chopping apples.

OMMADARLIN: I don't need your help.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I know.

OMMADARLIN: You've got grass stains on your knees again.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: My arms are glued to this room somehow I think. Hardened icing keeps my feet on the floor. My ears rotating. Eyes peering from all the light fixtures. But open my mouth and my voice is no more noticeable than the sound of the heating system.

OMMADARLIN is stopped by an image of zygote LYDWINE. Squirming egg like, lanky serpentine baby.

LYDWINE: Warm and tidy in here. Sugar and spice, gleaming gumdrop eyes, red icing dresses. Is it tasty out there? Smack your chapped lips together and open your mouth wider. Your teeth wider. Open your eyes until your forehead soaks in thought-lines. Oven door will open soon too.

OMMADARLIN: Just wide enough to fit someone's head...

A moment of hesitation. Everything seems to be slow motion.

MATILDA: We are getting things ready. For a surprise visitor.

TINY: Someone slower and or stronger. Maybe a pet sloth.

MATILDA: Or a fierce pirate. Everyone is welcome here! We have decorated it with sparkles from people's teeth.

TINY: Ready ready ready ready... we're prepared.

OMMADARLIN: What's worse really? The agony of possible disaster? A silly putty body stained in newsprint? Or the shudder that comes with realizing that everything precious has already happened at least twice?

Everyone is leaning in towards OMMADARLIN. She stands up as if to throw the apples into the garbage, and instead walks away from the cart and begins to pick at the pie fruit. The others join her. There is much eating of pie fruit.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It's good.

TINY: Delicious.

MATILDA: Do you think a nest is an excellent place for sleeping?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: We could get someone to help.

MATILDA: Nest helper!

TINY: We are prepared to do the right thing at the right moment.

OMMADARLIN: Anyone need anything else?

Their mouths full, they all shake their heads.

MATILDA: We are all good, domo arigato very much.

TINY: Thank you very much, very much.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It smells good in here. I think you have a winner.

The opening chords of a song are heard from OMMADARLIN's belly. LATER MATILDA accompanies their joyous song and dance on a key-tar. From the oven LYDWINE accompanies on invisible flute.

ALL: There's gonna be a new baby soon
It's gonna be here by the next full moon
So we're gonna have to make some room-

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: That's my baby boy

ALL: In her womb!
Baby baby baby baby baby baby baby baby baby
baby.....

8 THE SOLARIUM

UNCLE GINGERBREAD massages the very pregnant OMMADARLIN's feet. MATILDA and TINY work on their nest.

LATER MATILDA: Ironing every building piece. Fastidious sharp toothed magpies. Baited with rusty pieces of history.

MATILDA: This is a part no one will be able to resist! Hold it steady.

TINY: Who needs an ironing board? Tell me about the outside again.

MATILDA: Not now. I'm ironing *bored!*

MATILDA pretends to fall asleep in boredom. TINY follows suit, but while her eyes are closed, MATILDA checks that the coast is clear and irons TINY's hands.

MATILDA: Shhhhhh.

TINY: Ow ow ow ow.

MATILDA: Smooth and soft.

TINY: I don't want your weird plastic hands!

MATILDA: But they are smooth and soft, we're just like twins.

TINY: We're not like twins. You are older. So closer to dead.

She covers her hand with an oversized work glove.

TINY: Ow ow ow ow....whoa whoa....

BOATSWAIN: *(From the nest)*
Ahoy! Land ahead!

The BOATSWAIN rises up paddling from the nest. He wears sturdy black boots, bright yellow pants, a lopsided sailor's cap and a blue captain's jacket. Disbelief all around.

MATILDA and TINY: Whoa....whoa!

BOATSWAIN: O'er the mighty shores, the compass pointed this way,
following the persistent tugging of magnets.

OMMADARLIN: Pointed this way?

MATILDA: He looks stronger. What about slower?

TINY: We don't need slower if we get him. He looks like a ninja.

BOATSWAIN: You look like you're drowning. Perhaps I can be of use

He removes a business card. It is snatched up by MATILDA.

MATILDA: B-O-A-T-S-W-A-I-N

TINY: B-O-A-T-S-W-A-I-N

BOTH: Bow-wwt- sww-ainnn

MATILDA: Boat-swain?

BOATSWAIN: Boatswain⁸² (*Boh-suhn*)

UNCLE GINGERBREAD takes the card and hands it to OMMADARLIN.

OMMADARLIN: Boat-swain?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: This isn't a boat.

LATER MATILDA: He climbed to the top of the crow's nest one day, jumped aboard a cumulous nimbus cloud and followed the lead of the wind and the rain. The boatswain...

OMMADARLIN: You look like a man who believes in truth and honour.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: The boat-swain is in charge of the sails and rigging.

MATILDA: Pirate sails?

BOATSWAIN: Salt of the earth.

The BOATSWAIN removes himself from the nest with the elegance of a teenage boy trying desperately to impress a girl on a first date.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: We don't have any sails here.

BOATSWAIN: Sails and rigging and the day-to-day running of the ship. Good job. Good enough. Been waiting for a promo for a while now. Promotion. Something with pizzazz. The River Styx maybe. One helluva day job that be. Helluva!

MATILDA: River Styx? (*Some air guitar*) Domo arigato!

TINY: Matilda-

A jaunty jig is heard. The BOATSWAIN performs an introductory dance that is the love child between the Backstreet Boys and Merce Cunningham.

BOATSWAIN: Anchors up and fathoms down! And two and three and four and five and six fathoms seven and eight and nine fathoms. Night turns into day. I'll keep it all ship shape. Octagonal housekeeping. Ten Fathoms! And ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen fathoms

OMMADARLIN gets into the dance.

OMMADARLIN: Fathoms and fathoms and fathoms!

⁸² When written boatswain, the word is pronounced correctly as *Bow-sun*. When written boat-swain, the word is pronounced incorrectly as *Bowt-swain*.

MATILDA: A Fathom is two arms, six feet or eighteen hands.

BOATSWAIN: Look at the first rate first mate we have here!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: The girls don't live on a ship. Mr. Boat-swain

BOATSWAIN: Cut the music a sec?

The jig ends abruptly.

BOATSWAIN: Before this goes any further. I-just-need-ta-tell-ya-what sticks-in-my-craw? "Boat-swain" Boat. Swain. I am a "bow-sun" Sun of the bow. Sun of the moon. I have swum in the ocean. Salted herring for my bones. White crust round the ankle.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: There are problems that come with too much salt you know. Iodine.

BOATSWAIN: Problems? You got 'em?

TINY: A few (*She shows him her burned hands*).

BOATSWAIN: Or worries?

MATILDA nods furiously

BOATSWAIN: Forget 'em.

OMMADARLIN: Keep it all ship shape? Watch over them when no one else can. There is danger peeking through every floorboard. Grabbing at the ankles of the wee ones.

