

Copyright
by
Geoffrey Warren Barnes II
2013

**The Thesis Committee for Geoffrey Warren Barnes II
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:**

Letting Go: Acting Process into Performance

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Pamela D. Christian

Committee:

Lee Abraham

Franchelle Dorn

Stephen Gerald

Letting Go: Acting Process into Performance

by

Geoffrey Warren Barnes II, B.F.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2013

Dedication

To my mother,

I could not do this alone. Thank you for being with me every step of the way. I love you forever.

Acknowledgements

So many individuals have inspired and supported me along this three-year journey. I would like to thank my friends and family for constant support and encouragement.

Special Thanks to:

Geoffrey W. Barnes, Sr.

April Barnes

Leslie Lannan

Cheyenne McGuire

Beaumont Fry

James Ellison Barnes

Abstract

Letting Go: Acting Process into Performance

Geoffrey Warren Barnes II, M.F.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisor: Pamela D. Christian

In fulfillment of my thesis project requirements for the Professional Actor Training Program Master of Fine Arts degree at The University of Texas at Austin, I portrayed the role of Ferdinand, King of Navarre in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This production was presented at the B. Iden Payne Theatre, (Department of Theatre and Dance) with guest artist John Langs directing.

This document includes a discussion of certain aspects of my MFA curriculum, and the methodology studied. In addition, it also contains personal observations on my strengths and weaknesses as an actor, and the steps that were taken to transfer those discoveries into my work on stage in the production of *Loves Labour's Lost*.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
LETTING GO	2
Chapter 1: Quick Study.....	3
First Reading.....	5
Notes – Advanced Shakespeare August 24th, 2011:	7
Notes – Advanced Shakespeare August 26 th , 2011:	7
Second Reading	8
Third Reading	10
Chapter 2: Releasing Tension through Breath	11
Chapter 3: Imagery	13
Chapter 4: Meisner.....	15
Chapter 5: Memorization	17
Learning Lines	17
Chapter 6: Talking and Listening	21
Bibliography	25

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2010, I made the decision to attend the University of Texas at Austin to become a more powerful, thoughtful, vulnerable, expressive human being with a desire to contribute artistically to society. I sought technique that would allow me to aptly live truthfully under a conceived set of given circumstances. I was unaware not only of the obstacles I would encounter, but how much I would grow as an artist and an individual. Many of the discoveries I experienced early on in graduate school exposed my weaknesses rather than my strengths. In addition, I discovered that my biggest challenge lay in the transference of technique learned in my graduate school curriculum to performance. In my thesis, I will discuss how certain discoveries strengthened my awareness of my craft, which lessons had the greatest influence on my technique and process, and how I applied this technique when working on a role.

Some of the specific lessons discussed in this thesis will be focused around Meisner technique, specifically the use of repetition, as well as identifying imagery in text, moment-to-moment work, releasing impulses, talking and listening and script analysis.

LETTING GO

“The foundation of acting is the reality of doing” (16). The reality of doing is achieved through absorbing technique and developing a process one can apply in performance. My biggest challenge as an actor in this program is finding a way to “let go” or to release myself from the mechanics of the technique, so that I may speak words as if they have never been spoken before, or experience moments as if for the first time. In other words, my aim is to live truthfully in the imaginary circumstances of the world of the play. I worked for eleven years as an actor and a singer before returning to graduate school to refocus my studies. Although my time working as an actor in New York City was rewarding, I felt that my focus on technique started to wane. I began to rely on the least amount of technique that would allow my work to be passable as an artist, rather than fully immerse myself in the moment-to-moment journey and life of the character.

One current goal is renewing my trust in actor training. In the past, I have been hindered in my work by becoming my own “critic.” I would focus too much on the mechanics of technique, and not allow my work to truthfully effect change. To elaborate on this issue I will focus on the Spring 2012 production of *Love’s Labour’s Lost (LLL)*, in the Department of Theatre and Dance. *LLL* was directed by John Langs, a guest artist with an extensive professional career.

