

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

Spring 2015

## Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose

Valeria Alejandra Avina Ortiz  
*University of Iowa*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd>



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

Copyright 2015 Valeria Alejandra Avina

This thesis is available at Iowa Research Online: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/1536>

---

### Recommended Citation

Ortiz, Valeria Alejandra Avina. "Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose." MFA (Master of Fine Arts) thesis, University of Iowa, 2015.

<https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.107mgrcz>

---

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd>



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

TRAIN YOURSELF TO LET GO OF EVERYTHING YOU FEAR TO LOSE

by

Valeria Alejandra Avina Ortiz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Master  
of Fine Arts degree in Acting  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

May 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Professor John Cameron

Copyright by

VALERIA ALEJANDRA AVINA ORTIZ

2015

All Rights Reserved

Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

---

MASTER'S THESIS

---

This is to certify the Master's Thesis of

Valeria Alejandra Avina Ortiz

has been approved by the Examining Committee  
for the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree  
in Acting at the May 2015 graduation.

Thesis Committee: \_\_\_\_\_  
John Cameron, Thesis Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Kalina

\_\_\_\_\_  
Anne Marie Nest

To my mentors who never stopped supporting my work  
And taught me to fail gloriously.  
To my Nugget

“Surrendering to what is the nature of compassion, the power of silence, a true commitment to the character, a complete freedom of the imagination, and the will, at any given moment, to let go of who we think we are in order to become who we are meant to be - has been the greatest teacher of all.”

-Eckhart Toll

## **PUBLIC ABSTRACT**

I considered grad school an opportunity to open myself up to what I always wanted to do, and become the best version of myself. Three years later, the work I put into exploring my passion for theatre led me to a dream of mine, which was performing in the production “Crescendo”. This unforgettable process was completely different from the others. In fact, it turned out to be one of the strongest pieces of work I have done so far. It touches on everything I've learned and what I have been searching for and applying since the start of my journey. Working on “Crescendo” has at its core: Meisner, Grotowski, Stanislavski, period styles, voice, and clown. However, without all the previous techniques I don't think I would have done what I did during this production. To me, “Crescendo” and “Clown”, are the root of all the work I have done during grad school, the root of my artistry. This rehearsal process, brought out in me a handful of discoveries, not just about myself and the way I tend to approach my work, but also what it is to fully explore and play a character that's based on truth, to play with all my heart and soul. This was the first time I closed a show feeling proud about myself, without any doubts, or the need to hear from others what they think. As I previously mentioned, this adventure taught me every single thing I have learned since day one.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. SURRENDER TO WHAT IS.....	1
The Beginning of my Journey .....	3
What did I Learned .....	5
My Life on and off the mat.....	7
Be who you are at the moment but, be there fully .....	9
CHAPTER 2. TO LET GO .....	12
Prescence and Grotowski.....	13
Following my impulses.....	14
Breath is meaning .....	17
CHAPTER 3. WHAT I’VE COME TO UNDERSTAND .....	19
Neutral Mask .....	20
The moment I started to embraced failed.....	22
When things started to make sense.....	23
CHAPTER 4. HOW CAN I DESCRIBE MY WORK.....	25
CHAPTER 5. THE BEGINNING OF MY CHARACTER WORK .....	26
I don’t know anything except my body and breath .....	26
The opposite of freedom.....	29
From general to specific .....	31
Using mask for character work.....	32
CHAPTER 6. WORKING WITH PAOLA AND MATTEO.....	38
My journey during Crescendo .....	38
What I Learned .....	41
What Olive taught me.....	43
CHAPTER 7. WHAT I LIKE TO SEE .....	45
CHAPTER 8 MY VISION, GIVING A CHANCE TO FAITH .....	47

The beginning of everything, the started point of to risk everything I have.....	47
CHAPTER 9. ANNOTATED PERFORMANCE HISTORY .....	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	53

## CHAPTER 1. SURRENDER TO WHAT IS

I truly believe that theatre saved my life and that grad school has opened my eyes to my true essence. Today, the acceptance of letting it go in order to become who I am meant to be, has taught me that all my failures have been, by far, the greatest things that have ever happened to me. Over the last three years of grad school, I've come to embrace failure by accepting it. My failures have taught me to love the work even more, and what it has taught me and given me was another opportunity to try one more time. Place for truth, growth or opportunity to change.

Today, I like to think of this journey as learning to ride a bike for the first time. We use training wheels so that we can adjust to the new experience until we no longer need the training wheels. As for me, I have taken the training wheels off to see if I can ride without them.

At the beginning of my first year, my acting professor John Cameron, pointed out that most of our work would be done outside the classroom, and that most of our growth would stem from diligently working the techniques everyday outside the classroom. As a tennis player, being diligent and practicing each skill has been one of my strengths. However, experience has taught me that growth doesn't start or end with being diligent and dedicated. In fact, there are both positive and negative consequences to this approach. The positive consequence is that you can't take anything for granted. Everyday, I worked on everything I had learned in class and I wouldn't be the person I am today if it weren't for the work I did outside the classroom. The negative side effect to this approach, for me personally, was that "letting go" became a challenge. I would work on the techniques so much that I would get down on myself when I, or others, weren't pleased with the result. I placed so much importance on achieving success that failure was nearly impossible to appreciate. The harder I worked the higher my expectations were. I hated constructive feedback and felt as if I were in competition with my own classmates. Consequently, I didn't realize at the time how my attitude had impaired the way I interacted with people around me and how much it was blocking me from seeing the truth. There comes a point

in a downward spiral where suddenly all the negative words and feelings become an opportunity to rise up. In this way, failure saved my life because each moment became a stepping-stone to a better place. While training, I also realized the importance of not treating my life as a goal, or a mission to accomplish something that society will appreciate, but as an opportunity to live fully and to be content with what I have today, and who I am now. I also stopped seeing life as a burden and as a struggle, and became comforted in knowing that I am part of everything, the miracle of life that unfolds all around us when we are present. The most important thing is to be honest and truthful with myself.

A couple months ago, the famous Puerto Rican playwright Jose Rivera said to me, that life is giving us the opportunity to find beauty, and as artists we must keep our eyes and hearts open to everything. As I was listening to his life story, I began to reflect on the thoughts and beliefs I had when I started college. I believed that hard work and dedication, and giving a hundred percent to everything would get me where I wanted to go. But, I didn't realize how much I was standing in the way of myself. In other words, I had to let go of what I thought was true: my strengths and my weaknesses. The truth I had believed in and held onto was closing me off from a life of endless possibilities.

Going back to day one, I came in with physical injuries. Physical limitations: internal and external. Personal issues kept me from moving forward, especially, during my first semester. I would seek attention from the people around me and had an attitude that was effectively blocking me from the work. In my mind, however, I was very passionate and truly focused on the work. I wasn't aware of a glaring truth that a big part of me was preventing me from getting the most out of the experience. Today, I understand that the work is not about what others think of it and it's not all about me. It's not about the "look at me" type of mentality I tend to have, it's not about pushing everything in front of me away as if it were an obstacle, it's not about living my life with expectations. This work is about the space that already exists between everything around us, it's about what is there already. Given the bouts we may have, we need to trust that the answers are already there. All we have to do is be open to everything. It is very simple, and less

complicated than what I used to do or think. Easier said than done, but without the acting faculty at the University of Iowa: John Cameron, Paul Kalina, Eric Forsythe, and Anne Marie Nest, and all the lessons I have learned during this process, the everyday importance of giving myself up to the work, the reminder to fully open up to the space, the people around me, to listen, to always be open to everything, to not expect anything in return, and to always be my best self wherever I am at the moment; I would not be where I am now and I would not be who I am today.

### **The Beginning of My Journey**

After my experience working on “Crescendo”, I decided to develop my thesis around the exploration of my work and its evolution from day one to this very moment: how I discovered my strengths and weaknesses over the last three years, a process which ultimately guided me toward this production. This is when things really cracked open for me.

My discovery process, though it has been very slow, has built over time. I find that every step forward has actually taught me fewer things than the many steps backwards I have taken. For instance, I came into the program with my dreams and desires about how good I could be at this work and who I could be. As I grew, I realized that my very dreams and aspirations were getting in the way of my experience. I started out being so focused on the end goal, on my dream, on the possibilities, that I was missing out on the very moment I was in, I was missing out on the step-by-step journey. I didn’t see it. I didn’t see what was happening in front of me so I didn’t appreciate it so the work *was never enough. I was not enough.* I was not aware that while we were doing so many things, we were actually learning. I was doing too many things at once and never fully committed to one thing. I thought I could do everything and being self-critical kept me working hard. But I was wrong. I spent most of my life running away from my past. The more I ran away from it, the more it kept hunting me. Growing up, I created defenses mechanisms so I wouldn’t drown. I would push everything that came my way out of the way. I would drive until there was nothing left in the tank. That said, I came into the program with an

optimistic attitude that gave the impression that I wasn't aware of the program's intensity and degree of difficulty. On the surface, I was trying so hard to pretend things were perfect and not hard at all so that others, including myself, would not see the fear I had inside.

*"We must be willing at any given moment, to let go of who we think we are in order to become who we are meant to be"...*- Joseph Cambell

It was conflicted between trying to be the person I wanted people to see and the person I really was, a person I was afraid to let surface. By the end of my second year, I finally started to embrace that person- a person I thought people would not like or would not accept. However, in hindsight, I realize that I was stuck in my own process of wanting things to happen immediately. I would get angry or defensive when I received feedback from my mentors. I felt a need to be good at every little thing right away, and there were many times during the training when I was not taking anyone or anything in. I was stressed all the time trying to figure things out. I also thought I was aware of what I was doing. I thought I was truly observing, listening, and being open to my classmates. Then, I realized that I was denying patterns or attitudes of my classmates that were related to my own. I became so drawn into my own issues that I couldn't see what was right in front of me.

The entire first year, I struggled to realize the detrimental effect of mentally visualizing my dreams and aspirations. Hope kept me out of the present and constantly in anticipation for something to happen. It was a plan and a trick to feel in control and less vulnerable, to feel like things were still within my reach. Yet all these illusions succeeded in doing was keeping the present at bay, the *what if* bay. I had become accustomed to living in the future in my mind. I was afraid of failure. I would get absorbed into my own issues, as if it were the worst thing in the world, as if I was the only person with a life crisis. For example, I discovered one of my habits during my first year while we were working on Ibsen scenes. John Cameron described it as "pushing energy" while we were

working with the Ibsen scenes. I considered that term as the worst thing or habit I could have, and as a consequence I ended up adding more hatred towards myself, and my work for almost two years. I was ashamed of myself and I started to hate this habit of mine even though I didn't understand why I was doing it. But because at this point I realized I had to hold onto things instead of push them away, I held onto it. I started to judge myself, and became obsessed with this habit, desperately trying to figure things out, and questioning how the habit developed in the first place. I even wasted time trying to find different ways to fix it, but the more obsessed I was, the harder it became to actually see or feel where this habit of mine tends to appear. It wasn't until the end of my second year, when Fannie Hungerford described presence by using electricity as an example during a yoga class. She said that we all have electricity in our bodies that tends to come out in our daily lives, and how the practice of yoga can teach us how to focus that electricity into the point we need to focus on. But we are so unaware of the way we tend to use it, that the electricity tends to move in different directions but never focused, in consequence we are more unaware, stressed, and anxious. After she explained presence through electricity I realized that is what happens to me, and not just in my daily life but during my work as well. My electricity was spreading out around the room and it was never focused. Also, I realized that this electrical energy I have is a gift, because when it's focused, it goes directly to the other person, and by being focused, it will go where it needs to; my partner.

With Fannie's compelling explanation, I started to shed the negative connotation I had of "pushing energy" and grew it into something positive, because, is not about changing habits right away, it takes time, and there are small steps to take before change can happen. The insecurity of pushing energy is still present, but I don't hold onto it the way I used to. I've come to manage it by first accepting how negative my attitude tends to be while attempting to change a particular habit or behavior. Then I acknowledge how I've dealt with the problem in the past, and come to accept it. Then finally, I attempt a different approach to overcome the problem.