BOATSWAIN: I'll keep your daughters safe and tighter than the noose you'd hang me with if I screwed the whole thing up.

OMMADARLIN: Wherever you are, whatever you are doing or intending to do, or thinking of intending to do, he will be watching you. You will be watching them. So don't even think about it.

MATILDA: All the time?

TINY: Even when I am sleeping?

OMMADARLIN: Yes. And Yes.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Be a friend of the Boat-swain. Your mother is. She hopes you will be too.

TINY: Boat-swain! Look.

TINY points, there is water spurting from between OMMADARLIN's legs.

TINY: Peeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeing!

OMMADARLIN: Call in the doctors!

TINY: I hope they can find us!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I'll put on the kettle...

BOATSWAIN: I'll keep a look out for...trouble

BOATSWAIN and UNCLE GINGERBREAD leave in a hurry. TINY and MATILDA frantically try and clean up OMMADARLIN's broken water.

LATER MATILDA: If you find yourself in someplace new, you can always follow the map tattooed on your brain to take you home. But if you have never left in the first place, everywhere that surrounds your house, thar be monsters.

TINY AND MATILDA look to the outside to see if help is on the way. Nothing yet. They call for help using physical morse code.

TINY AND MATILDA: Dit-dit-dit dah-dah-dah dit-dit-dit!

Armed with cooking implements the Medics appear. They wear lab coats and march in unison. OMMADARLIN faints. The kids scurry to get out of the way. LATER MATILDA accompanies on key-tar.

MEDIC 1: AAFB!

MEDIC 2: BAEP!

MEDIC 3: CABG!

MEDIC 1: Oahhhhh! Good one! DCIS

MEDIC 2: Epidermolysis bullosa acquisita!

MEDIC 1: EBA... excellent

MEDIC 3: FAE

MEDIC 2: GHB

MEDIC 1: HCV-PCR

TINY: This is taking forever. Tell me about the outside.

MATILDA: I don't remember.

TINY: Tell me anyway.

MATILDA: I think it's just like them. But faster.

Their marching turns to double time.

ALL MEDICS : Prosteglandon cream.
Prepidil gel.
What is the effacement percentage here?
Cervidil.
Epidural.
Nubain.
Oxytocin.

*Each medic leaps forwards to get a closer look and smell at the knocked out (and up)
OMMADARLIN*

MEDIC 1: She out?

MEDIC 3: Looks out.

MEDIC 1: Anyone else got the urge for a Christmas cake?

MEDIC 2: Maybe an anniversary cake...

TINY gets distracted by the odors emitting from the labouring OMMADARLIN.

TINY: Whoa! That smells like the best dessert in the world!

MATILDA: Dessert house is so much better than a poop house.

TINY: He's going to be the best.

LATER MATILDA: Right now, swimming and covered in slimy scales. They won't get better than this.

MEDIC 3: Not cake exactly. But Scones?

ALL: Scones!

MEDIC 1: 100% Effacement Push!

MEDIC 2: She can't push, she's out!

MEDIC 3: Forceps!

ALL: PULL!

Oven timer dings. MEDIC 1 delivers the pink balloon of a baby. The live sound of baby cries.

9 PROGNOSIS

MEDIC 1 holds the balloon child and lecture the family

MEDIC 1: Let's think of the baby as a drunken socialite at a cocktail party. Schmoozin' around the womb.
Little crudite over here. Little wine there.
And the baby goes a little "wild." Gets sauced.
You know the only way to help your little hungover socialite fetus is to provide it with water.
You retain water in the ankles and suddenly you're doing the log driver's waltz, but the logs, are your legs.
Yes?
Retain water in the wrists, and your high school charm bracelet, is all pop pop pop pop, charms in all directions.
Now.
Those are fine places to retain water.
But you take it to the next level. Hording water everywhere.
Retaining water in the brain. Starts swelling, helium balloon in the skull.
Only place for the brain to go is outwards, to press on your optic nerves. Brain swells and swells, retaining all that water, about to sever your optic nerve when, shazam!
The baby's mouth opens swallows and swallows that excess water, little thirsty fish, and saves your vision.

ALL FAMILY: Hooray?

MEDIC 1: At the expense of its own.

ALL FAMILY: Huhhhhhh?.

MEDIC 1: Soooooooooo. This is the child.

The balloon baby transforms into LYDWINE, who steps tentatively from the oven.

LYDWINE: Hello?

MEDIC 1: It's a girl.

ALL: Oh.

MEDIC 1: It's unfortunate she's blind. But hey! Some of my favorite musicians are blind!

MEDIC 1 exits. Air piano and singing a blind musician medly on the way out.

MEDIC 1: "Very Superstitious - Georgia, Georgia – take us to a place!
Guide us with your faith!..."

OMMADARLIN: I told you I was too tired...

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I can help

MATILDA: We built a nest...

TINY: Slower, and or stronger...

MATILDA: We built a nest...!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD moves towards LYDWINE. Smells her head. Shocked at its redolence. He names her.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Lydwine.

ALL: Lydwine...

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: You are perfect in everyway.

LATER MATILDA: This is more than the normal intoxication from a baby's head. Out of every crease and cuticle a different perfume – enough to send you whirly-top.

Everyone leans towards LYDWINE. Inhale and inhale, they almost want to taste her.

MATILDA: He rocks her to sleep like how he picks the best tomatoes in the solarium.

TINY: The little ones that explode under your tongue?

MATILDA: You still have red stains in the corners of your mouth.

TINY sticks out her tongue, looking for remnants of lunch, all she gets is a mouthful of LYDWINE.

#10 THE SOLARIUM 2

UNCLE GINGERBREAD is gardening. Trying to get TINY interested. TINY lies still, practicing MATILDA works on the nest aesthetics. OMMADARLIN rocks LYDWINE. BOATSWAIN stands guard.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Mulch? Furrows? You are doing an excellent job.

TINY: In order to survive an attack by an anaconda, you just lie really still with your chin tucked in. Like a statue.

LATER MATILDA: What was he growing in there? Just laying on the ground. Digging up earthworms and banana slugs. He licks the dirt off them when no one is looking, like licking the sugar off a jujube. Mind goes soaring by on hopeful clouds.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Root bound? A bigger pot please! Probably the best assistant in the world.

TINY: The snake will slither all over you and start eating your feet first. Wait until it has eaten to your knees. This will take a long time.

LATER MATILDA: He is searching for their wormy civilization. Their slimy social mores

TINY: When it has eaten up to your knees, sit up suddenly, take your knife and slide it in between its mouth and your leg. And cut its head off.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Garden hoe? Pumpkin seeds? A fearless adventurer and princess.

TINY: Make sure you have a knife. Make sure it is sharp.

MATILDA: Tiny! I need your help, to finish it nicely.