Chapter 1: Quick Study

In Fall 2011, I discovered that I would be one of three graduate actors cast in *A Single Shard*, a production that would have its world premier at the Seattle Children's Theater, directed by Linda Hartzell, Artistic Director. The production, from the book of the same name by Linda Sue Park, was adapted by UT Alumnus, Robert Schenkkan, who wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning play *The Kentucky Cycle*. The production was co-produced by the UT Department of Theatre and Dance. The production itself was successful and received a number of positive reviews. Initially, *A Single Shard* would be the last production of my second year of graduate school, and I was looking forward to returning to Texas and completing the last of my studies for that semester. However, two days before I would leave Seattle for Austin, I received an email from the Samantha Acetulli, the stage manager of UT's production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, asking if I would be willing to step into the role of King Ferdinand with only three weeks of rehearsal (including technical rehearsals).

One of my classmates had unexpectedly withdrawn from the production due to personal issues, and a search was initiated to find a replacement. With little time to decide (I had until the afternoon to make my decision, during which I received calls from Professor Barney Hammond and John Langs), my first reaction was to not participate in the production. I was concerned with balancing my class schedule, coursework, and class responsibilities with the demands of learning a role with limited time. However, I also realized that I had a wonderful opportunity to jump into this production with a fantastic director in John Langs. Additionally, I would have the support and guidance of Professor

Hammond, my graduate voice and speech instructor and voice coach for the production. Furthermore, my experience living and working as an actor in New York for the past eleven years strengthened my confidence to tackle this task. This wasn't the first time that I had to jump into a production at the last minute, and I have a feeling it won't be the last. I received a copy of the script Saturday morning, March 25th and immediately locked myself in my apartment in Seattle to read the play. My first goal was to get a general understanding the story, characters, and relationships and how they change throughout the journey of the play.

I anticipated that I would need to access any and all resources that I could in preparation for this role. The first step would include referencing notes from our *Advanced Shakespeare* course taught by Professor Franchelle Dorn, The head of the MFA UT Professional Acting Program. The wonderful element about Professor Dorn's teaching is that the information provided in her class is universal. With this work as a foundation, I would have the tools that would allow me to be clear in my choices, define my process, apply technique, and support the director's vision. I retrieved a document distributed by Professor Dorn entitled *Scene Study Method*, which consists of a compilation of techniques studied and discovered by Professor Dorn over the span of her career. These techniques helped to establish a solid foundation and structure during that quick study period, in which I could work proficiently on bringing honesty and life to this role. Professor Dorn's document instructs the actor to prepare by creating the initial four personal rehearsals into *readings*. A *reading* is a careful examination of the text designed to gain a deeper understanding of the play.

In the interest of time, I had to amend and abbreviate the detailed techniques laid out in Professor Dorn's document in order to utilize my time wisely. Furthermore, I discovered that I began to develop a technique specifically for this type of situation. After all, the goal was to develop an effective technique that would aid in my personal process and allow me to make the transition from development and application of technique to living truthfully on stage. Ms. Dorn's outline merely provided a launching pad in which to move forward.

First Reading

My first reading followed the steps laid out in Professor Dorn's outline:

BEFORE THE FIRST READING:

- *Acquire an "actor's notebook."*
- *Read the entire play.*
- *Look up vocabulary with which you are unfamiliar.*
- *Eliminate any pronunciation problems you may have.*
- *If the text is written in verse, scan.*
- *Outline the plot for yourself and determine what part your character plays in advancing the story line.*
- *Pay special attention to what other characters say to and about you – these are clues to your character.*
- *Read all of the background material you can about the play, including but not limited to the historical period, the location, and the playwright (include other plays s/he has written).*
- *Learn to make notes on ANY images/ideas that come to you*

The above notes were extremely helpful in the beginning stages of my process. Before I could begin any specific work on the character of Ferdinand, I had to have a clear understanding of the text, synopsis, and world of the play in which these characters live. The more information I had, the easier it would be to filter the information into my work. Of course, the bigger issue would be letting go of all that technical work in my transition to the stage and living presently in the moment with my fellow actors.

DURING THE FIRST READING:

Please find a mutually convenient time for you and your partner to meet for a minimum of two hours. The space should be comfortable WITHOUT distractions. Actors sit in chairs or on the floor facing each other, with knees almost touching. Actors MUST maintain EYE CONTACT when SPEAKING OR LISTENING. Each actor, in turn, looks at script, remembers as many words as is comfortably possible, looks up at partner, and delivers the line. This is an indulgent exercise that requires NO ACTING – simply talking and listening. If the meaning of the line is unclear, the partner is OBLIGED to say simply “I don’t understand.” The line is then repeated until the meaning is clear. This is the only step in the process that CANNOT be done in class. OBJECTIVE: To find out what you are saying.