### **What Did I Learn?**

This journey brought up the best part of me. In other words, it has been a spiritual journey for me, by uncovering my truth, embracing new beliefs, the journey of my self-acceptance, to love others and myself unconditionally. Last summer was when I began to make sense of my journey and see the transformation I've undergone from day one to today and its impact on the work. I started to fully understand how each class I've had is connected to a specific point of the training, how one experience started to fulfill the next. It's like a metaphorical smoky mirror, where smoke keeps me from clearly seeing my own reflection, and each class was a new tool for me to remove part of that smoke, little by little, until my full, true reflection was revealed. During each semester I struggled in many ways, but those struggles helped me reveal my truth, the root of my work. In this case, Meisner Technique was my first step.

Meisner technique with John Cameron, was one of the most difficult processes I encountered. During this class, surrendering was not easy. It took me a while to finally let go of what was standing in my way: lack of self-control, lack of focus, and poor listening. But surrendering was one of the most important things. I couldn't let go, and I didn't fully understand what letting go meant at the time. In fact, the blatant rejection of those insecurities contributed to the fact that I couldn't let things affect me during exercises, or during the few moments I found stillness or true listening. I was unable to identify them. For example: when I had to knock on the door I was pushing so much energy that I couldn't control it. In other words, coming in with my full attention on my partner, and being able to let go of my preparation, seemed impossible for me at the time. I needed John Cameron to remain me: *stop and listen*.

During the class activities, there were many times I came into the room with an agenda, or wanted to do the work like other people. This constant idea of wanting to make something happen was blocking me from listening to my partner and the space around me. As a result, there were no surprises. I wanted to listen, to be present, to respond truthfully so badly that I ended up doing the opposite. I was trying too hard but I wasn't allowing the work to have an effect on me because I (my ego) wanted to make

something happen. It was about me, not about the work.

Today I realized that it was my ego that was keeping me away from the present moment, and how much I wasn't able to take the time I needed. All of my struggles during this class taught me how often I push away the people around me, how often I ignore the positive side of the struggles. I've also realized that I very rarely take the opportunity to be grateful for my successes - as tiny they may be. I had been blind to the fact that each step backwards helped me take two more steps forward. I didn't know that letting go was simply *"yielding to rather than opposing the flow of life"*.- Eckhart Tolle.

### **My Life Off and On the Mat**

The mind is such a powerful thing but it's a double-edged sword. It has the power to raise you up or to tear you down. Yoga plays a major part in my growth, yoga, meditation and seeing my speech therapist I started to look into my own self, life, my past and my own views of the world. Within this, I began to work toward a new way living, centering in on my heart, and searching for that moment where it is no longer enough to simply be open. Searching for that moment when I'm ready to step out and live in that openness – because that's where the real change and healing happens. This focus started to have an affect on me during my class work, when I started to open up, and my sensitivity started to develop, suddenly I started to identify my negative thoughts, and how much my brain tends to feed those negative thoughts. I found out how much I tend to get stuck with my negative thoughts. For instance, there was a period of time during my second year where I got lost, I started to hate who I was because I couldn't get what I wanted, or to performed the way I planned it in my heard, and even worse, I was so insecure about my accent that I was often angry because I wanted to sound like my classmates. It was another excuse to keep those negative thoughts. Also, there were many times where I couldn't find the middle ground. There were many times I actually enjoyed sinking in my issues knowing that I was turning things up-side-down.

In addition to this, during the Meisner class I couldn't accept what I was hearing

from my colleagues, and mentors, I couldn't take any feedback without turning it into something negative, or see it as a new opportunity to improve, or just neutral information. I would become angry and irritated with myself because I couldn't do it right or because I didn't want to be a failure in front of my classmates. I had a knee jerk reaction, as Paul Kalina would call it, to any feedback I received. I found myself frequently trapped within my own traumas, and discoveries of my work. Nothing was fine because of my high expectations. But in this case, during that first year, the Meisner technique was the foundation of my journey. Through the technique, I shed each layer that was preventing me from seeing the truth. I had been so blind I wasn't able to even see the smoke covering the mirror. Even, phrases that seemed logical at the time, I wasn't able to physically do. However do what seemed logical in my mind at the time that has change, today I still understand it intellectually, but also spiritually. For example, that first semester I remember John Cameron, and Paul Kalina, saying, "Act like a dog", "really see it", "commit to it", "listen". They were trying to encourage us to see the world for the first time; Eric Forsythe, 'see the world explore nature'; Matteo destroy, 'Indulge yourself with beauty'; Anne Marie Next, 'Use the words'. Each of them were trying to find ways for me to finally allow myself to re-discover everything like a child- to open my eyes to what is. Moments like that kept resonating each day, "you are the less important thing", "its not about you, it's about them". Today, all of that makes so much sense and if I take all that I have learned during my three years: my yoga practice and my belief in all this work, everything I had been looking for since day one begins to take shape. Everything I believed about an actor's work, myself and the world, has completely change.

Looking back at my own life experiences I understand why humans resist life. As Don Miguel Ruiz put it, "To live is the biggest fear we have"; I've tried to create an image of perfection because I thought an image was all it took to be good enough. That it would eventually turn into something real so long as I could keep up the appearance. But in doing this I was working against myself. There were times I made mistakes in front of people where I tried to deny the mistake, and cover it up with laughter or anger. But as soon as I was alone, the judgment was so strong, the guilt, and feeling stupid, or feeling

so bad, or so unworthy that my thoughts kept me away from reality. I wasn't able to see what already is. The space and everything around me provided the answer to everything. I just had to be present. Everything we do in life mirrors what we do on stage and the way we interact with people around us. When we stop resisting life, we stop resisting the work, we are able to see what we weren't able to before - sooner or later we will see the light.

*“Beauty arises from the stillness of [m]y presence.” - Eckhart Tolle*

Continuing to let go of my pushing after the Ibsen scenes, was a struggle. It seemed like the more I was trying to figure things out, the less I was capable of dealing with it. As I mentioned before, my first idea was to get rid of it, by punishing myself or trying to solve the problem intellectually. But that only created chaos, Fannie described it in class as a new opportunity to expand my awareness, not in my head, but in my body. To stay present when that habit happens, because it isn't about what I can do to change who I am, or change how I do things, but to be aware of how I deal with each thing, and then find a way to deal differently within each life situation.

### **Be Who You Are at That Moment in Time, But Be There Fully**

Grotowski with Eric Forsythe was a recognition of the beauty that already existed around me. It was a time to see clearly the opposites of my emotional state, another tool to search for joy in the sorrow, and vice versa. I also understood that we are never going to be perfect because that's the beauty of everything. It reminded me that everything is alive, that not everything is about me. It taught me to take a risk when I feared it the most, and it showed me the importance of seeing what already is, because as an artist the world around me is key for my work.

Furthermore, one of the most important lessons was when we started to imitate nature. It helped me see into another dimension of my work, of myself, the power of taking in each thing around me. *Thus*, I rediscovered the deep curiosity that always existed in me, the

way I used to see the world as a child, my spirituality. It showed me another dimension of the work that I never thought of, and how I used to expand my imagination when I used to have that state of awareness.

This experience showed me the intimacy we must establish in order to create a piece, the importance of collaboration, the raw side of this work, and the beauty of human connection. I started to see a world filled with possibilities: the use of rituals and different ways to play off each other, while creating a piece based on our truths. This was the first class where I started to use colors, and images for my work. I discovered, that it was a way for me to connect what's inside to the outside and vice versa. With this, I started find more effective ways to play with my imagination. For example, using my body to create, and shape the space instead of just looking at things. This way of creating a new space around me was a new discovery. It revealed another side of the work that showed more passion and joy towards life and it helped me understand words, sounds, and my own voice work. The use of colors allowed me to create different worlds around me, my imagination started to expand, and I also found a personal inner peace that allowed me to find silence, the sounds underneath the silence, and stillness that guided me into a different states of peace and deep focus.

Grotowski led me to explore nature, which helped me connect more deeply with the present moment. It served as a different tool explore the world around me and open my eyes to things bigger than myself. Moreover, stepping outside the work taught me that being a compassionate human being begins with loving myself and accepting the power I have within me, trusting that I am capable of changing my negative thought patterns into positive thought patterns. Harnessing that power has led me to more discoveries about myself. I started to take my bliss seriously. I began to love the sunrises, the sunsets, the relationship between nature and me. I began to see the world filled with infinite possibilities toward my work, especially my character work.

*“Something is always born of excess: great art was born of great terrors, great*

*loneliness, great inhibitions, instabilities, and it always balances them.”*

-Anais Nin

Today, I understand that the moment my mind tries to make something happen, the real moment becomes intangible. On the other hand, when I connect with what is around me, in this case nature, I can feel the essence in every flower, every tree, the water; and myself in this moment that I'm present. Spending time observing nature helps me to create a character. During Grotowski I had the opportunity to explore that side of me, and better to understand what Paul Kalina explained when we were working toward expansion, and presence. What nature brings to me is something hard to explain, but what I do know is that I have such an attachment to the sky, and anything around me that brings out my creativity. My sensitivity towards nature took me into a place where I found freedom.

## CHAPTER 2. TO LET GO

*“See something and surrender to what you see.”* - John Cameron

After combating my stubbornness, I began to accept that some of my habits may never go away completely, but recognizing these habits has allowed me to notice when I'm not really seeing my partner, when I am on my own and I feel the fear and my own judgment creeping in.

Over the last three years, I have found how important each moment working on stage and the rehearsal process is, yet, it took me a while to accept that I used to live in the past. I started to grasp moments where I'm present, and recognized that when the moment where I let all the judgments go, my tendency to do much, and be in my head goes away. As result I do less, and my work is more simple. In other words, simplicity is what makes my work unique, and truthful. It's always easier said than done but all I have to do is be fully committed to what is happening now.

The more I think about my journey, the more I realized how many ups and downs I've have had each semester. I've learned to take one step at the time, which was a struggle because I had to take each moment seriously, while everything was constantly changing inside me and out. Maybe taking things to the extreme could be part of my own personality, but for the purpose of the work it wasn't helping me at all. For example, the end of my first year, I was my worst critic. I was unable to see how I had grown from my acting classes. I didn't appreciate having experienced silence, stillness and true listening at least even once during the Meisner Technique. The importance of surrender to *what is* finally started to make sense along with the idea that the most important thing in the room is my partner. What Paul Kalina said during movement class, *'train yourself to let go of the need to make something happen and never forget that there is so much more to life that we don't understand and maybe never will – and that's ok.'* I learned to live a life of not knowing and being ok with that because there is always so much more to learn.

I'm also conscious that this is just the beginning of my career and that what I think I know now might change in the future. These last three years I've spent exploring I've realized in hindsight how miserable I had become. I came to understand my self-destructive attitude and behavior that led me down a path where I dismissed my work and I got so down mentally that I truly believed that I was not succeeding at anything. Paradoxically, I realized that from the very first semester I have never been so happy in my life. I honor the fact that this is a journey to get to know myself better, and to love myself in a way that I never thought I could. In other words, to open my eyes towards the world, and seek the beauty that exists all around me, and to never forget that underneath sorrow, and despair, there is always joy.

### **Presence and Grotowski**

*"Being impeccable is not going against yourself. When you are impeccable, you take responsibility for your actions, but you do not judge or blame yourself".*

- Don Miguel Ruiz

We only see what we want to see, and hear what we want to hear. We don't perceive things the way they truly are, and when we don't understand something, we make assumptions about the situation, and when the truth comes out our bubble pops. We finally realized that what we thought it was, wasn't it at all. It's very interesting how my mind works, my need to justify everything, or understand everything in order to feel safe. This might sound exaggerated but the semester I took Grotowski, I started to walk around places in utter amazement, as if I had just been born again. I was living in a state of uninterrupted peace, and bliss. It taught me about the creation of a piece with nothing needed but yourself and the people involved. To bring myself into the piece sharing my own artistry and creativity. Grotowski really touched a part of me that helped me let go of a huge part of my ego, and showed me my selfishness by understanding how much I tend to take everything personal. I understood that there is always something bigger than us, that we are just a part of something else that cannot be named, something ineffable.