TINY: It's all done... look – slower... stronger.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: How do the worms decide which one is going to peer its blind head out of the ground each morning? Worm looks left, right, straightens his jello spine, and is taken as sacrifice by the early bird. How do they decide?

LATER MATILDA and MATILDA: How do they decide?

TINY: Decisions decisions decisions decisions decisions decisions decisions

MATILDA hops towards the BOATSWAIN, watching over LYDWINE.

MATILDA: Do you like the nest? Is it cozy? And comfortable? We worked very hard to make it. For someone slower and or stronger. Do you think you could wrestle a crocodile? Did you know I am to be married to a pirate?

OMMADARLIN: Not so many questions Matilda. You will wake her. And then she'll start wandering around and running into things. Your mother is very tired right now.

OMMADARLIN moves to her bedroom. BOATSWAIN and MATILDA in whispers

BOATSWAIN: I've never tried.

MATILDA: To marry a pirate?

BOATSWAIN: To wrestle a crocodile.

MATILDA: The sound of a crocodile would be knives chopping at straw.

She chops at the BOATSWAIN's leg, finds herself looking at his thermos.

MATILDA: What's in that? (*thermos*)

BOATSWAIN: Shhh shhhh. Maybe you should hold her.

MATILDA: Lydwine, Lydwine, gingerbread girl. Sugar and spice, gleaming gumdrop eyes, red icing dresses. Little child doll. trusting and sticky.

MATILDA tickles LYDWINE who smiles and giggles at the attention and promptly throws up. Airy popcorn bits of lung and liver scatter the floor. The sound and smell of miracles brings the family rushing in.

OMMADARLIN: What was that?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I don't know, but suddenly feel the urge for some Christmas cake

TINY: -birthday cake

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: -carrot cake

TINY and
UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Scones!

TINY and UNCLE GINGERBREAD notice the mess in front of LYDWINE and MATILDA.

MATILDA: Lydwine did it.

LYDWINE: It was an accident.

OMMADARLIN: What is it?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Smells like the best dessert in the entire world.

They move closer to her airy expulsion. Overcome by the smell. MATILDA gets the closest, investigates and pops a piece into her own mouth. She feels something. She removes her eyepatch and finds her face has been fixed. LYDWINE breathes heavy. Coughs.

TINY: Nice face Matilda!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It's beautiful. I knew she was perfect.

OMMADARLIN: It's a miracle. This is a miracle child! I have a miracle child.

BOATSWAIN: What type of miracle?

MATILDA: The fixing type?

TINY: Miracle child.

BOATSWAIN: But what is it?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Fertilizer!

OMMADARLIN: Tonsils?

LYDWINE: Matilda.

LYDWINE coughs.

MATILDA: Domo Arigato Lydwine. I may fall 18 stories in love with you.

LYDWINE wheezes and throws up again.

LATER MATILDA: A moment of perfect clarity where truth comes down a prairie hailstorm, in giant icy chunks.

MATILDA: It's lungs and liver.

OMMADARLIN: I've told you what happens when you don't tell the truth.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Lungs and liver?!

LATER MATILDA and OMMADARLIN: The body of a liar stops growing, except for their ears and nose which grow triple speed.

LYDWINE wheezes, and investigates her own chest while weighing the expulsion.

LYDWINE: It is lungs and liver.

OMMADARLIN: Doesn't she need those?

TINY: They are really sparkly for lungs and liver.

OMMADARLIN: Don't you need those?

LYDWINE: I don't know.

LATER MATILDA: It starts right about there, and she can feel the whole thing branch outwards, like she is being turned inside out.

MATILDA: Lungs and liver. I just can tell.

BOATSWAIN: I have sailed the globe and think that diagnoses is absolutely probably true.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: I suddenly feel hungry for the first time in 400 years!.

OMMADARLIN: A miracle child. Mine.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Perfect. I knew she'd be perfect.

OMMADARLIN and UNCLE GINGERBREAD retire to the bedroom

LATER MATILDA: Rock a bye baby in the tree tops. When the wind blows the scent of her head will spread for miles and everyone will come out of their houses hungry for the first time in 400 years. Open their mouths, stick out their tongues and fall 18 stories in love with her.

#11 SEA RULES

TINY and MATILDA pull kazoos from their overalls, and march up the stairs to the top stair platform that has become LYDWINE's room. LYDWINE stumbles blindly behind. BOATSWAIN is getting them ready for bed.

LATER MATILDA: Three in a tub. Splashing water until they are sea sick and ready for slumber.

LYDWINE: Bathtime prune hands!

MATILDA and TINY look at their hands and sigh.

BOATSWAIN: When you are standing tall on deck and the waves are whippin' at you from every direction you get a whole prune body!

TINY: If you are on the sea, then you need to be prepared for a shark attack.

BOATSWAIN: Everyone on a ship is prepared for everything.

MATILDA: Like a flood, or storm, or earthquake, or spontaneous combustion?

TINY: Or a shark attack. Swimming backwards is good practice, because if they swim backwards they can't breathe cause their gills get flooded.

BOATSWAIN: Really any old disaster will work as an opportunity to find... the person... best... SACRIFICED!!!!

BOATSWAIN pretends to chop them with an axe

TINY AND MATILDA: AHHHHHHHHH! (*Dissolves into giggles*).

LYDWINE: Who is best sacrificed?

BOATSWAIN: The one who asks the most questions!

TINY: AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

BOATSWAIN: Every so often, you just need a sacrifice! Just keep ‘em quiet by shoving something sacred in their mouth – an orange, a beetle shell, a drawer pull, or the useless parts of a map.

MATILDA: Like the mountains that are too tall to climb?

TINY: They don’t exist!

LYDWINE: Or the oceans that are too deep to swim in.

TINY: Just work on holding your breath!

BOATSWAIN: Everyone on the boat would watch this sacrifice, and we’d say to them "YOU – yes YOU, by holding this sacred object between your teeth-“

MATILDA: Remember – the orange, the mountains etc.

BOATSWAIN: “You will be imbued with a power stronger than 65 to the power of 3.”And who doesn’t want that!

LYDWINE: But what about the sacrifice?

BOATSWAIN: Well they have a mouth full of drawer pulls and citrus fruit so they can’t say anything like-

MATILDA: "This is ridiculous"

BOATSWAIN: or-

TINY: "This flies in the face of all things scientific"

BOATSWAIN: or-

LYDWINE: "I don't want to be sacrificed thanks"

BOATSWAIN: And when the drool runs down their face, and give them wet vampire fangs, and the tears run from their eyes, giving them soggy crows feet, and they are marinated good in their own juices. Then. Only then. Are you permitted to eat them. Whole.

The girls are all terrified. The BOATSWAIN seems oblivious to their fear.