Unfortunately, the readings themselves were not possible since I began my work prior to arriving back in Austin and didn’t have the chance to work with any of my scene partners. To incorporate all my preparation, I had to schedule outside rehearsals with

fellow actors, in addition to official rehearsals and table work sessions with John Langs. Once I arrived back in Austin and was inserted into the rehearsal process, I simply re-read through my scenes with fellow scene partners and stopped any time I had a question regarding text. Simultaneously, I worked to immediately memorize what I did understand using the tools laid out in my notes from Fran's class.

My "actor's notebook" consisted of notes, thoughts, ideas, discoveries, research and imagery inspired by the work that came up in the process. Many entries came fast and furious, mostly in the form of scribbled notes; anything I could record in this short amount of time helped flesh out my process. Below are excerpts from Professor Dorn's *Advanced Shakespeare* course, which I applied to my notes during the rehearsal process.

Notes – Advanced Shakespeare August 24th, 2011:

- *All the truth, all the beauty, all the time.*
- *Shakespeare is interested in first meetings – Literally and figuratively.*
- *Discovery equals big surprises.*
- *Make objectives specific, not general.*
- *Always provoke your partner.*
- *Acting is an organic extension of the life we are living. It's simply more conscious.*

Notes – Advanced Shakespeare August 26th, 2011:

- *Figure out moment before. Incorporate that into beginning of the line.*
- *Imagery needs to be behind lines.*
- *End of Shakespeare's lines (without period at end) has a lift.*

- *Identify your operative words – words you emphasize (stressed syllable)*
- *Respect the language. Inhabit a world where people speak poetically*
- *Really think about words and language. Expand your range of words/inflection.*
- *Musical notation in speech; using vocal range to color words and phrases*
- *Shakespeare is about allowing things to happen –freedom of text: where does it take you?*
- *Parentheticals lie above or below the line.*
- *When Shakespeare uses monosyllabic lines that means there is something extremely important to say.*
- *“O” is an emotional, verbal sound.*
- *Your obstacle should be what your partner is doing or trying to change in you.*

These notes provided a foundation on which to apply technique, and they helped to cultivate and develop a process that I felt would effectively bring me closer to living honestly in every moment of Ferdinand’s life. The only way I could successfully remove any hint of process from my acting would be to effectively understand every inch of text, every relationship that Ferdinand is engaged in, and every moment that Ferdinand experiences in this play.

Second Reading

I began my second reading of the play on March 25th during the flight back to Austin, Texas. I made the mistake of attempting to expedite the memorization process without fully understanding every line of Ferdinand’s text. Perhaps I did this because I was told by Johns Langs and by Professor Brant Pope, our department chair, that I could

perform with the script in hand if needed. However, anxiety had gotten the best of me. I couldn't memorize lines without first investigating the history, given circumstances, and imaginary circumstances of the play. The term "given circumstances" refers to the total set of environmental and situational conditions that influence the actions that a character undertakes. I took a breath and restarted the reading, focusing on Ferdinand's goal or "spine." My definition of a character's spine is defined as the overall want or need of the character beyond the events of the play itself. In addition, it is in this same instance that I began to specify the overall objective of Ferdinand. The overall objective is defined as the characters wants or needs throughout the course of the events of the play.

Objectives can also be divided into what the character wants or needs within each scene. I needed to specify what Ferdinand longs for, what steps he takes (or doesn't take) to attain his goal, and if it is attainable at all. I perceived Ferdinand as a sensible individual with great friends who just happens to be in a position of great power. He loves life and lives it fully but doesn't quite know how to assume responsibility or use it properly. I made a choice that, prior to the first scene, he had not been taken seriously as leader, hence his desire to be to be remembered beyond his death. I applied this "moment before" transition into the first scene when Ferdinand gives a grand speech about the desire to attain fame and live eternally through legend. I established Ferdinand's life goal as that of an individual who longs for acceptance and respect amongst his people and desires immortality through remembrance and legend. The more specific I could paint the picture of Ferdinand's point of view about others and the world, the easier it would be to establish objectives and explore actions without constraint or feeling stuck.