Many times I attempted to figure out what I might feel once I found that moment of presence, or how glorious that moment was supposed to feel once I found it. When I finally felt it in mask class, it was nothing like I had imagined. I realized how many times during the day I was actually present without even noticing it. As I previously described the moment John Cameron kept talking about during Meisner, the moment where we feel so small as if we're in the middle of the stage, we're unconsciously taking in what's in front of us. Before, I thought it was the opposite, feeling bigger in the space, because for me it feels that way - the entered space expands. That moment is when I understood what John and Paul kept repeating in each class *'let yourself see everything for the first time, over and over again'* - to let myself be completely vulnerable, to see the things that touch my humanity. To me it's the moment I raise my head up to the sky, that's when I let go and open myself. [Satori]. This became a huge part of my character work, and another opportunity to take things in during the course of my training.

### **Following My Impulses**

*"Your need for acceptance in this world, can make you invisible in this world."*

- Jim Carrey

*"Whatever you are, be there totally."*

- Eckhart Tolle

Understanding the meaning of an impulse is not enough. What makes a difference is the action. Taking the action over, and over again, until it establishes a solid foundation. Going through each experience, peeling back each layer that protects us from seeing *what is*, the practice of each technique, and presence, taught me the importance of not just listening to my partner but to my body as well, which is a major player in the articulation of impulse. In other words, the heart is the articulation of the body, a connection of the soul and mind. It's the root of our intention. The willingness to be open and vulnerable allow us to be part of the big picture, to feel ourselves in the midst of all this beauty, to listen beyond the silence, to feel the tingling of our fingertips and the

electricity running through our bodies, with the acceptance of what we are in that moment, and being able to bring all of that to the surface – that is what it is to be present.

The impulse begins before we begin to speak, and the heart is the root of our entire being. When we speak from the truth our breath is supported and we are able to articulate: our mind connects with our body, we are present and we are listening. During my process I thought I was open to anything, but there were many more things covering the truth. I thought I had everything I needed to do the work, but without listening to my impulses I was effectively denying my own creativity and limiting my ability to play. On the other hand, going to therapy and working toward accepting myself, and failure, started to have a profound change on my perspective of the world and of myself. With this, I came to realize that I'm becoming my best self and I started to listen. But it wasn't until my third year that I found peace and gratitude toward life, something I had never imagined. I discovered that everything I do, in life and in work, must come from a place of truth. This entire journey has been an opportunity to continue exploring and connecting with my inner self, and the space that exists in me, that reflects the source of who I am: my timeless essence, and other aspects of who I am and my work that has allowed me to be more vulnerable, and compassionate toward the world.

The connection with my body showed me how powerful the mind can be, but equally how dangerous it can be- a double-edged sword. During the process with Crescendo, Matteo Destro said once: “ Use the mind when it’s needed, the rest of the time listen to your body”. Matteo was right, I started to notice the times when my mind was feeding me negative thoughts, and how easy it was for me to get sucked in. For example, during my second year, there was a period of time where I was not in a good place. I started to hate who I was because I couldn't get what I wanted. Working on my American accent I became very frustrated because I couldn't sound exactly like my classmates. There were many times when I couldn't find the middle ground, and it felt like I was back in first semester when I would sink into my issues and I turned things up side down. It happened after Water by the Spoonful. When the show ended, I received feedback and was hearing what I didn't want to hear. I fell back into my habit of being

concerned about the fruits of my labor, instead of paying attention to my journey. I got to the point where I started to doubt of my own qualities. I was also torn between my two identities and decided to not speak Spanish at all until my English was perfect. I created new blocks, tensions, and hatred towards my work.

This self-destructive behavior led to low self-esteem, and once again, I pushed myself to the extreme until I couldn't take it anymore. With time I began to feel better, I did move forward but I labeled that experience as negative, embarrassing, and shameful and I made the decision to never look back. On the other hand, while struggling with all these negative thoughts, Grotowski and Careena Melia's voice class kept me grounded as strange as that might sound, but they kept me exploring the importance of staying true within myself. What enters the light becomes light. The mask work changed everything, especially the importance of failure. This is when I decided to look back on that experience, and understand that there is nothing wrong with fear, that fear, must be used in our work to let everyone else see what is there. That's when I decided to consider the experience I had during Water by the Spoonful as very important, because it taught me much more than any other prior experiences. In processing that experience in hindsight I was able to accept it as information for me to use to improve. Finally, I started to identify, and accept my thought patterns, and how much I tend to swing from one extreme to the other emotionally or judgmentally.

After applying the Grotowski and Meisner methods, I realized when working on a new project I don't fully understand it until I've experienced it. For example, during period styles, I was having a hard time in finding the truth while using the social mask. During the class, I realized that I tend to get ahead of myself and quickly jump into big choices, or create an idea of what I'm going to do next, or figure out how I will perform certain things without first finding the truth. A reoccurring piece of feedback I've received every year is to keep finding the balance. During period styles and my scene with Mo, we had issues trying to find the truth and a relationship that would give the scene truth in comedy. But, it wasn't until John told us to rehearse the opposite of funny. Then we started to play the comedy as drama. I approached the text in my own way by saying the

lines how I thought they were meant to be said and used colors and images that related to each word. As a result, the scene started to take shape. This scene with Mo was the first time I could stand still for a while only using words, and without judging myself before speaking, or rushing all my lines for the fear they would get caught on my tongue or my accent would come out. However, I didn't even realize this until John addressed it at the end of the semester.

Doing the mask work is when I started to wake up and when I started to see my classmates work without any judgments or comparing my work or behavior to theirs. This was during a time when a lot of things began to change again. I realized that the more I let myself work with no restrictions, and just let my curiosity be there, the more discoveries I would have. I understood that the work is not about "what others think" or the "all about me" mentality, rather it's about the space, what is already there. All we have to do is to give into it, fully open to the space, and people around us.

### **Breath is Meaning**

The meaning of breath produced a whole different perspective and an incredible changed in my work. I like to think of it as the engine to our soul, working with Anne Marie Nest the last three years has had a huge effect on me since first semester and not only vocally, but physically as well. The floor work, and tremoring helped me discover resonance, and dissonance, both in my daily life and the work. I started to see myself for the first time. Applying the Fitzmaurice technique, doing yoga, going to therapy and rehearsing have all helped me expand this awareness.

Additionally, my yoga practice, my voice class with Anne Marie, and Paul's movement class, really complemented one another in a way that my body awareness began to expand. I even began to treat myself better in my personal life. I learned to identify what to do physically without hurting my body, and with time I became capable of doing things that I never thought were physically possible for me. As a result, my body started to change, to soften.

Voice class opened my eyes to the training I will undergo after graduation. I got to reaffirm how passionate I am about self-transformation, and the desire I have to improve the way I interact with the world. The Fitzmaurice technique, during Anne Marie's accent class dealt with my stubbornness to sound like an American from day one. As I've mentioned before, it was important for me to let go of my desire to have results right away because this desire ultimately limited what I was able to do and prevented me from seeing the incremental improvements I was actually making. During Anne Marie Nest accent class I met with my speech therapist for the first time. The approach to my accent work changed and I went right back to the basics where I taught myself to slow down and push myself toward doing less and simply focusing on one thing at the time. This new experience was a good exploration of that side of me, where as before I used to focus on too many things at the same time instead of taking things one at a time. It offered a new approach to pick up the American accent, and find the fun in it again. I began to realize how I actually understand every word, which in turn gave me a confidence boost that removed the limitations I had been putting on myself in the form of fear or shame. In fact, I discovered that even though my speech may not be well understood, there are many ways for me to connect with the words, such as using my body. I found ways to approach language or words by using colors, sounds, images, and my body. Accepting how much I've been improving, and discovering my ability to hear sound and imitate them started to shine a light on my speech work. The process of teaching myself to work alone, and being able to see the advantages of having an accent, I feel more confident and connected to language as I continue to practice.

### CHAPTER 3. WHAT I HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND

*“Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose.”- Yoda*

In order to become my own artist and fully play I must get to know myself, and the way I work. I am a very emotional person, but also very smart, and powerful in many ways. The emotional explosions I would have are a clear demonstration of a person who lacked inner understanding. I always had a hard time processing my thoughts, and possessed a fear of being affected by people. I had a need to receive all the attention from others. But, that need for attention has been dissipating, and transforming into empathy for others. The expression of my shame, and anger, has taught me to not fear the fear. I wanted to be so talented, and the best in every moment, but I felt that I was nowhere and going nowhere. So my negative thoughts were always present: in class, rehearsals, and my own life. But, perfection is boring. It's the enemy of the art and being good at everything doesn't exist.

I believe that the acceptance of *what is*, both failure and bliss, is gold. The willingness to risk is essential in our work, because failure doesn't exist in the eyes of others. We fail because we make ourselves fail, or feel we fail even before jumping off a cliff because we don't try. Failure is a product of the mind to protect myself. It's an excuse to not follow impulses or imagination. As the play kept going, during mask class I started to feel the sensation that I wasn't fully committing to something out of fear. I was able to identify the moments when I would judge myself, or disconnect from what I thought was not the “right” thing.

During mask, I realized that when I let go of judgment, fear, and ideas of what to do, and simply trusted in my process –everything was there. This is a good moment to mention how I've learned that patience, something I've never had, is key. Letting go of the expectations I had for my work also comes from my own hesitation to try new things. Working with neutral mask, I understood that a block is not something to hide, or consider a threat, because hiding a block can create a new one. A block is a part of myself

that can be used as a tool for my work. Learning to soften that part of me is also a strength, and not a weakness. I know now that fear, surrendering, trust, patience, and diligence to focus on one thing, will one day shift things around for me.

*Eyes are the mirror of the soul.*

- Alejandro Filio

It's hard for me to stop fighting against myself. It's a phase of unlearning everything, questioning it, refining it, challenging it, and reinventing it so that I can finally call it my own. However, all the lessons that have revealed themselves in the work and life continue to work on me in strange ways. After I started to pay attention to the subtle changes and my interminable commitment to what I love the most, my eyes opened to this passion of mine, this hunger to learn and to keep absorbing new things throughout the course of my career

On the other hand, what I've never doubted, and I won't stop being proud of is my passion, and commitment to the theatre. When I played tennis, I wasn't the best tennis player, but my passion, commitment, and especially discipline for the sport helped me get to where I am now. My creative-self stems from these core attributes. As mentioned before, passion can be anywhere, because without passion, greatness would not exist in the world. If our professors lacked passion, they would not care about our improvement or commit to us the way they do. Even though I continue to struggle with many things, as we all do, all the passion, will, heart, commitment, discipline, and drive inside of me keeps me moving forward, and keeps me longing to learn more. It is a huge part of who I am. I'm always seeking out people who are better and smarter than me.

### **Neutral Mask**

I want to explore my own form of expression and deep desire to change the world with this art form. It's what led me to find what I really want to do in life. This will never change for me. Theatre is infinite exploration, a mirror of our humanity, a moment to

just be, in whatever state that is.