BOATSWAIN: Well, Goodnight girls, Tiny and Matilda, you got 5 minutes before you go back to your room. You make sure the bedbugs won't bite. I'll look after potential robbers and those who might steal you away and keep you locked in a dungeon until you are teenagers.

GIRLS: Goodnight Boat-swain.

BOATSWAIN: It's boatswain. Damn kids.

BOATSWAIN exits.

LYDWINE: Eat them?

TINY: Whole?

MATILDA: Maybe he was hungry. Or running out of B12 vitamins.

TINY: Actually, that gives me a bit of a scared tummy.

Loud rhythmic noises from next door. TINY edges towards her sisters, and holds them too tight.

LYDWINE: Tiny, I can't breath.

MATILDA: You know you squeeze a baby chick to see if it's a boy or a girl, but if you squeeze it too hard, it poops.

TINY: I'm practicing.

MATILDA: And if you squeeze if mega-hard, it explodes.

TINY: Sharks kill you when they get you in their mouth and thrash around a lot, but if you just hug the shark really tight, then they can't reach you, and you don't get lots of skin torn off. This is good information.

LYDWINE: How long do you have to hug them for?

TINY: Oh. I don't know. I guess forever.

LYDWINE: Ok. That sounds ok.

Kisses goodnight. TINY and MATILDA jump into their bedroom below.

#12 THERMOS HEART

BOATSWAIN at his post at the bottom of the stairs. He pulls out his thermos, opens it and stares at the contents for a long time. He seals it tight and sighs. OMMADARLIN (pregnant again) and UNCLE GINGERBREAD enter and move towards LYDWINE sleeping form. OMMADARLIN pokes and probes at her daughters sleeping body. Investigative.

LATER MATILDA: Is there a form of measurement
To find out if she's heaven sent?
Their meaning is benevolent
Approach and both are reverent.

OMMADARLIN: Which part is the most redolent?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Every bit looks the softest in the world.

OMMADARLIN: Where does the essence lie?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: In the lungs? The phlegmy bits?

LATER MATILDA: She looks in secret, walking counterclockwise into her room at night. Scraping at the tear ducts with a sharpened fingernail. But the eyes in the walls don't miss a tick

OMMADARLIN: I have a miracle child.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Why do we have a miracle child?

OMMADARLIN: The outside is crying for miracles

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Do we look like the sort of people in need of miracles?

OMMADARLIN: I have a miracle child.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD tries to kiss LYDWINE but is sent away by OMMADARLIN. She strokes LYDWINE compulsively, but keeps looking right at the departing UNCLE GINGERBREAD.

OMMADARLIN: When someone loves you so much, and their eyes are on you at every moment and you can feel them thinking you beautiful, and remarkable, then you start to feel beautiful and remarkable in their presence. It brings out of you that special self that lives just under the surface of your skin. So that makes them useful. And that-

BOATSWAIN: Can be hard to send away?

The BOATSWAIN has been watching and listening all along. It catches her off guard.

OMMADARLIN: Right. It really is just better for everyone that way.

BOATSWAIN: Right...

OMMADARLIN: Right.

OMMADARLIN exits. BOATSWAIN holds his thermos. MATILDA sneaks out of bed to check on LYDWINE.

BOATSWAIN: Hello Matilda.

MATILDA: Hello.

BOATSWAIN: Not sleeping well?

MATILDA: You know where they get the jars? Once a month, a giant truck pulls up, carrying tons of preserved food. Eggs, meat, yellowing green beans. Tiny and I stack them in big towers.

But whenever I eat any of it, all I can think about is botchulism. If you mess up the preservation just a little bit – botchulism.

BOATSWAIN: I think you are fine.

MATILDA: What is in there?

BOATSWAIN: Where?

MATILDA: You stared at it for a long time.

BOATSWAIN: What?

MATILDA: What are you keeping? (*A long pause*) There.

BOATSWAIN: On the sea, they know how to get things done....

MATILDA: You may think that I am little and can't be trusted like a spider, and you are probably going to say "you'll find out later" but look (*Empty palms*) I'm not going far ever, so anything you tell me, will stay right here.

BOATSWAIN gives MATILDA the thermos.

MATILDA: Domo arigato.

She opens it up and peers inside. Red light spills into her face. A waterlogged heartbeat is heard.

MATILDA: Is that a heart?!

BOATSWAIN looks at her for real.

MATILDA: You can't put it back in?

BOATSWAIN: It's fine s'long as I keep it with me.

MATILDA: If you took it out, you should be able to put it back in.

BOATSWAIN: Right.

MATILDA: They said that I would maybe marry a pirate.

BOATSWAIN: I've known pirates.

MATILDA: Is there a pirate perhaps you could introduce me to?

BOATSWAIN: Just one really. She stowed aboard and earned her keep swabbing the deck. Removing battle stains with turpentine. One day thought if she could remove battle stains that way, she might attempt to get rid of the remainder of her

encounter with a shark – a raised line of scar tissue that came up like a question mark to curve around her-

LATER MATILDA, who has been watching everything, is particularly physically affected by this story.

MATILDA: A lady pirate-

BOATSWAIN: Scrubbed away until you could see her veins and organs cause her skin was so thin. A walking x-ray.

MATILDA: X-ray vision?

BOATSWAIN: Right through the skin of other people. So-she- looked-right-at-me-real-hard. Said I would never know enough about her to love her the way she deserved , so I heaved and heaved and rather than airy kernels of lung fragments, I heaved and heaved and up it came. Small and ugly, poorly stitched with thick black yarn. She laughed for so long the ears of the world rang. I tried to swallow it back, but it kept getting stuck in my throat.

OMMADARLING (o/s): My angel, my pet!

MATILDA: Make sure Ommadarlin doesn't throw it out by accident. It looks like rotten meat.

BOATSWAIN: It's just fine.

MATILDA: For truth?

BOATSWAIN: You know how the royal family travels separately in case they all die in a plane crash?

MATILDA: Yes?

BOATSWAIN: It's something like that

MATILDA scurries back to her bedroom and the BOATSWAIN retreats to his post, both getting out of the way of the approaching OMMADARLIN.

#13 CLEAN DREAMING

OMMADARLIN (still pregnant), full of morning sunshine, bursts into LYDWINE's room to wake her.

OMMADARLIN: Gift from above and below. Did you dream honorable last night?

LYDWINE: Always Ommadarlin.

OMMADARLIN: You need to always dream honorable, and never once let the unsavoury into your ears, because as soon as that

happens, your insides will turn grey and poisonous and smell like tennis shoes and hatred.

LYDWINE: I dreamed of apple pie, kittens, rose petals, toes in the sand

—

OMMADARLIN: Lovely. Very lovely.

LYDWINE: And a new sister. When she was born she came out like an underdone cake. Bad thermostat or something. I set the timer and put her back in. But everyone got distracted, and the oven started to smoke.