Third Reading

For the third reading, I continued to reference Professor Dorn's outline to clarify my work. I began to construct my character's history in areas not supported by the text so that I could discover a more specific, in-depth, and fully realized life for Ferdinand. I started to investigate the historical relationships that Ferdinand has with other individuals throughout the play. To my advantage, many of these questions were eventually answered in depth during future table-work sessions with John Langs and fellow actors once I returned to Austin. Two issues that were important in this stage of my process were analyzing relationship histories with Berowne (played by Kyle Cotton) and The Princess (played by Liz Kimball). These two characters either have a storied history with Ferdinand, or develop a deep personal connection with Ferdinand by the play's end. In the case of Berowne, since this production was not set in its original period, I had the freedom to reconstruct circumstances not supported by the text. An excerpt from my *rehearsal notes* below details the relationship history identified between Berowne and Ferdinand:

LLL Notes – 5/27/12

Berowne and Ferdinand are college buddies who roomed together throughout finance, barely graduating. Ferdinand completed his studies at the request of his father, knowing that his degree would not bear any significance due to his future ascendance to the throne as King. Berowne, however, did not graduate, and remained close with Ferdinand, often freeloading off his wealth and power.

Chapter 2: Releasing Tension through Breath

Once I returned to Austin and began the extensive table work and rehearsal process, I began to experience an overwhelming sense of stress and tension. I mention this because of the importance of breath and its connection to my center. It is a vital part of my preparation for any project. It's wonderful to realize how I have progressed with the simple idea of connecting breath to my center, allowing my work to become more honest and vulnerable, and most importantly, releasing and manipulating tension. As an actor, as well as in life, I operate with an excessive amount of tension, which in turn cuts me off from finding honesty and vulnerability in my work. I can recall one of my first classes with Pamela Christian, my Professor for *Dialects for Performance*, fall 2010. During our second week of classes, we discussed the topic of Voice and the Body and were introduced to a basic workout and voice/body explorations. One exercise involved being paired with a partner, while maintaining a connection with our partner through a wooden dowel as we moved through space. If I were not in touch with my breath, it would induce tension. The result was dropping the dowel and with it my connection to my partner. It was during this exercise that the importance of breath and connection to center came to light. If I don't allow my instrument the ability to connect to my partner, than how can I come from a place of truth?

John Langs set up a number of table work sessions and would alternate with Professor Hammond who would focus more on connecting text to voice work. At this point the work between the two was running smoothly for me. The sessions with John

dealt with (a great deal of) talking and listening, in addition to explaining Ferdinand's point of view. The work was the strongest and most efficient when I knew exactly what I was saying.

Chapter 3: Imagery

The most challenging aspect of my process was work with the opening speech itself: “*Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives, Live registered upon our brazen tombs and then grace us in the disgrace of death*” (I.i.1-3). I knew what this speech was about and, up to this point, my work with Barney was effective. The words had new importance and weight to them through my text work; connecting to breath, letting the breath drop in, sending the words through my body and space, using muscularity and filling vowels and diphthongs with urgency and emotion. At the same time, I felt I wasn’t painting a picture. One of my first notations in my Shakespeare class (fall 2011) with Professor Dorn was the phrase “Word imagery = essential.” This means I am responsible for delivering all of the images in this monologue. I know the imagery for this opening speech was not present in my work. One of the fascinating aspects of Shakespeare is his exceptional ability to tell a story or paint a picture using only the words printed on the page. There is no need for subtext in Shakespeare. Scene and text work in Professor Dorn’s class supported creative uses of imagery; a picture, a lyric, or an image could aid in specifying and fleshing out the text. At one point, I placed a picture of Prince Harry in my notebook from around the time he was being identified as a royal playboy and partier. At the same time, he was an upstanding guy with an understanding of responsibility, but not quite at the place where he could handle it.

For Ferdinand’s monologue at the beginning of Act I, I placed in my rehearsal notebook, an image of the fictional statue in front of the Philadelphia museum of art from

the 1982 motion picture, *Rocky III*. Winning is what Ferdinand wants; that's what he aims for; that's what he pines for. Ferdinand understands that he cannot simply erect a statue that represents what he wants. He has to prove himself; he cannot just talk the talk, he has to walk the walk as well. The use of imagery helped me paint vivid pictures and stay out of my head.