During my second year, I wrote a paper asserting my need to learn how to fly and my great desire to change lives through my work. I look back to this time because of how freely I started to play during mask. Mask and clown mark the birth of my exploration - the moment where things truly began to click for me. I started to explore my work in a rhythm different to the one I had gotten used to. I began to slow down. I had to make changes to my daily routines. I had to identify what habits I had while doing very simple tasks. For example, practicing running backwards instead of forwards-things like that. My everyday floor work started with a short meditation (either sitting or walking) before I carried on with my day, then in the evening I practiced yoga. As I worked outside the classroom I began to see that my behavior outside class mirrors my work in the classroom. One simple example, during Mask, Paul had us sprint as fast as we could without moving out of the space and I started to feel very competitive. I wanted to win. My ego surged and I found myself judging others, thinking how much I had to push myself to be better than everyone else. Then, I had to stop myself immediately, and do it again but ten times slower than everyone else. This was very difficult. But, it taught me many things about the game, perception, and attitudes I frequently have when I anticipate, instead of being present, doing what I can, without judging myself or others, and allowing myself to see who is in the room with me and identifying how they are affecting me. In the Meisner class I would takeover everything without even looking at it. I recall the principles, 'never do anything until something happens to make you do it,' and, 'Every little moment has a meaning all it's own. These principles started to affect my work. I began to notice my tendency of pushing in a different way, and how I would miss out on the moment-to-moment because I was rushing to reach the end product. I realized how much I wasn't paying attention to the journey itself or allowing myself to be moved by the present moments, which were passing me by. In Meisner, I came to understand that one step forward already contains all the other steps, and I came to accept that nothing is what I think it is, or what it's going to be. To remain myself who as an artist, must look beyond *what is*, and see beyond the words. As Anne Marie reiterated constantly, always look beyond the words, don't get stuck on the level of the words. A

word is no more than a means to an end. It's an abstraction. We can study a word as much as we like, but we won't really know it until we taste it. I deeply connect to what a word truly means to me within the text. However, it's a complete paradox to accept a word as it is while at the same time seeing beyond that word. When a word becomes a necessity to say what you need to express the truth, and with believability, you have to connect with the word to use it as part of an impulse to say what you have to say with an intention.

### **The Moment I Started to Embrace Failure**

Failure has been the greatest teacher for me. As I mentioned before, I labeled many experiences during my training as *negative*, or *embarrassing*, I was unable to accept failure. I was afraid of not being good enough. And there were moments where I questioned my own truth. Matteo Destro, kept highlighting the word "love" during Crescendo and he was not talking about self-love where nothing else matters but you, he was referring to the love that is beyond selfishness. The willingness to give everything to the space, nothing more, nothing less, but what is needed. Thus, love is the ultimate vibration, it's something we deserve because it is our sovereign birthright, and the extension of love to one another is essential.

Working on Mask has giving me a freedom that I can't explain. There was no time to think about the words and no time to judge myself. I realized that when I let go of the fear of messing up my words, and focused, instead, on my need, my body guides me and my freedom supplants my fear. The mess is gone. If you are not in the mask you can't see anything. But when you are in the mask, you can see perfectly, and the word specificity has to do with every choice you make.

*"None of us are one dimensional. It depends who I'm in a relationship with. What we're doing is laying out our truths. We're going to blow it up and say, 'Ha! Let people laugh at it.' When you do that you have a clown."* - Paul Kalina

During the training Paul reiterated that we don't exist in only one dimension. He

encouraged us to always be open to the fact that though we may find the true essence of our artistry, it might change over time. Working with Paul has taught me the importance of becoming well aware of my behavior, habits, speech patterns, and physical traits. As time passed, all of this started to become more apparent. There were many occasions during the last semester of my second year when I was defensive whenever Paul would give me feedback. I would punish myself instead of taking it as new information for me to keep improving. In fact, the day I started to change my habit of being defensive, was when Paul talked to me about leaving the program if I was not willing to hear feedback from my mentors. After our conversation, I decided to give it a try. The motivation to change started with ego and pride (to let my mentors know, that I could do it). I finally began to feel the difference. The difference between beating myself up when I receive feedback, and having a positive attitude, embracing feedback as new information that will help me improve my work. Suddenly, the difference between the two started to make sense and I began to change the way I responded to feedback by seeing it as an opportunity to make adjustments (instead of coming down on myself), and then let myself to try one more time, or however many times necessary. As I started to change, I began to see my strength, and these events led to my relinquishing my ego and defensiveness. As I started to let go of these things I became increasingly aware of the moments I would push, or overdo it, just to *show* them something. Every time we try to create an experience before we actually do it, we create expectations, and we anticipate everything, but the moment we stop trying, the results are usually not what we were expecting at all. Paola Coletto would often say during Crescendo that the moment you are in the mask is not a glorious moment, so don't look for it, just be in it. She was right. When I found Olive it wasn't as if an angel just illuminated my soul, but it was the moment I played most freely. I didn't go my own way, I just let myself go for the ride.

### **When Things Started to Make Sense**

*“To enter into a mask means to feel what gave birth to it, to rediscover the basis of the mask and to find what makes it vibrate in yourself. After this it will be possible to play it from within.” - Jacques Lecoq*

*“This art is not about contemplating the beauty, like contemplating a mask for hours, with heaven knows what mystic concentration, before performing. It must be jolted into life.” - Jacques Lecoq*

As John Cameron said: ‘your only obligation in life is to be true to yourself’. I’ve discovered my own truth not by hiding behind, but surrendering to the mask. Any part of us that we may consider bad or negative is a gift that we must share. One thing connects to the next

“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away”  
.- Pablo Picasso

## CHAPTER 4. HOW CAN I DESCRIBE MY WORK?

All my classes: Meisner Technique, Voice Work, Movement, Accents, Period Styles, Grotowski, Shakespeare, Stage Combat, and even dance class and yoga, etc...have taught me many of the same things. All of these classes, at their core, share the same basic principles, but each class approaches these principles in their own way. Some classes resonated with me more than others. In my case, the work really started to click during Voice, Mask, and Clown. But that's not to say that the others were lost on me; on the contrary, if it weren't for the other classes and techniques, I would not have been able to discover what I did in the ones that I just mentioned. The classes are tied together, one concept or approach leads the next. The techniques come together as one. One technique, like one tree, has many branches, many approaches, but beneath its foundation a complex root system that feeds that the same tree, the same technique.

Before grad school my inspiration was, and always has been the creation of a character within a different structure, not just physical, but also vocal. Fear had been blocking me from following what truly made my heart burn during my first year; until, I started working on the show Roundabout and using Grotowski with Eric Forsythe. That's when my eyes opened and realized that I had been doing the same thing everyone else was. I did the same work as my classmates because I thought that my curiosity to create a character using a pussycat structure was wrong, or fake. It wasn't until "Roundabout" and using Grotowski that I realized I was doing things I didn't even like. So I motivated myself to explore that part of my work while applying what we were learning to the character work. I finally started to realize the *why* of my work, the inspiration for this art, and *why* I had begun to feel capable of doing such work. The expansion of my awareness extended to my emotions, my patterns, and my self-judgment (without hurting myself). Each year guided me to accepting myself for who I am, but my most recent experiences really pushed me to see myself in a different way. As Mateo Destro said, "*the mind in itself is not dysfunctional, it is a wonderful tool that we must only use it when is necessary and the rest, just listen to your body, because, presence is the key of freedom.*"

## CHAPTER 5. THE BEGINNING OF MY CHARACTER WORK

The beginning of my character work and embracing nature helped me become more conscious in my life. This mindfulness also applies to character's journey. Over the last three years, I've paid close attention to my habits and have realized how much it's not about accomplishing what I set to do. It's the same for character work – it's not about the end goal - but I would always look at this, exclusively. What happens then is that the future becomes more important than a step I have to take at that moment. That step becomes something untruthful. So being in the moment that sits between the beginning and the end, and not going beyond in this instance - is the key to what makes life and work on stage so fun and interesting. It's the not knowing what's going to happen. Being in this place allows us to really play, to be in the moment and see everything for the first time all over again, night after night.

All of this is part of the structure. All of this is part of the work as a whole. The given circumstances, objective, actions, tactics, imagination; specifically, is key to this work. By giving into it without fighting it my need to push and do more will dissipate over time. The technique must come first and once it gets into our bodies, the rest is play that we must apply at all times within the structure - the paradox of things.

### **I Don't Know Anything Except My Body and Breath**

*“Without error, there is no movement. Death follows.”*

*“We must be architects of the inner life. Outer movements resemble inner movements, they speak the same language. My main fascination is with the poetics of these permanencies, which give birth to writing.” - Jacques Lecoq*

The body and the breath are our voice's engine. We are vibrant beings, and part of our work is to let out that internal vibration. When we perform, our body structure changes radically with the space, when the space changes the body does too, the inside of the body changes perspective, but the space the body is in won't shrink. We all see the

world differently, and so do the characters. Each body structure tells a story, and it has life of its own. A change of place modifies all our attitudes and behaviors. Because constructing a habitable space, whether in real-life or on stage or for those off stage, its important to work out in advance the life that will exist in that space. By exploring my body I started to view peoples' structures differently. I have a deep curiosity towards their life stories looking at their body structure, because the expression of our bodies says more than our own words. This curiosity has become a passion of mine. I like to analyze body movements. I like to analyze the movements of nature and imitate them.

Each process has been somewhat different from the next. The types of show I have worked on have caused the process to vary in different ways. I've only worked on two shows where the script has been available to me beforehand, I like to read it before the first reading. I don't read the script to analyze it. I read to enjoy the story first and figure out what the story about. Another reason I do this is because I know my reading skills are not that strong and I like to be prepared for the first reading so I know what I'm saying without making any decisions. On the other hand, if I don't get a script ahead of time, I like to see the people I'm working with and observe their personalities and energy, particularly if they are in a scene with me. I do this because I truly believe in the energy others bring to the game and our energies have to work together. The first reading is sometimes the beginning of the game for me, and if we read the script for the first time, I don't ask many questions due to the fact that some things will not be clear to me until later that night, or the next day. Also, sometimes their relationships give me information about their speech pattern, and how many internal changes take place within people during their lives. Moreover, I tend to meditate, and tremor with speeches, but what works for me the most is the use of colors while trembling, and feel how that changes my experience, and the piece; Which helps to imagine different parts of my body to connect with that piece, or any image that might arise during the process. Using colors also helps me interpret my character and by interpreting my character using color I realize how much a particular color affects me as an actor.

During my character exploration, I don't like to hold onto one structure, but I do

like to start with some sort of idea based on the script. I also like to make choices right from the beginning, even though I'm aware that most or all of those ideas and choices will change for me over the course of the rehearsal process or even during performances. For example, during Quiet Witches I started with one specific thing: everything she did she was protecting her heart, physically and emotionally. I like to bring proposals all the time based on what I feel inside and how much the character is affected by the people involved in the story.

Working on my character analysis during movement class with Paul I started to change my perspective about the body theory and how each part is affected by either physical injuries or life situations. Even though it doesn't seem like a lot of information, it does tell me a lot about the person I'm looking at and what my personal relationship is with that character. In other words, I must believe that I'm that character in order to fully engage in my actions and relationships. Throughout this process, I like to work inside out first by finding a connection with parts of the body. I don't like to incorporate everything at the same time. I'd rather play with each part of the body separately then I just let it flow until I don't have to think about it. One of the most important parts of my process is my voice work, since it involves everything I do, during my pussycat exploration and structure.

*"Extending the voice into resonance, range and speech."* - Patsy Rodenburg.

I may not always start inside out. There have been times when I started from the outside in. For example, during NPF, Four stories was a play where we didn't have much information about the characters. On the first day I brought up a whole slew of proposals, until certain things started to click and connect with the speech and characters around me. One of my characters, Twain, came from a physical proposal in the rehearsal room, and the inner life of Twain started to develop as the interactions he had increased and more questions arose.

The summer I spent working with the Shakespeare Company, my character work

started to shift. During this process, using “as-if” was extremely helpful for me. I’m a true believer that we all have animal instincts, and incorporating that into the work helped me develop another side of this character. For example, using “as-if” with character work for animals helped me develop the character of Emilia, in Othello. I played a lot by imitating, and researching animals, and observing nature. Every morning before rehearsal I would go outside and observe nature and people's physicality.