OMMADARLIN: That doesn't sound-

LYDWINE: She was all crispy and the spatula left a burnt layer on the pan's bottom. Uncle Gingerbread just kept saying "Love her, love her, love her, love her. Take her out. Show her off. Bring her bowling, and to play pinball, and to the beach" But all I could think, is that I don't even know how to get to the beach, and even if I did, the sunscreen would make her all mushy.

OMMADARLIN: Well. That is good truth telling my pet, but I think we may need some breath freshener for my dirty mouthed darlin'

LYDWINE: There is nothing dirty. I brush everyday. Even my tongue.

LATER MATILDA: The constant expulsion brings up stomach acids. Her teeth are mealy.

OMMADARLIN: Mouth open. Wait for a drop of something delicious.

LYDWINE obliges and OMMADARLIN feeds her from a baby bottle filled with murky brown liquid.

OMMADARLIN: Vanilla extract. Pure

LYDWINE coughs, tries to hide it.

LATER MATILDA: The scientific method, if carefully employed, will allow you to find a paradigm for the working mechanisms of everything around you.

OMMADARLIN: Those dreams are too big for my precious angel, as soon as you let the unsavory into your ears, then I promise, grey and rat poisonous. Keep your mouth open. Wide enough to fit someone's head.

OMMADARLIN pours and pours. Risking drowning. When the bottle is done, OMMADARLIN exits.

#14 THREE SISTERS

TINY and MATILDA sneak to LYDWINE's room to check on her.

TINY: Hey Lydwine, wanna play a game?

She does. They help her down from her room,

LATER MATILDA: A miracle child is cursed with wrinkled palms. Future etched deep.

The girls sit in a circle and play patty-cake. The first clap hurts TINY's burnt hand like crazy. LYDWINE can't see that there is a problem and MATILDA ignores it and continues to play with LYDWINE.

MATILDA and LYDWINE: Patty cake patty cake baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can.

TINY's hand really hurts, she shows it to MATILDA, who slaps it hard..

MATILDA: Mark it with a T!

The BOATSWAIN rushes in to save the day.

BOATSWAIN: Ok ok little misses. Who is story time ready?

LYDWINE: Do they bake cake on the ocean?

TINY: In the other places?

MATILDA: Outside of here?

BOATSWAIN: In the east every food is dyed rich saffron yellow, in the south it's all blood red tomato, and in the ocean side places everything is hotter than a long last lightbulb.

TINY: Or an iron.

BOATSWAIN: We sailed to Lolosiento de la Carmalacita in the rain once. Find this tiny museum. Storm shelter. Two rickety stories of natural wonder. Cardboard displays, with glue stains behind crumbly leaves and twigs.

TINY: Boring.

TINY skulks off to her room. Angry at her sister.

MATILDA: Well that is something you should practice being prepared for too! Now listen up.

BOATSWAIN: On the second floor, everything stares back. Natural history. Featherless birds. A skinny stuffed cow.

LYDWINE: For eating?

BOATSWAIN: A skinny stuffed cow... with 2 heads!

ALL: Ahhhhhhhh!

BOATSWAIN: Everything molting. Bald patches. All the real eyes have been replaced with milky white marbles. Too much white. Cartoon eyes. It's hard to really get close and look as we-

MATILDA: You and the lady pirate? Is that where you lost her? You should go back there to find her.

BOATSWAIN: As we are swarmed by school kids soggy from rain. Pushing and shoving "El vaco!" "Chinga tu madre!"

TINY: If you ever get caught up in a swarm of bees do not freeze or swat at them, but run away.

The BOATSWAIN goes to comfort TINY in her room. MATILDA goes green.

BOATSWAIN: This swarm is not interested in the jars that are high above their heads. Top shelf. Barely noticeable.

TINY: Run away from the bees and get indoors fast; if no shelter is available, run through bushes or high weeds. This will help give you cover. Regular honey bees will chase you 50 yards. Killer ones. 3 times that distance.

LYDWINE: I hate honey. I have to eat it everyday.

MATILDA: Shhhh. More story please.

BOATSWAIN: A salsa label is still stuck to the back of one of the jars. And floating right there in front of me, closed eyes, is a real human embryo.

MATILDA: Just floating like some jalapeno ultrasound...

BOATSWAIN: Skin peeling. Closed eyes.

LYDWINE: You said that part already

BOATSWAIN: Well that is the part I am most glad about. Otherwise it would have spent its entire formaldehyde existence staring at the salsa label's faded underside... which gave tasty instructions for a 6 layer bean dip.

MATILDA: Is that a for real truth or a story?

LYDWINE: Are you calling him a liar?

MATILDA suffers a surprise hormone attack, fueled by jealousy and frustration and sulks off to her room.

MATILDA: No, it's just, sometimes it's hard to tell.

TINY: You know what Ommadarlin thinks about lying.

LYDWINE: "The body of a liar stops growing, except for their ears and nose which grow triple speed."

MATILDA: Yeah. I know. It's always just hard to tell. With everyone.

BOATSWAIN: You are all highly intelligent nibblits, just open your ears to everything around you and you will figure it out. But sometimes it's hiding in the wall cracks and spaces between words.

MATILDA: Right. Ok.

TINY: What type of salsa?

BOATSWAIN: Spicy!

TINY: Spicy salsa!

Everyone knows what that means. SALSA dance! TINY leads, MATILDA pouts and LYDWINE gets more attention from TINY than ever before. LATER MATILDA on the key-tar.

TINY: Dah-da, dah-da, da- PICANTE!
Dah-da, dah-da, da-

MATILDA: Chipotle.

TINY: Dah-da, dah-da, da- CHUNKY!
Dah-da, dah-da, da-

LYDWINE: MEDIUM!

TINY and LYDWINE: JALAPENO!

TINY spins LYDWINE who throws up all over TINY. The vomit cures TINY's hand. LYDWINE wheezes.

MATILDA: Lydwine!

LYDWINE: Accident. Hide it under the pillows please.

TINY: You fixed it! (*A little song and dance*)
"Whose got a future after-all, Clementine, Clementine!"

MATILDA: Well you still smell like poop!

BOATSWAIN: Girls!

MATILDA: Miracle child!

LYDWINE: Don't worry. You are maybe going to marry a pirate. Maybe the Boat-swain's lady pirate has a cousin you could meet.

TINY: Maybe I'll marry a pirate instead of you! "Whose got a future after-all, Clementine, Clementine!"

MATILDA: Boatswain...

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: *(offstage)* Lydwine!

OMMADARLIN: *(offstage)* Lydwine!

LYDWINE: Hide it somewhere.....

The kids rush to clean up the vomit, but the adults enter and spot it first. TINY and MATILDA scurry to their room, the BOATSWAIN to his post.