Jumping into a rehearsal process, while abrupt, was an enlightening and freeing experience. I approached this experience with a sense of awareness, allowance, and playfulness. I had to use listening and observation skills right out of the starting gate. Those elements kept me from falling behind in the staging process, mostly because scenes were just being run through at this point. John Langs (he admitted this later in the rehearsal process) would forget that I had never worked the scenes before and would let the scenes run without walking me through blocking. I had no choice but to rely upon listening and watching my peers in the scene. Obviously, there were points in which we had to stop, because there were moments where I had no idea what to do next and I had to simply wave my hand and ask. However, listening and relying on my character's point of view really helped me to keep up during this process and provided many moments in which I made some amazing discoveries, which aided me in continuing to develop Ferdinand's character, point of view and relationship with others in the life and world of the play.

Chapter 4: Meisner

I made numerous discoveries through my observation of behavior during this rehearsal progress. Because of my late arrival in to the production, sometimes that was all I had to rely on at certain moments. The use of Meisner repetition exercises would have been a great aid in developing strength in creating impulse based on behavior. However, it didn't really happen. I would attempt to pull aside my fellow actors and ask them to engage in repetition exercises with me. I didn't succeed as much as I would have liked, but that is not my peers' fault; it's just one of the challenges of coming into a rehearsal process late. However, when I was able to engage with one of my peers using repetition exercises, it really freed up the scene work and helped me to let go.

Meisner technique forced me to let go of my habit of trying to control a scene. Elements of Meisner forced me to take in only what the other person was giving me, rather than act based on a series of planned out actions in my work. I recalled a moment in our *Advanced Acting Technique* class with Professor Lucien Douglas in fall 2010. Professor Lucien Douglas worked with me on responding to my scene partner through behavior, i.e. letting my partner affect my impulses and reactions instead of trying to do the work all on my own. I was struggling to focus on behavioral changes in my partner, Dan Lenzian, as we engaged in repetition exercises. I was concentrating so much on the words themselves (what we were repeating, thinking of what word to say next) that I was completely missing the changes that were coming out of Dan. In addition, I wasn't letting his behavior affect me. This is a prime example of my habitual need to hold on to technique and structure too much. What I noticed, once I started to absorb Dan's

behavior and let it affect me, was a stronger connection and definition in our relationship. Impulses became organic and fused with my overall objectives and actions. I experienced more of the reality of doing. The challenge for me was to intrinsically let go of all the technical work I put together in rehearsal.

Understanding Meisner holistically, not just isolated repetition exercise alone, has helped me to have a much better understanding of the importance of working with a partner. Reading behavior on stage played a vital part in shaping and defining my relationship with fellow *LLL* actors Kyle Cotton, Liz Kimball, Andrew Ktrola and Will Douglas. My relationships with these characters really helped me strengthen my point of view, thus helping to further clarify and support my actions and objectives for Ferdinand.

Chapter 5: Memorization

I was feeling extremely stressed with the task of completing memorization by the beginning of tech week. As I mentioned previously, I even asked Mr. Langs and consulted with our department chair, Professor Pope, about the possibility of performing some scenes with a script in hand. I didn't have faith at the time that I could successfully pull off this production organically, communicating and living truthfully with this text memorized, mainly because I felt I hadn't had enough time to let the text seep into my body and mind.

Learning Lines

I went to John Langs and expressed my concern about completing memorization of the text in time for the opening of the production. He provided me with support and said he had faith in me and believed that I could get to a point where I would allow the words to live in me by the time we opened. Mr. Langs informed me that his wife, Klea Scott, was faced with these same challenges in her acting career. He suggested that I contact her to find out techniques that could help me with not only memorization, but with owning these words and allowing them to live within me. Klea Scott is a professional actor with a substantial career in stage, television and film.

Fortunately, our graduate acting class was scheduled to have a talk back session with Klea the next day. Upon approaching Ms. Scott with my question, she told me about an experience she had working on the set of *Minority Report*, directed by Steven Spielberg. She was given an extremely long monologue consisting of complex police

jargon and she had to be ready the next morning to shoot. The scene was the first one scheduled to be shot the next day. What worked for Ms. Scott at that moment, when she realized she had only eight hours to know this monologue organically backwards and forwards, was *repetition*. She explained to me how she walked around back and forth, and in circles mechanically, speaking the monologue repeatedly until she had it completely memorized.