Another thing I noticed when the show closed was what comes after. Paul talked about the experience of breathing in the mask. Every time I work with a pussycat structure and the physical choices I make are in my body, new things begin to arise: unexpected physical traits and body language. For example, during the Othello rehearsal process, my body started to move as if I had taken period style class before, mannerisms I never even practiced, nor knew about. It was something my body started to do instinctually, but I never noticed it until I took Period Styles with John Cameron.

After that summer, I made sure to keep following my instincts. The beginning of that year, while I was approaching that type of character, reminded me my passion toward body exploration and how much my work changes once I let myself play, because then I have no limitations. I like to find the possibilities in everything I do. There is some sort of connection within my body that I can't explain. I find freedom and I can't seem stop playing.

### **The Opposite of Freedom**

Regarding my character work, during the second run of Water by the Spoonful, I started to shut down choices and impulses. I was excited throughout the whole process and I was always ahead of the work. I had never been so diligent in my work as I was during this production. I worked on my lines all day long. I had many times where Rehearsals were a blast for the most part, but I noticed something in my body that didn't feel right, and I didn't listen to that impulse. I wanted to do the work right. As I would say in Spanish: *I ended up adding too much sour cream on my tacos*. I am highly sensitive, yet I was not connected with my body at this time, and I end up pushing an idea of what

my character was supposed to be and was supposed to feel instead of letting things simply happen. I got stuck. There were many times I didn't let my character move forward with the story. I held on to it so tight that it got stuck. In other words, I never played opposites, the actor was down, and the character was down, so nothing happened except the extension of mood and shape. The mood made me think it was real because "the actor was feeling it". However, Paul would explain that it became personal - a private moment. Today, I know that I simply wasn't allowing myself to play. I was constricted by own choices because a huge part of me "wanted to do it right". I realized that I was shutting out the *what is* at that moment and I was effectively shutting out the audience. The second weekend, fear took over my work and destroyed my journey.. This experience taught me so much about anticipation, shape, fear, and how the process of getting ahead of things can hinder my work. I thought it was going to be my chance to prove that I was good enough and that I deserved to be in the program. I didn't understand that the work was already there and that the sentiment was already in the space. I didn't have to recreate anything I just had to let myself play. But I didn't listen, so in the end it became mechanical and pushed.

Despite my irrational behavior, my mentality started to change when I began working with my director Nina Morrison and playwright Sam Collier. For this new project, I knew Nina was the type of director who likes to give as much freedom as possible to the actors so that they can find clues for the piece, and the collaboration of ensemble is really important to her. That said, 'Quiet Witches' as a great opportunity for me to set free my work and my play. On this occasion I started to work inside out, reading the script for the first time at the first reading and contributing proposals right away. Working with my character Daniela was an adventure for me, but also presented a challenge within my personal life because I realized during that time that my need for acceptance was making me even more invisible. To counter that, I decided to take my happiness seriously. With the help of Anne Marie, and my speech therapist, and the freedom Nina gave me, my self-esteem started to rise up again. My first proposals were not as well received as they were at the end of the process. I did my research, picked my colors for Daniela, and the relationships around her. My speech work was also very much connected to the way Sam

wrote the piece. During this process I focused much more on the language since I started to experience and develop most of her physicality along with the speech pattern. For example, at the beginning I found a certain rhythm in her speech that I couldn't keep up physically. Then I realized my initial proposal wasn't the right one. The more I started to connect with her speech and rhythm, the space around me, and her relationships on stage, the more everything started to have an effect on my physicality.

*“Undulation is the principle of all physical effort”-Jacques Lecoq*

Outside the rehearsal process, I used body undulations, as a form of communication, to play more with body structure. By the end, I entered the situations with much more clarity. On the other hand, I had changed my floor work routine by following John Cameron's advice to do less and only focus on what the character needs. My vocal warm up and floor work supported the physicality I was looking for. With this different approach, I started to take advantage of my blocks in order to explore where the character lived in me. Many of the attributes that started to develop were from my old body structure such as my shoulders forward and my tendency to push away.

### **From General to Specific**

John Cameron was right. There was no need for me to do so much before going on stage like I had been doing my first year. I was so afraid of pushing energy that I used to do so many things before a show because I thought if I could tire myself, I would not push energy. But again, it was my misunderstanding of the word “pushing”, lack of focus, and not knowing what to do when fear and nervousness manifested. That said, during ‘Quiet Witches’ I started to warm up only what was needed for my character and I was more grounded on what the action was during each moment. I would make mistakes, but without judging myself, and I would make bigger choices than I made during the “Water by the Spoonful” process. Also, what I found most helpful was the personal shift I made by trusting myself more and being more aware of when I was judging myself and whether I was in or out of the moment. I think that I never felt so grounded, and

comfortable on stage.

Throughout each process the moment always comes when my insecurity surfaces before opening night and I have doubts about certain choices. This happened most memorably during 'Quiet Witches' because of the physical choices I made. I began to doubt if my decisions were right. I anticipated my judgments and self-criticism. But my biggest insecurity has always been my accent. I tend to think to myself, '*what if I mess up a line?*' I'm always afraid to mess up a line and I have fear and doubts about what I know and, especially, being understood, like what happened during "Water by The Spoonful".

### **Using My Mask Work for Character Work**

I always knew mask was my life even though I had never trained with mask and didn't even know what mask work entailed. But I knew it was meant for me. Everything is movement. The year when I put a mask on I felt my body dancing with inner music. Everything had a meaning of its own and everything was like looking at things for the very first time. I discovered freedom, a light I'd been seeing for years but never opened myself to it. The beginning of mask work unearthed an abandonment of one extreme only to pick up another. The separation I tend to make when my mind begins to push or when I just focus in what is in front of me.

*"Theater is a physical event that I consider to be a powerful tool, one that serves the larger objective of 'revitalizing the art of the artists' and frees artists from following a particular method, technique or system, so that they may find their own artistic voices."*

- Paola Colleto.

I had another opportunity to work on a character after mask work with Paul, and that was during the NPF with Nina Morrison. This was our second time working together, but this time, I was drawn to freedom in a different way. I had realizations about my work during 'Quiet Witches', particularly that I had found Daniela's truth in me, even though I had missed the moments where she was softer with Amina (girlfriend). I missed part of her

vulnerability where the audience would have connected with her even more. I missed the moments where she softens and those where she puts her armor on. I understand now what Paul and Anne Marie were trying to explain to me about the two how I always seem to miss what stands between the two. Moreover, this self-examination made me wonder as an artist where Valeria can soften a bit more as well. Where is the middle ground within my own life?

What part of my life can teach me what we used in clown - *it is* or *it isn't* - and move on? What does that journey look like from its start point to its end? While working with Nina in Four stories I had begun to answer some of these questions as I started to open up again, which I believe is in part due to the cast being made up of all grad students. That made such a difference in my work. Each rehearsal was a lot of fun and it was all one proposal to the next. However, with my character Twain I had to find the truth in her, which initially I started from the outside in, but in the middle of the rehearsal process I got stuck again. Something about my choices was not quite right until one night I was commenting about my character and realized I wasn't truly living it. Then I took a moment to step back for a second. I went back to the script and found the rhythm of her speech without using my body. After finding that rhythm I went with what I had found and my physicality started to shift from what my first proposal was. Most of it was still the same, but I scratched some choices too where I realized that I wasn't truly committed to the speech or to the words. I had started playing with a body structure, but the mistake was in losing the truth that was coming directly from the script.

Then new things started to come to the surface for me; specifically, the time I noticed I had created an ensemble with my classmates during the process, and one of the few times I was actually listening to the audience. Only a few moments are unforgettable to me, especially those when I listened to my instincts, and owned each choice I made on stage because I was in tune with the movements of my body. I experienced things that were not expected during the runs - it's an incredible feat! As Paul would call it, John Cameron was right. There was no need for me to do so much before going on stage like I had been doing my first year. I was so afraid of pushing energy that I used to do so many

things before a show because I thought if I could tire myself, I would not push energy. But again, it was my misunderstanding of the word “pushing”, lack of focus, and not knowing what to do when fear and nervousness manifested. That said, during ‘Quiet Witches’ I started to warm up only what was needed for my character and I was more grounded on what the action was during each moment. I would make mistakes, but without judging myself, and I would make bigger choices than I made during the “Water by the Spoonful” process. Also, what I found most helpful was the personal shift I made by trusting myself more and being more aware of when I was judging myself and whether I was in or out of the moment. I think that I never felt so grounded, and comfortable on stage.

Throughout each process the moment always comes when my insecurity surfaces before opening night and I have doubts about certain choices. This happened most memorably during ‘Quiet Witches’ because of the physical choices I made. I began to doubt if my decisions were right. I anticipated my judgments and self-criticism. But my biggest insecurity has always been my accent. I tend to think to myself, ‘what if I mess up a line?’ I’m always afraid to mess up a line and I have fear and doubts about what I know and, especially, being understood, like what happened during “Water by The Spoonful”.

I always knew mask was my life even though I had never trained with mask and didn’t even know what mask work entailed. But I knew it was meant for me. Everything is movement. The year when I put a mask on I felt my body dancing with inner music. Everything had a meaning of its own and everything was like looking at things for the very first time. I discovered freedom, a light I’d been seeing for years but never opened myself to it. The beginning of mask work unearthed an abandonment of one extreme only to pick up another. The separation I tend to make when my mind begins to push or when I just focus in what is in front of me.

*“Theater is a physical event that I consider to be a powerful tool, one that serves the larger objective of 'revitalizing the art of the artists' and frees artists from following a*

*particular method, technique or system, so that they may find their own artistic voices.”*

- Paola Colleto.

I had another opportunity to work on a character after mask work with Paul, and that was during the NPF with Nina Morrison. This was our second time working together, but this time, I was drawn to freedom in a different way. I had realizations about my work during ‘Quiet Witches’, particularly that I had found Daniela’s truth in me, even though I missed the moments where she was softer with Amina (girlfriend). I missed part of her vulnerability where the audience would have connected with her even more. I missed the moments where she softens and those where she puts her armor on. I understand now what Paul and Anne Marie were trying to explain to me about the two how I always seem to miss what stands between the two. Moreover, this self-examination made me wonder as an artist where Valeria can soften a bit more as well. Where is the middle ground within my own life?

What part of my life can teach me what we used in clown - it is or it isn’t - and move on? What does that journey look like from its start point to its end? While working with Nina in Four stories I had begun to answer some of these questions as I started to open up again, which I believe is in part due to the cast being made up of all grad students. That made such a difference in my work. Each rehearsal was a lot of fun and it was all one proposal to the next. However, with my character Twain I had to find the truth in her, which initially I started from the outside in, but in the middle of the rehearsal process I got stuck again. Something about my choices was not quite right until one night I was commenting about my character and realized I wasn't truly living it. Then I took a moment to step back for a second. I went back to the script and found the rhythm of her speech without using my body. After finding that rhythm I went with what I had found and my physicality started to shift from what my first proposal was. Most of it was still the same, but I scratched some choices too where I realized that I wasn't truly committed to the speech or to the words. I had started playing with a body structure, but the mistake was in losing the truth that was coming directly from the script.

*During “Four Stories”, there is a moment I feed Keyla on stage. She was tied up so I had to feed her bread and we reached a point where I knew she needed to drink water because the bread was too much bread, and without even thinking about it, I just shoved the entire bread inside her mouth to save her and the entire audience laughed. After the show, it was amazing how everyone thought that moment was rehearsed, but it just happened in the moment. I understood then that they found it hysterical because it was a truthful moment. I was really trying to help her. However, I also encountered moments when I stopped playing with my partners and started playing for the audience. It’s the same as with the mask work, when you play for the audience the space shrinks and I can sense when choices are not based on what is happening on stage, but what is happening outside - life feeding the ego.*

After having experienced the preview shows, approaching the end of Mask class, and during my self-examination, I started to ask myself, ‘should I keep hoping to do things if hope is like begging for something new to happen? Or should I keep allowing the faith in my work to guide me?’ I had to make a promise to myself to surrender to what I no longer needed to fight. Surrender to the work because it’s never fought against you. I decided to surrender to the beauty of this art. I realized how much I’d been blocking my own path. I could no longer keep putting up barriers. After a week working closely with Paola and Matteo I came to understand that I have been fighting all my life and fighting the work too. I was embarrassed by my skills and everything I knew that brought me into the theatre. Then I started to see the work as my own life process: let go of “success”, “right”, and “perfection”. We were, “creating chaos with structure”. For example, going back to the opening night of “Four Stories”, there is a moment I feed Keyla on stage. She was tied up so I had to feed her bread and we reached a point where I knew she needed to drink water because the bread was too much bread, and without even thinking about it, I just shoved the entire bread inside her mouth to save her and the entire audience laughed. After the show, it was amazing how everyone thought that moment was rehearsed, but it just happened in the moment. I understood then that they found it hysterical because it was a truthful moment. I was really trying to help her. However, I also encountered moments when I stopped playing with my partners and started playing for the audience.