#15 IPACAC FLAVOURED BREAKFAST CEREAL

UNCLE GINGERBREAD picks up LYDWINE to take her to bed, but OMMADARLIN (no longer pregnant) thinks this is a good time to stockpile some vomit. She carries a large jar to collect the goods. UNCLE GINGERBREAD does what he can to make her vomit.

OMMADARLIN: We could sell it like girl-guide cookies – hit the schools first where it counts.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: How about people who eat their own scabs?

OMMADARLIN: In boxes like fundraising chocolate bars, door to door in support of high school basketball.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Trying to breath, but you are surrounded by people whose farts travel at the speed of sound, so you smell them the instant you hear them – instantly filling your nostrils with excrement particles!

OMMADARLIN: Or beside the poppies in November – old people are only interested in their own long dead battles, they need miracles if anyone does.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Come on Lydwine...

LATER MATILDA: She doesn't want the ipecac flavoured breakfast cereal. Or the long questioning fingers down the throat.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: You think you have a bruise, but one day it bursts open, and maggots spill out of your body!

Nothing seems to work. UNCLE GINGERBREAD slowly takes LYDWINE to bed. OMMADARLIN barely notices.

OMMADARLIN: Lydwine, we need a stockpile here. To throw from the windows to save the outside, so everyone can frolic through fields all happy and caramelized. All together, dreaming of sunshine and puppies. It's only you that can help the outside wake from their sweaty slumber. They don't even know they are sleeping.

LATER MATILDA: But eyes in the walls don't miss a tick.

#16 BOXED IN

TINY and MATILDA in their room. LYDWINE sleeps above them. Loud violent noises from OMMADARLIN's room keep them up.

TINY: This is no good for sleeping.

MATILDA: Here.

TINY: No.

MATILDA: This is no good for waking either.

TINY: Here.

MATILDA: No.

They stare longingly at the outside past the glass wall of jars.

TINY: We could sleep in the nest?

MATILDA: We need to find the boatswain's lady pirate. I think she made a mistake.

LYDWINE: Where?

LYDWINE begins to make her way down the stairs. She is not going to be left out of escape.

MATILDA: Out there.

TINY: I'm ready for it! I've been practicing.

LYDWINE: Is the outside like in here?

MATILDA: Uhhmmmmmm.

TINY: Uhhmmmmmm.

MATILDA: You can't come Lydwine. They would find us. They can smell you a mile away.

LYDWINE: I will never take another bath.

MATILDA: Lydwine...

LYDWINE: I will get a pet skunk and sleep with it at night.

MATILDA: I think you should get in there. (*the oven*) It's nice.

TINY: Cozy.

MATILDA: It will keep you safe.

TINY: Protected. From the bad guys.

MATILDA: You are really stealable Lydwine. In the middle of the night-

TINY: In your canopy bed. All dreamy.

LYDWINE: Ommadarlin painted faeries on the walls, to protect me. She told me.

TINY: But how do you know for sure. Have you seen them?

LYDWINE: I felt eyes watching me.

TINY: But whooooooooose eyes?

MATILDA: No. You are right, there are faeries. Decoupage faeries.

TINY: Uncle Gingerbread captures them in the solarium.

MATILDA: He uses a big mason jar.

TINY: I can't even lift it!

MATILDA: Big big jar, and he baits it with pig's pee.

LYDWINE: Where does he get pig's pee?

MATILDA: A mystery!

TINY: Mystery mystery!

MATILDA: So the little fairies get their wings wet in the jars and they are forced to tread pee until they slowly drown, Ophelia like in yellow pools.

LYDWINE: Can they protect themselves from drowning?

TINY: Not if they don't swim. Its automatic asparagus fragrant death.

MATILDA: They sacrifice themselves to watch over you. Ommadarlin flattens the bodies using out of date phone books.

TINY: Then she lacquers them to the walls with collage glue.

LYDWINE: Wings in the night coming through the canopy and tearing holes in it.

MATILDA: We know. Moth eaten? We don't think so.

LYDWINE: Please don't leave me.

MATILDA: Hide in there. We will come back when we find the boatswain's lady pirate.

TINY: This is safe. It's where you came from, and where you come from is always safe.

MATILDA: We are looking out for you. Just keep quiet and nothing will hurt you.

LYDWINE: Where you came from is always safe?

TINY: Yeah, warm and clean. Nothing will hurt you.

MATILDA: Hug us first.

LYDWINE: For practice.

They do. LYDWINE throws up. It gets all over MATILDA's hands. Anticipation! Nothing.

ALL: Accident.

LYDWINE: Sorry.

LATER MATILDA: Perhaps you can heal the scars that you develop over time, but the ones you're born with. They seem permanent.

LYDWINE cautiously crawls into the oven. TINY and MATILDA antsy. The oven heats up.

TINY: Is this a-

MATILDA: Bad plan? Yes. But it's a plan. Good to have a plan

TINY: Even if it's bad?

MATILDA: Better than no plan at all. Are you ready?

TINY: Ready.

MATILDA: Which way is out?

LATER MATILDA: The whole house is like a live mouse trap. Once you get in, the door behind you seems to lock from the outside.

TINY: I have prepared us a map!

She undoes her overall bib and a carefully drawn map spills out.

TINY: That way!

She points to the nest. TINY and MATILDA enter the nest. They peer deep within it, unsure how to activate it.

MATILDA: *(Head in the nest)*
Hello! Boatswain's lady pirate, are you out there? I think you made a mistake!

Light grows from the Nest. TINY and MATILDA look at each other. The oven continues to smoke. The nest begins to rattle and shake.

OMMADARLIN o/s: Who is smoking in the house?

UNCLE GINGERBREAD o/s: Where there's smoke, there's fire.

BOATSWAIN o/s: Where are the girls?

BOATSWAIN enters just in time to see TINY and MATILDA disappear into the nest

OMMADARLIN and UNCLE GINGERBREAD enter and rush at the oven. They open the door and LYDWINE sits stubborn and strong. The adults try and get her out of the oven.

OMMADARLIN: Gift from above and below!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Come out Lydwine.

OMMADARLIN: It's only you that can save... the outside

LYDWINE: No. They were right. Warm and tidy in here.

LYDWINE closes herself in the oven. Shock. Unsure of what to do, or who is in charge, UNCLE GINGERBREAD and BOATSWAIN look to each other, and then OMMADARLIN. She looks at the outside world and starts to remove the jar barrier.

LATER MATILDA: In just one moment. She collapses the walls, pulled down quick as a band-aid ripped from knobby knees. Everything scabby and scarred, red and oozing.

The sound of jars rolling builds and builds into the eerie sparseness of the future.

#17 OUTSIDE

TINY and MATILDA crawl out of the nest into the Outside. Their map appears useless.

LATER MATILDA: Open their eyes, and blink a thousand times. Adjusting their pupils to the expansive future. Looking for something they have never met.