A previous director of mine from New York City, John Basil, through his book *Will Power: How to Act Shakespeare in 21 Days*, provided yet another bit of technique to assist in my memorization process. Mr. Basil is the Producing Artistic Director and founding member of American Globe Theatre, and director of over forty professional productions. On approaching memorization of Shakespeare, Mr. Basil recalled a six-week workshop at Temple University in which he studied with Jerzy Grotowski. Mr. Basil discovered the benefits embracing a physical rehearsal with Shakespearean text. In his book he writes:

Speak your speech aloud while doing a physical activity- perhaps dancing, tossing Nerf balls against a wall (or back and forth with a scene partner), hopping on one foot, jogging, and so on. As soon as you begin putting a speech into your whole body, your whole body will start resonating with it, making your emotions more accessible and expanding your range of possible acting behavior. A lot of actors have trouble relaxing and surrendering their expectations about how their lines “should” sound and what they “should” mean. Therefore, they don’t indulge in a much of a discovery process as the otherwise could. That’s

where physical activity comes in handy. It helps the actors who are stuck or constricted to bypass the superficial layer of meaning in a scene and get into deeper layers and possibilities. (162)

Upon receiving this new information, I applied Basil's technique to a part of my process by engaging in simple activities or tasks while learning text, such as tossing a ball in the air or running around in a circle. At one point, I began to do push-ups. The use of physical activity began removing any boundaries or expectations in my memorization of text, thus allowing me to respond organically to impulse and live present in the moment.

I experimented with yet another method of memorization for *LLL* derived from the Meisner technique. Meisner instructed his actors to learn lines dry, by rote (through repetition) without gesture or inflection, so as not to fall into line readings. When the line is finally to be delivered, its quality and inflection is derived from an impulse at the moment of articulation. I had never tried this approach to Shakespeare before. So much Shakespearean text preparation work involves scansion, identifying and using punctuation as tools to help clarify comparing/contrasting ideas, imagery, and point of view through text. I was apprehensive in using the method of writing out text in block letters without punctuation in fear that I would have lost some of the work I did up to that point with scansion. I created a stack of index cards with cue lines on one side followed by my response on the other, again, in block lettering without punctuation. If anything, learning lines by rote in this way helped me stay away from repeating lines with the same inflection or pattern. This helped me stay present and open throughout the play. I felt that

I had the license to engage in behavior with others rather than confining myself to a pattern of how I thought events should unfold in the play.

With the information received from Klea Scott, Lucien Douglas and John Basil, I began to repeat lines in random movement patterns until the text permeated my brain and became organic. It was only then that I could go into rehearsal and focus on relationships, obstacles etc. with clarity about what I was saying. The integration of these techniques sped up the process and allowed my memorization to be secondary in a process where talking and listening did more for me than anything else. Again, it was the moment-to-moment work, the reality of “doing,” creating an emotional life, and talking and listening that really brought home the character of Ferdinand.

Chapter 6: Talking and Listening

For me, talking and listening is a gauge for living truthfully in the present. Whenever I was struggling with a particular moment in *Loves Labour's Lost*, all John Langs had to say was “just talk to him” or “just talk to her.” Sometimes it just took a simple question to help me live free and be vulnerable in any given moment, and sometimes I needed to ask myself that simple question just to get back on track. I was reminded of this recently in our *Showcase Colloquium* class with Professor Dorn in fall 2012. I had been having an issue with a particular moment in a scene with fellow actor Nickclette Izuegbu from Romulus Linney’s play *A Lesson Before Dying*. I sensed that an arc or change in relationship was missing throughout the scene. I scheduled a meeting with Professor Dorn to help me through this process, and essentially what it boiled down to was talking and listening, the same reminder that John Langs had given me when I was struggling with moments in *LLL*. It is a reminder that comes in handy, especially when I am struggling in a specific moment. It helps to go back to basic concepts and questions. For example in one scene Ferdinand, Dumaine, Longaville, and Berowne all confess to writing love letters to their respective love interests and start to compare the women, complete with insults. I was not connecting to how certain insults were impacting me. The one thing that helped was going back to simple questions: “What am I doing?” “What do I want?” “What am I willing to do to get it?”