It's the same as with the mask work, when you play for the audience the space shrinks and I can sense when choices are not based on what is happening on stage, but what is happening outside - life feeding the ego.

After having experienced the preview shows, approaching the end of Mask class, and during my self-examination, I started to ask myself, '*should I keep hoping to do things if hope is like begging for something new to happen? Or should I keep allowing the faith in my work to guide me?*' I had to make a promise to myself to surrender to what I no longer needed to fight. Surrender to the work because it's never fought against you. I decided to surrender to the beauty of this art. I realized how much I'd been blocking my own path. I could no longer keep putting up barriers. After a week working closely with Paola and Matteo I came to understand that I have been fighting all my life and fighting the work too. I was embarrassed by my skills and everything I knew that brought me into the theatre. Then I started to see the work as my own life process: let go of "success", "right", and "perfection".

## CHAPTER 6. WORKING WITH MATTEO AND PAOLA

I was so proud of myself when I started to honor the beauty of my body and all the amazing things my body can do. Coming to appreciate the things I can do, and doing things I thought I couldn't do, I began to love who I am and realize the power I can bring to the work.

Writing my thesis I realized that all this work and exploration led me to “Crescendo” where the type of work is completely different from what I had done before, but at the same time it’s the basis of everything I have learned. It’s one of the strongest works that it actually touched on everything we have been trying to apply over the past three years. I believe that this work is the basis of every technique: Meisner, Grotowski, Stanislavski, and Period Styles. Every technique is based on this. This piece and Clown are the root of my work -the root my artistry.

### **My Journey During Crescendo**

*“Clown is a rediscovery of self: the playful self, the ferocious self, the vulnerable self, the artist.”-Jacques Lecoq*

During Crescendo’s rehearsal process I finally understood the significance and importance of presence and *why* the character has to come from a place of truth.

The beginning of this process didn’t revolve around reading or analyzing a script. It was about play, the creation of space with nothing, where nothing means everything. It was a collaborative process where we were all part of the big picture, although at the beginning none of us knew what the big picture even was. We only had a few ideas, but we didn't know what was going to happen, or what the show was going to look like, but we certainly knew it was something that required the best of ourselves - demanding our truth. The beginning of the process was an introduction to the space, to finding out what it actually means to fill a space with body movements, structure, space undulation, presence and play, at all times. We explored transforming the space using all our bodies. Because

of all our different energies the sense of play in the room never came to an end, and it shaped the space continually. As we kept putting all these things together, and did a very specific warm up with Matteo, the whole piece started to take shape. We started to shape the space, to open the space beyond walls. All the things we must do as artists in each production started to make sense. Paul always mentioned the expansion of the space by reaching each single corner, shaping space, feeling each other, and establishing specificity. Part of the journey was finding the mask, which started with all us improvising. We tried on different masks with body structure, and with the help of Matteo, and Paola, and the actor's proposals while playing we found ways to find the right structure for each mask during the rehearsals.

The entire process was a challenge. The masks are so powerful that it is easy to identify when movement and choices are not truthful; especially, when the actor is not fully committed. When that happens, you can see the separation of the mask from the actor. Even if you look right at the mask, when the actor is not in it, there is a separation between the mask and the bottom part of the face. Yet, when the actor is fully there, committed to the space, and fully present, it takes you into a different world where you can actually relate to those beings. As an actor, even though you can't see anything, when you are in the mask and fully connected, you can see everything very clearly. One of the most compelling moments I had during the rehearsal process, was when Matteo explained the meaning of the space for us to understand that when opening night is about to happen we must be willing to open our hearts to the audience. This is because they are not interfering. There is no separation between the stage and the audience. We must open the space and give it to them. We must welcome the audience into our space and invite them on the journey. After all these years of training, by the time we were running the show I could finally feel it. The moment before I walked into the space to warm up, I looked at it, and I felt this tingling running through my body. I was ready to play, to give the audience what we have created. It was a space where we all expanded our imagination, and skills so that we could create such a beautiful and magical piece. I was more than ready.

During the process, each mask started to wake up and have a life on its own. Olive, my mask, was the last mask to wake up. I found the mask's soul right away but I wasn't into the mask. There was a huge part of myself that wasn't allowing me to fully commit. It's very strange how excited and committed I was to play at the beginning of the process, and how quickly fear took over and blocked me from playing. I could feel the mask, but so many other feelings started to surface that mixed with the clown, and rehearsals, and I was really drowning myself. I was taking it too personal, and I began to turn my experience into something negative. Mask work is so powerful because it pulls some things out of you, and inexplicably you get faced with your habits, fears, and flaws. The beauty is that also pulls out your strengths, the power of your imagination and creativity. This is the key to everything, as Paola would say, "just play and fail gloriously. We will make sure we pick up the best part of it." Once again, she was right. Without failure nothing new would arise. We need failure. My problem was that I wasn't accepting what I was experiencing.

I started the process with fear and nervousness. Bad habits took hold. There were moments I started to doubt my skills, and wondered if I was the right one for the work and thought that *'maybe they won't cast me, but since it was my assigned role they would have to deal with me'*. The critic in me was very present, but I started to become more aware of my thought patterns. This was the first process where I blocked myself from making the big choices usually do. I had forgotten that this work needs my energy and that Valeria's negative thoughts about pushing energy was wrong. My blown up energy and big presence were necessary for this work and for some reason was necessary for the mask, because that energy is my truth. It's a big part of who I am, and I shut it down for almost three weeks. While playing, we spent the first half hour warming up together and working with the technique that our sensitivity would start developing later on. Conversely, each morning while doing my personal yoga routine on my own I would include the technique and the movements we were applying during rehearsals. However, by the time rehearsals started, Valeria, the critic was there. I made myself feel small and worthless and I stopped truly playing. Yet I came to realize that's something I tend to do when I'm working for somebody that I really admire. I also tend to judge myself before I

even try to do anything. As before, when I was in tune with my sense of play no one could stop me. It was incredibly fun. But I stopped listening, I sought after attention for no reason at all and I was afraid of failure.

One day I saw Paul playing. He was practicing his technique or just the movements and when something was off he would go back again and ask Matteo to look at it. I thought, why is it hard for me to do that? Why am I so afraid to hear that I'm not doing something right? And why, when we all are failing, I think is funny and decided to take risks too and am able to laugh about it later? Why when that happens don't I judge myself? Then I realized that failure is information that can teach me something. There were times Paola would say, 'don't show that you don't know how to do things. Act like you do know.' For some reason that lifted me up a lot. Failure is a friend and is fun too. I remember I got so frustrated so many times with my own judgments that my first thought was, "fuck it" and then would go on stage without thinking. Just a "fuck it" in my mind. I ended up doing outrageous things and I could hear Matteo saying, "That's it. That thing that you just found... keep playing with that!" I was very confused because I thought that I was being messy, that I was being a jerk by not caring about anything. I thought I was pushing and sloppy and I thought that all my bad habits were coming out like vomit. All I wanted to do was to leave the room and cry because I didn't see what was in front of me, or even hear my body yelling at me. But not everything was chaos. It may be confusing, but actually it was the best experience of my life. I learned more in one month about myself, and my artistry, than what I might learn in the next ten years.

### **What I Learned**

I learned that theatre is an art form where words are secondary. The body speaks the truth and words follow the body. The body is a true reflection of who we are and the way we interact with the outside world. Shaping the space is created by the imagination first, the space is shaped according to what my truth is, what I truly *see*, what I can touch, shape and transform into something else.

One night after our first run, a week before opening night, I was so frustrated that I had to sit down for a couple of hours at my apartment. I needed to ask myself and my body what I was missing; because, I knew from the very beginning that something was missing - a part of me wasn't fully there. I had a dream that night that Paola gave me a bouquet of flowers and asked me to take care of them. I was so afraid to mess them up that I said, "I don't know what to do with this," and she walked away while I was standing there holding her bouquet of flowers. Strange enough, the next day Paul reiterated something that we had been learning for a while and it was something that we had also been applying in the rehearsal process since the very first week. It was the counter-mask, which I understood as the opposite of what it appears to represent. For some reason that same day I was drawing a tree outside the theatre department as I pondered my recent dream about Paola. I thought about the tree's beauty and I realized that even though it didn't have any leaves or birds perched on its branches, it was still very strong and beautiful. Then I realized it was the counter mask for me. The tree was dying from the outside but the inside was very strong and nurturing to the environment and it made me think of Olive. I started to reflect on when I would get very frustrated with my work. I wondered why Matteo appreciated my "fuck it" mentally. I wondered how much my attitude of *not caring* was changing the play in a good way. Then everything clicked. I realized that Olive's mask itself was down, the structure of her mask is already down, and the actress was down too - so the mask was never alive. That's the counter-mask. If the mask is down the actor must be up. From that moment on everything just exploded. I went to the run simply being myself, not caring, and playing hard. After that, I was unstoppable.

Olive was down all the time and rejected by her friends during the show, but the actress was up, smiling enjoying the ride, laughing, and taking risks. It's the theory of everything, of presence too. It doesn't matter if the character is dealing with a complete depression, the presence must be up and radiating, the actor must be up and this concept applies to the clown as well. The clown fails or falls, but the clown always gets up. That's when I took flight. I was on a roll for two and a half weeks. During this time my structure kept expanding. Olive was taking over and it was the best time of my life. I never felt so

free in my life or on the stage. During the run it felt like I could do anything. I could care less about my diction, or the way I sounded. I wasn't worried at all. Every night was about playing, seeing where the play would take us, and feeling the audience. It's so hard to describe, but that feeling was so far beyond what I felt when I used to play doubles tennis. The best part is when the audience is already engaged right before we enter, because they are already with us, and it feels like we don't have to do anything, the audience is with us one hundred percent, and all we have to do is enjoy the ride and keep the energy level up. I would leave the stage exhausted but I could have done one more. I always looked forward discovering more things. After that I fell in love with failure. We are the creators of our own artistry. My accent wasn't about perfection, it was about playing with it and loving it – not judging it. In the expression of our bodies each movement carries language that we use all the time. I learned that even though there's silence there is always noise, and underneath the silence the world speaks all the time and we do too.

### **What Olive Taught Me**

Olive has taught me so much about keeping up the work, and about so many core lessons in life. So far, she has been the greatest teacher of all. She came from a very truthful place, and she taught me the importance of when and where things start to take place – when life seems easy and fun. She took me back to the times I felt immortal in my childhood. Every night was a surprise. I never felt so alive. This is the first time ever that I was fully satisfied with my work and proud of it. It was the first time I was proud of myself. I discovered my true artistry, my strength, and most of all, the power of silence. The power revealed what simplicity is in a very powerful and beautiful way. Because, when you surrender to *what is*, you become fully present and the past ceases to have any power. Such as my past and habits that I don't need anymore.