TINY: That! This way!

MATILDA: Or there! That way!

TINY: Look! Left!

MATILDA: Or further! Right!

TINY: North.

MATILDA: South.

TINY: West.

MATILDA: No. This way. I can feel it. Compass ready.

MATILDA breaks from their rooted stance, thinking TINY will follow. TINY doesn't move.

MATILDA: Come on Clementine.

TINY: I can't.

MATILDA: I'm tired too.

TINY: I'm not tired I'm practicing. Once you have been swallowed by a whale, it is best not to touch anything because gastric processes are invasive and skin does not recover well from encounters with digestive fluids.

MATILDA: That is not very lively.

TINY: Wearing synthetic clothes will buy you some time, but unless someone is looking for you, or you have a very large cutting implement, you may have to be satisfied with simply surviving until starvation takes you or good fortune saves the day.

MATILDA: Ok.

They stand very still. Close but not touching. Still. For a long while.

TINY: But if all else fails, once you are in the whale, you might consider using pepper or a small fire to smoke your way out.

MATILDA: We don't have either.

TINY: I need to practice! All birds sleep on their feet. I think we will be fine.

They stand eyes closed.

MATILDA: We need to go.

TINY: I can't. Belly of a whale out here. I have to be ready.

MATILDA hugs her close.

TINY: I'm going to explode!

MATILDA: I'm just practicing.

TINY: Shark attack.

MATILDA: Something like that.

A thermos rolls in. MATILDA picks it up. TINY nods. MATILDA gives her sister one more hug and then exits in the direction the thermos came from.

LUNGS AND LIVER 2

LYDWINE is in the oven. OMMADARLIN and UNCLE GINGERBREAD enter as LUNGS AND LIVER #1. Quiet and encouraging until the music storms in.

OMMADARLIN: Magical Lydwine, purveyor of the finest in sugar glazed bits of lung and liver. Tell anyone you care to care for this is the best cure all this side of the century.

OMMADARLIN opens the oven to reveal LYDWINE, sick of body, but full of resolve and adolescent power.

LYDWINE: This expulsion.... It's like every time a beam of sunshine comes down through the clouds, it makes a ladder of light. And the feet of that ladder extends until it hits the top of my head, makes my eyes and nose bulge out as it pushes through my skull. Straightens my spine.

OMMADARLIN: Postures a good thing. Stand up straight. Everyone respects someone with excellent posture!

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Please. For everyone.

LYDWINE: The wood of the ladder dissolves into mold as it soaks in my spinal fluid, but as soon as it hits my stomach, up it comes, bringing with it pieces of the lungs and liver.

OMMADARLIN rushes forwards in hopes of collecting some miracles. Too much for LATER MATILDA, she climbs down from her crows nest and walks towards LYDWINE

LYDWINE AND
LATER MATILDA: “Hello darling sister, I am aeroplane forwards-

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: It's beautiful. You are perfect.

LYDWINE and
LATER MATILDA: -balancing like chevrons, feet finally on the floorboards.”

LATER MATILDA helps LYDWINE out of the oven.

OMMADARLING: 100% pure this one is. Just soak one tiny morsel in brandy overnight and clean your conscience with it the next morning.

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: Miracle child miracle child.

LATER MATILDA hoists LYDWINE onto her back.

LYDWINE and
LATER MATILDA: “Lydwine, Lydwine, gingerbread girl. You let us walk straight, and fall in love with the sidewalks. 18 stories head over heels for the taste of the trees. We'll hold onto you forever. As we eat the world.”

LYDWINE dies. Carried off by LATER MATILDA.

OMMADARLIN: Magical Lydwine, never tells a saucy tale, sees the world through filmy rose, and you will too. Just a wiff or a touch.....Just a taste of her.....precious bits-

UNCLE GINGERBREAD: She's beautiful. She's perfect. Miracle child

UNCLE GINGERBREAD follows LYDWINE off, LATER MATILDA re-enters and looks directly at OMMADARLIN who senses eyes on her and flees, following the path left by UNCLE GINGERBREAD.

OMMADARLIN: Do we look like the type of people in need of miracles?

LATER MATILDA

The stage is clear as in the beginning. LATER MATILDA alone looks back at her crows nest and finds the thermos. She picks it up and studies it. BOATSWAIN quietly enters behind her, speaks to her affectionately. With familiarity.

BOATSWAIN: Hello

LATER MATILDA: You snuck up on me.

BOATSWAIN: Electric slid into my brain? Dancing like windmills?

LATER MATILDA: I didn't see you there. *(A take to the empty jar in her crow's nest.)* I've been peering backwards with x-ray vision, not wanting to see her drained. Not always safe where you came from.

BOATSWAIN: I'll keep you safe and tighter than the noose you'd hang me with if I screwed the whole thing up.

A wink and a smile, the BOATSWAIN takes the thermos gently and exits. But he's not going far. LATER MATILDA looks at the spaces where she used to live. She fits herself differently into the room she used to share with TINY.

LATER MATILDA: Is there a specific place where you go to move from youth? A circle you step into backwards that makes body hair grow in unique locations? Where you look around to figure out who is in charge of making decisions and realize it is you. Organs turn hard and stale, dizzy with responsibility. But at the end of the long day, when you are out of all air, there will still be a spark in everyone of pencil shavings and sidewalk chalk. Living in their breath until their final exhalation which will smell like regrets. But the beautiful kind.

MATILDA runs onstage. Fearful. Hands clenched tight at her chest. Lost.

LATER MATILDA: I was filled up with waiting, empty hands. Everything cramming in the absent crease spaces like salt. Grains caught from every direction. A crust from the oceans.

LATER MATILDA approaches MATILDA whose body begins to relax. MATILDA's arms rise slowly, trying to balance on an invisible tightrope.

Dipped and dry and dipped and dry until my hands are crystallized. Hesitating throwing it over my shoulder, because someone told me over the left, and someone told me over the right and I can't remember which.

MATILDA's hands open slowly. LATER MATILDA reaches, close to touching her.

So I just try and hold onto all of it. Every grain in these open hands. Salty towers. Until one day...

LATER MATILDA gently turns MATILDA's hands over. Palms down, like a rainbow. Salt falls from them. Both of them breathe. LATER MATILDA backs away, but continues to give MATILDA her support. The salt pours. Lights fade to black.

The End

Appendix 5: Collaborator Biographies

FREE RANGE

LISA OPPENHEIM – DIRECTOR/CO-CREATOR

A graduate of Studio 58, Lisa is an actor/writer/director/teacher residing in Vancouver. Recent credits include “Rose” in Sunshine Theatre’s premier production of *Break!*, “Alice” in Western Canada Theatre’s musical production of *Alice, a Wonderland* and “Jessie” in Green Thumb’s production of *The Skinny Lie*. Her original performance piece *Painting Cupid*, created at the One Yellow Rabbit Summer Lab Intensive, premiered at the 12 Minute Max new works festival.