In this situation, reverting back to basic questions about objectives and actions reinforced my choices (or identified a choice which wasn't working). This allowed me to embrace the freedom in my work and not grab on to preconceived choices in my brain.

The integration of my Voice and Speech work with Professor Hammond was such a vital part of my process in this production, but one, I must admit, I did not embrace right away. I had been covering a lot of ground in my approach to the text: using muscularity and clarity of speech to cut and shape text, clarifying imagery, and the use of vowels and diphthongs to fill words with life and emotions. We worked with intoning text. Intoning text is an exercise that enables the speaker to explore various layers of vocal flexibility, freedom, and range through singing of text.

However, when it came to transferring that work into rehearsal, I was not always successful. I was not allowing the process to work for me but against me. When I was a first-year graduate student, Professor Hammond would always remind the class about his ongoing debate with Professor Douglas regarding the importance of the text versus the importance of behavior and impulse. I found that both sides of the argument were valid. For *LLL*, I would spend tutorials with Professor Hammond walking text, intoning speech and writing out text in letter form. Then I would work with John on table work, objectives, point of view, etc. I was so overwhelmed. I was either working so hard on cutting and shaping words that I wasn't focusing on my partner, or focusing so much on my partner that I wasn't letting the audience into the world of the play. I had to recognize and allow both to live organically inside me in order to free myself of any control. The understanding of allowing these tools to work for me holistically was essential in

overcoming my personal obstacles. Words are the vessel in which emotion is carried out of the body. The awareness of these tools being part of a whole is what I had to embrace. If anything, allowing myself the freedom to “let go” after applying these techniques during the *Loves Labour’s Lost* rehearsal process, is what strengthened my confidence as an actor throughout my experience.

There is no question that I have acquired an invaluable education and techniques that will allow me to become a more adept, honest, and resourceful artist. More than this, I am ecstatic about my discoveries and my self-examination as a human being, strengths, weaknesses, and all. Graduation does not mark an end of my training, but it does mark a new beginning. This is another stage in my career in which I am reminded to trust and love my talent and craft. I have been reminded to take risks, be an investigator, ask questions, and live truthfully and unapologetically in the moment, and if all else fails, the simple instruction of talking and listening always proves to be the needed adjustment. I have grown in my training immensely, yet I understand that this is naturally a life long process. I can never stop learning. That is what makes a good actor. What I am proud of is the strong awareness I have about myself and my art and the ability to accept what I cannot change. What I have taken away from this program, in addition to technique is a personal challenge to take risks, trust myself, and live life with a degree of vulnerability so that I can let go of control.

I have understood the importance of examining every angle and investigating all aspects of my craft, from text to observation, but most of all I walk away as a more engaged, active, complex, assertive, honest human being. I am more accepting of my

shortcomings and strengths; my weaknesses are only strengths in disguise. I feel that I am prepared to seize opportunity and commit with confidence to any work I engage in the future. As Oprah Winfrey once said, “I believe luck is preparation meeting opportunity. If you hadn’t been prepared when the opportunity came along, you wouldn’t have been lucky.” (Winfrey, “*Thought for Today – Luck*”).

Bibliography

- A Single Shard*. By Robert Schenkkan. Dir. Linda Hartzell. Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle, Washington. 25 Feb. 2012. Performance.
- Basil, John, with Stephanie Gunning. *Will Power: How to Act Shakespeare in 21 Days*. New York: Applause, 2006. Print.
- Dorn, Franchelle. *Scene Study*. Austin, TX: Dorn, Franchelle, 2010. Print.
- Linney, Romulus. *A Lesson Before Dying*. Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 2006. Print.
- Meisner, Sanford, and Dennis Longwell. *Sanford Meisner on Acting*. New York: Random House, 1987. Print.
- Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*. New York: Sandpiper, 2001. Print
- Rocky III*. Dir. Sylvester Stallone. Perf. Sylvester Stallone and Talia Shire. United Artist, 1982. DVD.
- Rodenburg, Patsy. *The Actor Speaks: Voice and the Performer*. United Kingdom: Methuen Drama, 1997. Print
- Woudhuysen, H. R., ed. *Love's Labour's Lost*. 3rd series. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1998. Print.
- Winfrey, Oprah. *Thought for Today*. *Oprah*. Web. 19 March 2010.