In addition to this, I know that this is just the beginning and that everything can change, but some things I must keep working on such as focusing on doing one thing at a time, finding simplicity and what's necessary for each moment, to practice everyday, to keep seeking freedom, to always let myself play, to believe and trust that I have it all. Having

lived all of this, I have found that most of my struggles are a product of my doubt and need for acceptance. But with Clown I started to understand that it's not about me, it's about the space, about the bigger picture and sharing everything I am, because when we hide it, or think that it's about us, it becomes untrue, and sort of hard for others to watch. On the other hand, when we bring it to the surface, and we reveal the truth then it becomes beautiful, it makes sense and, keeps us out and present. As for me, I know that when I'm open and playing there is vibration all over the place. I believe that I have a gift, and I can't wait to keep exploring this power I have, because one day it will make a difference.

*“The person you are is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor could ever hope to be.”*

- Constantine Stanislavski

As I keep identifying my work, I realize that I never treat anything as a technique or apply labels to specify what I do. I use technique to shape what I do as a sculptor uses tools and techniques to shape sculptures. With tennis, I never thought or talked about my technique. I learned technique to master the game I was already playing. My craft is like having an entire buffet to pick from anything I want, like a chef who wants to make a delicious meal knows how to use all the best tools and can even improvise when the conditions are not ideal to prepare something amazing. I see art like a painter creates their vision in their minds.

## CHAPTER 7. WHAT I LIKE TO SEE

*“Chaos is necessary for creation, but 'chaos' must be organized, allowing each person to put down roots and develop their own creative rhythms.”- Jacques Lecoq*

We must invite chaos within the structure. I used to watch other actors and see myself on stage playing the character. I would think about the choices I would have made in that situation, but now, I lose interest very quickly. It's hard for me to fully engaged while watching a show. If I find myself lost in the story, I turn my full attention to their bodies and physical choices. I like to see the actors with less dialogue and I'm curious about what they're doing and how they manage with the space around them. However, there's always some interesting things happening on stage and I like to see that. I like to search for the chaos and which actors are having fun and who are fully committed. Sometimes it doesn't matter if it's good or bad, because when they are playing there is always something very interesting to observe and learn from.

Furthermore, having observed my classmates over the last three years, it has become very apparent to me when they are not connected with their bodies or when they are having a hard time letting their ideas go. Clown and Olive taught me the importance of playing with my truth, and letting everyone see all the layers we carry. John Cameron is right. How many times are we actually not committing to ourselves and the space around us?, How much time do we waste when we make the whole space “about me” and abandon our partners, thinking that we are “doing something”.

The contamination of a character is a very difficult subject to me. The first time Paul introduced that concept is when I decided to do as much as I could to avoid the contamination. On the contrary, during clown I realized how much of my truth I tend to play with on stage, and how much I hide from the audience because I feel like I have to hold onto the experience; my selfishness gets in the way. It's always easier said than done, but contamination feels like betrayal to my character and their truth. Paul says that physicality has to be connected to the voice and to the character's truth. For me, when its

not connected, when its not there, it simply demonstrates that we are not listening to the mask and that there is a huge separation between the actor and the mask.

This is what I love to see in a show. It doesn't matter how amazing it looks. I love to see chaos, actors making bold choices and having fun, moments of truth and connection, seeing the mistakes made, and seeing how they are managed. I love to see the actor be in the moment, be surprised by what they are seeing, and of course seeing their passion. There are so many actors that have great technique, but if they lack heart or passion in their eyes, I'ts not interesting to me. I believe that for actors with such creativity, passion and the will to get better, the ones who will never stop working, that drive for play is what matters the most. I don't search for the best technique - I love to see the mess within the structure.

I had the same feeling during "Crescendo". As Paul would say to me, "I was sitting in the shit". However, one of the things I did apply in my work was making efforts to not contaminate the character. I made bold choices in the room to experience what feels right and what feels off. In Clown class, I found different tools and exercises that helped me discover where the truth lives in me - amplification with the nose on, listening to my impulse, finding more layers and possibilities, and always capitalizing on this need I have to make big things happen or make big choices - but in a positive way.

## CHAPTER 8. MY VISION, GIVING A CHANCE ON FAITH

One of the strengths I have, is my passion for this art, and my will and longing for more work. I'm very good at comedies and physical work. I truly believe I have a huge sense of play and risk, but as I previously mentioned, I believe that everything is possible. I don't believe in labels or restrictions. I grew up believing that I was capable of doing anything. My life is the theatre. I love TV work, but there's nothing else like being in the same space with the audience and inviting them on a journey with me, the feeling of a mess up and seeing where it will take me. I grew up wanting to become a hero. I'm so taken in by my mentor's work and passion. I know now that it doesn't matter if its performing or acting, one day I want to do the same thing as my mentors and have a chance to teach what I love, and perform for the rest of my life. I think there is a light inside of me that yearns to shine for others and for myself. Such a light has been there for a while now.

My last experience in Bogota, Columbia, was for the Fitzmaurice Technique. I got to see and feel a community of artists practicing compassion, revealing their stories, and teaching us the work. Also, during my training with Anne Marie Nest, Careena Melia, and my experience in Columbia this work started to make even more sense for me. I spent all of year one without noticing, then I started to open up doors inside of my body. Unlocking memories, emotions, fears, and even muscles inside me. I became very curious about my body and breathe.

*“Breath powers your body, voice, your mind, your heart and your spirit. Every inhalation takes in energy from the world and attaches you to it. On exhalation, you send what is inside you out in the world. In so doing, you touch and change the world with your breath. The connection to ourselves and the world is clearly reflected in how we breathe.” - Patsy Rodenburg*

**The Beginning of Everything, the Starting Point of My Life to Risk Everything I**

**Have**

Only the person who takes risks is free. I want to be that person. I'm looking forward to moving to Chicago after graduation and starting my career, while getting ready for my Fitzmaurice certification training. However, this is only a two-year plan. What happens next, we shall see. If I go back to Mexico it will be another opportunity for me to expand my horizons and explore what I have to learn, but in my own language - who knows where that might take me. Projecting myself far into the future, I hope to be able to buy my own space and start building a theatre. This is my ten-year plan and it's been a dream of mine that I've had for a long time: a space for future artists, and new plays that no one has ever heard of. A place of possibilities, where I can ask myself, what do they need that my talent can provide?

I will never stop dreaming, loving, and giving my everything to this art. I can't wait to see where I will be, and how much I will grow as an artist, but the most exciting part is not knowing what the beautiful journey of life has to offer me or what I will offer to my own life and the world around me.

*“Everything you do in life, everything you gain in life will rock and fall apart, and all that would be left of you is what was in your heart. Always be kind to everyone.”*

- Jim Carrey

## ANNOTATED PERFORMANCE HISTORY

### **Lady M**

Based on William Shakespeare's Macbeth

**Directed** by Matt Hawkins

**Designers:**

R. Eric Stone; Samantha Transkei; Emily Busha; Melissa Gilbert; Jess Fialko; Cassie Malmquist; Andrew Stewart; KatyBeth Schmid; Adriana Fernandez; Stacy Stoltz.

**Scenery and Props:**

Ojin kwon; Tina Nordquist; Stephanie Abresch; Josh Christoffersen; Jae Hee Kim; Kevin Loeffler; Paige Wilson; Tony Zabka; Nate Jedrzejewski; Tyler Brogla; Alex Burbach; Paul Crump; Trevin Cusimano; Cassio Hudson; Kelley Pfeiler; Ryan Steele; Craig Kelchen; Marisa Ramos.

**Costumes:**

Megan A. Petkewec; Barbara J. Croy; Bonnie Jenkins, Amy Price; Kim Long; Melina Neves; Emily Hinkler.

**Production Staff:**

Bryon Winn; Rick Loula; Jennifer Hall; Melissa L. Turner; Rebecca Tritten; Tiffany Sutterer; Katy Joines; Brooke Lewarne; JD Mendenhall; Amber K. Lewadowski

**Cast:**

Valeria Avina; Felipe Carrasco; Luke Cunningham; Dylan Davenport; Lesley Geffinger; Emily Hinkler; Elizabeth Hinkler; Matthew James; Nicole Lane; Allyson Jean Malandra; RJ McGhee; Bryan McIntyre; Luke Millington-Drake; Regina Morones; Scott Myers; Ben TeBockhorst; Breeyn Tighe; Nathan Wasson.

**Location, Dates:**

David Thayer Theatre

October 11-21,2012

**Role:** Witch 1

### **Roundabout**

Based on "la Ronde" by Arthur Schnitzler

**Conceived by** Basil Kreimendahl

**Directed by** Nathan Halvorson

**Creative Team:**

Costume design: Amy Price; Set Design: Kevin Loeffler; Dramaturg: Jenni Page-White; Stage Manager: Sarah Kate Patterson

**Cast:**

Valeria Avina; Kelsey Chingren; Alex Philoon; Chris Rangel; Michael Sotelo; Miriam Thoe.

**Role:** Ensemble

**Location:**

Cosmo catalano Acting Studio (Room 172)

**February 28, 2013 to Mar 02,2013**

### **Tantivy from the Rooftops**

New Play Festival 2013, Featured in The Reading Series

**Written by** Sam Collier

**Directed by:** Anne Marie Nest

**Role:** Tantivy

**Location:** Cosmo Catalano Acting Studio (Room 172)

May 06-10, 2013

**Saudades**

**New Play Festival 2013**

**The Reading Series**

**Written by** Ryan Olivera

**Directed by** Kristin Clippard

**Role:** Mother

**Location:** Cosmo Catalano Acting Studio (Room 172)

May 06-10, 2013

**Water By the Spoonful**

**Written by** Quiara Alegria Hudes

**Directed by:** Tlaloc Rivas

Artistic Staff:

Maritza Pineda; Careena Melia; Madison Colquette; Taesup Lee; Jess Fiako; Emma Zhang; Peggy Mead-Finizio; Lucas Ingram; Bri Atwood; Melissa L.F Turner; Rachel E. Winfield.

**Performance Crew:**

Breeyen Tighe; Haley Burbach; Jacob Melvold; James Morey; Tom Peterson; Adam Philips; Julia-Kaye Rohlf; Evan Lewis; Sydney Nguyen; Josh Ollendick.

Scenery Props:

Ojin Kwon; Leslie Delavan; Josh Christoffersen; Sam Transleau; Paige Wilson; Tony Zabka; Nate Jederzejewski; Paul Crump; Trevin Cusimano; Cassio Hudson; Dhyana Perez; Craig Kelchen; Marisa Ramos.

**Costumes:**

Megan A. Petkewec; Barbara J. Croy; Angie Esposito, Bonnie Jenkins; Audrey Eastin; Melina Neves; Emily Hinkler; Melissa Gilbert.

**Production Staff:**

Bryon Winn; Rick Loula; Jennider Hall; Melissa L.F Turner; Jason Tipword; Anthony Ramos; Rebecca Tritten; Tiffany Sutterer; Colin Bieber; Amber LeWarne; Kristan Hellige; Emily Busha.

**Cast:**

Christopher Rangel; Valeria Avina; Regina Morones; Kevin Argus; Morris Hill; Kristin Ho; Jordon Corpman.

**Role:** Yazmin Ortiz

**Location:**

David Thayer Theatre

October 10-20, 2013

**Quiet Witches**

**Gallery**

**Written** by Sam Collier

**Directed** by Nina Morrison

**Production Staff**

Scenic Design by Lucas Ingram; Costume Design by Melissa Gilbert; Graphic design by Zoe Woodworth; Stage Manager by Alisha Lemon.

**Cast:**

Valeria Avina; Elena Bruess; Bree de Souza; Aurora Green; Emily Hinkler; Kylie Jensen; Keyla McClure; Kashia Plazinska; Marisa Ramos; Miriam Randolph; Alex Rinehart; Zuri Starks; Weiyi Zhang.