ERIC POWELL – COMPOSER/PERFORMER

A recent SFU MFA graduate, Eric’s work has been heard across Canada. His practice focuses on the relationship between sounding object, space and place. Most recently he presented *Sound.Garden.Scape: Gastown*, as part of Vancouver New Music’s Surrounding Sound Festival. Other sound projects include include a site specific installation for *Crossfiring* at the Claybank brick factory in Southern Saskatchewan, *Sub theory: Iceberg sculptures*, a gallery installation in Minneapolis, MN in collaboration with Margaret Pezalla-Grandland. He makes folk, rock and electro-acoustic music with Ian Oldham, Eric Powell and the Awesome, and Birds are Dinosaurs

PALMS DOWN LIKE A RAINBOW

DAVY BISARO (Creation Session performer)

Davy is in her final year in SFU’s dance program. She is interested in interdisciplinary collaboration, movement and narrative, and multi-sensory spaces.

ALLY COLCLOUGH (Stage Management/Photography)

Ally is a recent graduate from SFU’s theatre production and design program, and is currently furthering her studies with a post-bachelor diploma in theatre performance. She works with Craning Neck Theatre, Leaky Heaven Circus, Green Leaf Circus, The Vancouver Fringe Festival, and participates in many SFU productions. Her favourite departments in the theatre are Photography for the Stage, Graphic and Poster Design, Lighting Design, and Stage Management. She can also occasionally be caught onstage.

ALIYA GRIFFIN (Later Matilda)

Aliya Griffin is a Performance Theatre and Political Science double major. Favourite SFU credits include *The Elephant Calf*, *The Queens*, and *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. She has collaborated and performed in *Cabaret Inferno* for the Delta Arts Centre, stage managed for the Vancouver Youth Theatre, and teaches acting to elementary students. Aliya hopes to pursue a Masters degree in Theatre and Media for Development in England.

CARMEN HUNG (Lighting and Poster Design)

Carmen has been very busy with the production and design stream of theatre. Recent credits include *Odd Couple* (VACT), *You Never Can Tell* (United Players), *Touched* (SFU Interdisciplinary Performance), *The Judge’s Wife* (SFU Directing Project), and *Returns* (SFU MFA Grad Project).

LAUREN KRESOWATY (Lydwine/Psychic/Medic)

Originally from northwest Saskatchewan, Lauren is currently completing her BFA in theatre performance at SFU. Her favourite performance experience so far has been playing the role of the Narrator in Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* at SFU. Outside of acting, Lauren enjoys jotting down poetry and barely-hatched theatrical ideas and training in her new-found passion, aerial silks. Lauren's current artistic goal for the future is to explore fairy tales and myths with her writing, body, and voice, and to nurture and share her sense of childlike wonder.

BRETT LITTLE (Ommadarlin)

Brett is a recent graduate of SFU's School for Contemporary Arts. She has recently directed *Night Queen*, *The Elephant Calf* and *Present Tense*. Past acting credits include *Queens*, *Allen and the Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *Linda Her*. Last spring Brett stage-managed Tigermilk's production of *Stupid Little Girls*. For her next project she will be moving to New York to intern with Richard Foreman's Ontological Theatre.

SCOTT OWENS (Set Design)

Scott's recent credits include the SFU productions of *Eurydice*, *The Visit*, and *Touched*.

GINA READMAN (Matilda/Customer)

Gina is finishing her major in Theatre Performance at SFU. She works administratively and as the assistant stage manager for the Vancouver Youth Theatre, where she has also taught a week-long teen intensive theatre camp. She also works in child care and teaches after-school drama classes at Vancouver elementary schools. Gina is interested in creation-based theatre, interdisciplinary collaboration and cultural exchanges. She is currently working as a dramaturg with emerging writer Fran Worster.

NATALIE SCHNECK (Boatswain/Customer)

Originally from Edmonton, Natalie will be graduating in spring 2009 with a BFA from Simon Fraser University. Past performance and directorial credits include: *The Visit* (SFU, 2008), *Crave* (SFU, 2007), *Silence* (UCFV, 2007), *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (SFU, 2007), *Silence* (SFU, 2006). Current interests are small spaces, gerberas, acting and directing. She is looking forward to a year of further collaborative work.

CAROLINE SNIATYNSKI (Dramaturg)

Caroline is entering the final year of her Theatre Performance major at Simon Fraser University Contemporary Arts. She also holds a BA in English Literature from the University of British Columbia, and has worked administratively for the Vancouver Fringe Festival and Boca del Lupo Theatre. She is curious about big things like collective creation, interdisciplinary work, and the relationship between theatre and community building, and slightly smaller things like developing a physical practice, and why real food is so interesting onstage.

BEN STONE (Clementine/Customer)

Ben will graduate from SFU in 2008 with a BFA in Performance and a minor in English. He will begin the Professional Development Program for teaching this fall at SFU. Recent experiences include performing as Orpheus in SFU's 2007 mainstage production of *Eurydice*, co-creating *Room* for the 2007 Walking Fish Festival, providing music for VACT's production of "Cowboy vs. Samurai" and earning the 2008 Betty Lambert Memorial Prize for playwriting. Ben will be chasing arts education and the union of

music, vivid images, colloquial poetry and physical theatre for the foreseeable future.

RYAN SWANSON (Uncle Gingerbread/Medic)

Ryan is a soon to be SFU theatre graduate. SFU acting credits: *The Visit*, *Eurydice*, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*, *The Possibilities*, *Teeth*, *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Lover*. Other acting credits include *Cowboy versus Samurai* (Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre), *Room* (Walking Fish Festival) and *Silence* (UCFV Directors' Festival).

CASS TURNER (Production Manager)

Cass Turner is a third year fine arts student at SFU. She enjoys working in theatre, writing songs and being a drag king. On her time off you will find her playing guitar hero and then using that hard rock material to write soulful ballads.

ELLIOT VAUGHN (Composer)

Elliot Vaughan and his ears have been partaking in the consumption and creation of sound and music for quite a long time now. They are currently studying acoustic and electroacoustic composition at SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts. Recent endeavours have seen their composing, performing, recording and wrangling musicians for a number of plays, interdisciplinary projects, formal concerts, new music symposiums, etcetera. www.elliottvaughn.com

Appendix 6: *Palms Down Like a Rainbow* DVD

The DVD appended in this book forms part of this thesis.

Contents of DVD: Thesis production of *Palms Down Like a Rainbow: A Folktale Eulogy*, recorded May 1-3 2008, Vancouver, BC.

Running Time: 74 minutes.

Filmed and transferred with the assistance of Meghan Armstrong, Adrian Buitenhuis, Tony Massil, Karilynn Ming-Ho and Matthew Parsons.

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