**Role:** Daniela

**Location:**

Theatre B

Feb 28 to Mar 01, 2014

**The Playwright****MFA Director Projects**

By Mario El Capone Mendoza

**Directed** by Mario El Caponi Mendoza

**Creative Team:**

Lights: Kevin Dudley; Scenic Design: Lucas Ingram; Costumes by Jae Hee Kim, Angie Esposito

**Role:** Ensemble

**Location:** Theatre B

**Dec 05, 2013- Dec 14, 2014**

**Four Stories****New Play Festival**

**Written** by Micah Ariel James

**Directed** by Nina Morrison

**Artistic Team**

Dramaturgy by Kristi Banker; Scenic designer by Hannah Morris; Costume Designer by Melissa Gilbert; Lighting by Alex Ingram; Sound Design by Alexandra Johnson; Stage Manager by Katie Burnett; Assistant stage Manager by Therese Peachick

**Cast:**

Valeria Avina; Keyla McClure; Regina Morones; Kevin Argus; Ruben Lebron.

**Roles:**

Twain, winter, and Delaware

**Location:**

Theatre B

**May 2, 2014**

**Crescendo****Iowa Partnership in the Arts**

**By:** Paola Coletto, Matteo Destro, Paul Kalina, John Rapson, and David Bills.

**Directed by:** Paola Coletto and Matteo Destro

**Artistic Team:**

Writer/Director/Collaborator: Paola Coletto; Writer/Director/Mask Creator/Collaborator: Matteo Destro; Composer/Music Director/Collaborator: John Rapson; Collaborator: Paul Kalina; Collaborator: David Bills; Scenic Designer: Kevin Dudley; Costume Designer: Jae Hee Kim; Assistant Costume Designer: Desiree Smith; Lightning Designer: Bryon Winn; Assistant Lightning Designer: Joshua Hinden; Sound Designer: Andrew Stewart; Vocal Director: Anne Marie Nest; Dramaturge: Madison Coquette; Stage Manager: Alison Kochman; Assistant Stage Manager: Kelsey Petersen; Assistant Stage Manager: Lauren Watt

**Cast:**

Valeria Avina; Felipe Carrasco; Ari Craven; Aneisa Hicks; Morris Hill; Paul Kalina; Alay Arcelus Macazaga; Allyson Jean Malandra; Bre Anne McNell; Chris Rangel; Damitri Taylor; Rubina Vidal.

**Role:**

Olive (Mask)

**Location:** David Thayer Theatre

**Oct 09 to Oct 19, 2014**

**Family Dinner**

**Workshop Series**

**By** Sarah Cho

**Directed by** Nina Morrison

**Artistic Team:**

Playwright: Sarah Cho; Director: Nina Morrison; Stage Manager: Brigidta De Souza

**Cast:**

Bre Anna McNeill; Miriam Randolph; Connett Croghan; Kristin Ho; Weiyi Zhang; Valeria Avina.

**Role:**

Aunt

**Location:** Cosmo Catalano Acting Studio (Room 172)

**Feb 20 to Feb 21, 2015**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment by Eckhart Tolle
- The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom A Toltec Freedom by Don Miguel Ruiz
- Practicing The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle
- Four Desires: Creating a Life of Purpose, Happiness, Prosperity, and Freedom by Rod Stryker
- The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre by Jacques Lecoq and Jean-Gabriel Carasso
- Germaine, Blandine. Anatomy of Breathing. Seattle, WA: Eastland, 2006. Print.
- Adrian, Barbara. Actor Training the Laban Way: An Integrated Approach to Voice, Speech, and Movement. New York: Allworth, 2008. Print.
- Linklater, Kristin. Freeing the Natural Voice. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976. Print.
- "Practice." VASTA 12.2 & 3 (1998): 9-4. Print.
- Skinner, Edith, and Timothy Monich. Speak with Distinction. New York, NY: Applause Theatre Book, 1990. Print.
- Berry, Cicely. The Actor and the Text: Sound and Meaning. Print.
- Rodenburg, Patsy. The Actor Speaks: Voice and the Performer. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. Print.
- Crystal, David. "Part I: Shakespeare's Life and Times." The Language of Shakespeare. Print.
- Heman-Acka, Yolanda D. "The Science of Breath and the Voice." Breath in Action. 21-32. Print.
- Biel, Andrew. Trail Guide to the Body: How to Locate Muscles, Bones and More. Boulder, CO: Andrew Biel, 1997. Print.
- Carnicke, Sharon Marie. "An Actor Prepares/A Comparison of the English with the Russian Stanislavsky." Translating Stanislavsky. TJ, 0. 481-494. Print.
- Williams, Tennessee. Lord Byron's Love Letter. 220-230. Print.
- Ibsen, Henrik, and Rick Davis. A Doll House. United States: Smith and Kraus Play Licensing, 2006. Print.
- Benedetti, Jean. An Actor's Work on a Role: Konstantin Stanislavski. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Benedetti, Jean. *An Actor's Work: Konstantin Stanislavski*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Worthen, William B. *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama*. Fifth ed. Boston: Thomas Higher Education, 2007. Print.

"Shakuntala" from *World of Drama*. B ed. Vol. 1. Dover Publications, 1933. 169-226. Print.

Luke, David, and Goethe. "Part I: Shakespeare's Life and Times." *Faust*. Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Brown, Stuart L., and Christopher C. Vaughan. *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. New York: Avery, 2009. Print.

Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Othello (Folger Edition): William Shakespeare*. Jacksonville, IL: Perma-Bound, 1993. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Ed. Barbara A Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square: Pocket, 1992. Print.

Rodenburg, Patsy. *The Right to Speak: Working with the Voice*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Rodenburg, Patsy. *Speaking Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Print.

Kunitz, Stanley. *The Layers*. Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Ninja, 2006. Print.

Etherege, George, and Bernard F. Dukore. *The Man of Mode, Or, Sir Fopling Flutter*. San Francisco: Chandler Pub., 1962. Print.

Wilbur, Richard. *The Learned Ladies*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1977. Print.

Williams, Robert Neff. "Technique for Period Styles." *VASTA Conference Wokshop* (1996). Print.

McNally, Terrence. *Some Men*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 2008. Print.

Bee, Kay. "Random Thought." *Sensically Nonsensical Monlogues.com*. Web. 1 Sept. 2013.

*Playing Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company*. Acorn Media, 2009. Film.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1996. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Champaign, Ill.: Project Gutenberg, 1961. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1993. Print.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary*. Rev. ed. New York: Dutton, 1969. Print.

Shakespeare, William, and Barbara A. Mowat. *Love's Labor's Lost*. Ed. Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1996. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1993. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1993. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square, 1998. Print.

Ibsen, Henrik, and Peter Watts. *Peer Gynt*. Penguin Classics. Print.

Ibsen, Henrik, and Rolf Fjelde. *Four Major Plays*. Rev. ed. New York: Signet Classic, 2006. Print.

Strindberg, August, and Harry G. Carlson. *Five Plays*. New York: Signet Classic, 1984. Print.

Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich. *Chekhov: The Major Plays*. New York: New American Library, 1964. Print.

Neill, Eugene. *Long Day's Journey into Night*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1956. Print

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot: Tragicomedy in 2 Acts*. New York: Grove, 1954. Print.

Beckett, Samuel. *Collected Shorter Plays*. New York: Grove, 1984. Print.

Lorca, Federico, and Brendan Kennelly. *Blood Wedding:(Bodas De Sangre)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1996. Print.

Kennedy, Adrienne. *Funnyhouse of a Negro: A Play in One Act*. New York: Samuel French, 1969. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman*. 16th ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. Print.

Shawn, Wallace. *The Fever*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1991. Print.

Stein, Gertrude. ""A Portrait of One," "What Happened," "Counting Her Dresses," "I Like It to Be a Play," "The Must. Be Wedded. To Their Wife."" *Geography and Plays*. U of Wisconsin, 1993. Print.

Muller, Henry. *Hamlet Machine*. Digital image. Web.

- Rowles, Jan, and Edda Sharpe. *How to Do Accents*. London: OBERON, 2014. Print.
- Bruder, Melissa. *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. New York: Vintage, 1986. Print.
- Wells, J. C. *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. 3rd ed. England: Pearson Educated Limited, 2008. Print.
- Rudlin, John. "Jacques Copeau." *Directors in Perspective*. Ed. Christopher C. Innes. Cambridge UP, 1986. Print.
- Hall, Peter. *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003. Print.
- Laufer, Deborah Zoe. *End Days*. New York: Samuel French, 2008. Print.
- Aitken, Maria. *Style: Acting in High Comedy*. New York: Applause, 1996. Print.
- Bentley, Eric. *The Life of the Drama*. New York: Atheneum, 1964. Print.
- Bergson, Henry. *Laughter*. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Print.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art*. New York: Scribner, 1953. Print.
- Meredith, George, and Wylie Sypher. *Comedy: An Essay on Comedy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980. Print.
- Seyler, Athene, and Stephen Haggard. *The Craft of Comedy*. [2d ed. New York: Theatre Arts, 1957. Print.
- Pirandello, Luigi, and Antonio Illiano. *On Humor*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1974. Print.
- Corrigan, Robert W. *Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Grove, 1963. Print.
- Wimsatt, William K. *The Idea of Comedy: Essays in Prose and Verse; Ben Jonson to George Meredith*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969. Print.
- Kerr, Walter. *Tragedy and Comedy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967. Print.
- Dumb and Dumber*. Perf. Jim Carrey & Jeff Daniels. New Line Cinema, 1994. Videocassette.
- Onions, C.T. *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Ed. Robert D. Eagleson. Oxford UP, 2013. Print.
- Working Shakespeare: The Ultimate Actor's Workshop*. Cecily Berry: Perf. Claire Danes, Helen Hunt, Samuel Jackson. DVD.

Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. 3rd ed. New York: Dover Publications, 1971. Print.

Tillyard, E. M. W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. New York: Vintage, 1986. Print.

Blu, Susan, and Molly Ann Mullin. *Word of Mouth: A Guide to Commercial and Animation Voice-over Excellence*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Silman-James, 2006. Print.

Brodnitz, Friedrich S. *Keep Your Voice Healthy: A Guide to the Intelligent Use and Care of the Speaking and Singing Voice*. 2nd ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1988. Print.

Damasio, Antonio R. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999. Print.

Carey, David, and Rebecca Clark Carey. *Vocal Arts Workbook and DVD: A Practical Course for Achieving Clarity and Expression with Your Voice*. London: Methuen Drama, 2008. Print.

Cazden, Joanna. *Everyday Voice Care: The Lifestyle Guide for Singers and Talkers*. Print.

Kapit, Wynn, and Lawrence M. Elson. *The Anatomy Coloring Book*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins College, 1993. Print.

Kapit, Wynn, and Lawrence M. Elson. *The Anatomy Coloring Book*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins College, 1993. Print.

Lessac, Arthur, and Michael Lessac. *The Use and Training of the Human Voice: A Practical Approach to Speech and Voice Dynamics*. 2nd ed. New York: DBS Publications, 1967. Print.

Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text*. New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1992. Print.

Saklad, Nancy. *Voice and Speech Training in the New Millennium: Conversations with Master Teachers*. Montclair, NJ: Applause Theatre & Cinema, 2011. Print.

Bloom, Davida. "Voice-Overs Overview." *EdgeStudio.com*. Web. 1 Feb. 2015.

Cardullo, Bert. *Theater of the Avant-garde, 1890-1950 a Critical Anthology*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001. Print.

Shepard, Sam, and Joseph Chaikin. *Seven Plays*. Bantam Trade ed. Toronto: Bantam, 1984. Print.

Fornes, Maria Irene. *Fefu and Her Friends: A Play*. New York: PAJ Publications; 1990. Print.

Parks, Suzan. *The America Play, and Other Works*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. Print.

Ehn, Erik. *Soulographie: Our Genocides*. Chicago, Ill.: 53rd State, 2012. Print.

Cruz, Nilo. *The Color of Desire Hurricane : Two Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2011. Print.

Lyotard, Jean, and Geoffrey Bennington. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1984. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. London: Verso, 1998. Print.

Schechner, Richard. *The End of Humanism: Writings on Performance*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982. Print.

Fuchs, Elinor. *The Death of Character Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. Print.