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Creating a Sense of Relevancy: Directing Lee Blessing's Two Rooms

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Creating a Sense of Relevancy:
Directing Lee Blessing's
Two Rooms

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film & Theatre

by

Erick Wolfe

B.F.A. University of Central Oklahoma, 2013

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Acknowledgements

“I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks....”

– William Shakespeare

“The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude.”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

To acknowledge every person who helped make this production a success would require a full book of gratitude. To say I have been fortunate to have the family, friends, mentors, faculty, crew, and cast who gave of their time, effort, knowledge, and skill so selflessly is an understatement. I cannot thank you all enough for your constant inspiration, support, and faith.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father,

George M. Wolfe

You will always be in my mind, in my heart, and in your grave.

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis is a documentation of the production of Two Rooms, including analysis, research production book, script, documentation, and evaluation. The play was performed in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the University of New Orleans Performing Arts Center Lab Theatre on November 7th, 8th, 12th, 13th, 21st, and 22nd, 2015.

Key Words: Two Rooms, Lee Blessing, Erick Wolfe, Theatre, Directing, Drama, Acting

INTRODUCTION

The following thesis is a documentation of the process, research, and production of Lee Blessing's play Two Rooms. The thesis is divided into multiple chapters and appendices. The subsequent introductions will breakdown and explain the contents and purpose of each chapter.

Chapter 1 is a brief biography of the playwright of Two Rooms, Lee Blessing. The chapter provides background information on the life of the playwright, his works, and awards.

Chapter 2 is an interview with the playwright, Lee Blessing, given to the Diverse City Theater Company in 2010 about his play Two Rooms.

Chapter 3 is a directing analysis of the play. The format used is taken from Francis Hodge's book, *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*. Subjects of the analysis include: Given Circumstances, Dialogue, Dramatic Action, Idea, Character, Mood, and Tempo. This chapter also includes tables and charts of the supporting documentation.

Chapter 4 is the journal of the rehearsal process and the performance evaluations for Two Rooms.

Chapter 5 covers the directors/authors process with Two Rooms in a self-reflective nature. The director/author explores and evaluates his work.

Work cited section includes all books, articles, websites, and information used in research and production. They are listed by author and publication.

Appendix A is the Production Script. It includes cast list, scene breakdowns, rehearsal schedules, and line notes.

Appendix B includes production designs. It includes design ideas and images provided by the director for set and costumes. It also includes images for the projected images during the show.

Appendix C includes a copy of the program.

Appendix D includes all promotional material used in the production of Two Rooms.

The Vita lists the vital statistics of the director/author.

The table of contents at the front of the thesis will provide specific page numbers for each chapter and appendix.

CHAPTER 1:
ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

American playwright Lee Knowlton Blessing was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota October 4, 1949. After attending schools in Minnetonka, Minnesota, Lee Blessing began his college education at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, then later transferred to earn his Bachelors of Art in English at Reed College in Oregon in 1971. Upon graduation, his parents offered the graduate a choice between a trip to Russia or a car, Lee chose Russia. In Russia he found the inspiration for his award-winning and best known work, A Walk in the Woods.

A Walk in the Woods depicts the developing relationship between a Russian and an American arms limitation negotiator, and according to interviews with Mr. Blessing the circumstances of the play are based on facts. During the 1982 talks in Geneva, Switzerland, between USA and USSR on limiting medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe, the Soviet Yuli Kvitsinsky and American Paul Nitze left the formal discussions to literally take a walk in the woods. These two men would be renamed as Andrey Botvinnik, a Soviet diplomat, and John Honeyman, an American negotiator. A Walk in the Woods Premiered at the Yale Repertory Theater, New Haven, Connecticut, in March 1987. It was next performed at the La Jolla Playhouse in California, July 1987. A Walk in the Woods then premiered at the Booth Theatre on Broadway on February 10, 1988 in previews, and officially opened on February 28, 1988. The play closed on June 26, 1988 after 21 previews and 137 performances and was nominated for both a Tony award and a Pulitzer Prize, though it won neither.

Although the play was a success, it was not for everyone, as Frank Rich, in his 1988 review in the NY Times states “Mr. Blessing has made a subject as volatile as the bomb seem as pleasantly cool - and as safely remote - as his neutral forest setting”, and later stating “The men's growing friendship in turn conveys Mr. Blessing's unsophisticated, if quintessentially American, political message. A Walk in the Woods tells us that all people and nations are fundamentally

alike, and that all world problems could be solved if only the adversaries might build mutual trust by chatting face to face on a park bench. The villains are the faceless, self-aggrandizing leaders (of all regimes) who subvert the people's will, insuring that progress in arms negotiations is at best an illusion leading to a new military buildup". Another review of the play provided a different view:

In what may well prove the most provocative play of the season, Mr. Blessing focuses on the human equation in a superpower encounter. Brought to stage life in the committed performances of Sam Waterston and Robert Prosky, "A Walk in the Woods" proves an unusually stimulating entertainment. – The Christian Science Monitor

However, before writing A Walk in the Woods, Mr. Blessing attended the University of Iowa, to receive his Masters of Fine Arts in English. It is in Iowa where he would first begin to find success in playwriting. Mr. Blessing would go on to receive another MFA in speech and theatre, also from the University of Iowa. During this time, Mr. Blessing wrote his first published work, The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid. Marking his first success in playwriting, this play was originally staged as a student production at the University of Iowa, and went on to win the National Playwriting award in 1979 at the American College Theatre Festival, where it would later be performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

This success would lead Mr. Blessing to a successful career in playwriting. Below is a listing of his current published works, in chronological order:

- 1983: *Nice People Dancing to Good Country Music* (premiered Louisville, Kentucky, 1982)
- 1985: *Independence* (premiered Louisville, Kentucky, 1984)
- 1986: *Riches (as War of the Roses, premiered Louisville, Kentucky, 1985)*
- 1987: *Eleemosynary* (premiered St. Paul, Minnesota, 1985 ; New York, 1989)
- 1988: *Oldtimers Game* (premiered Louisville, Kentucky, 1982)
- 1988: *A Walk in the Woods* (premiered La Jolla, California, 1987; New York and London, 1988)
- 1990: *Two Rooms* (premiered La Jolla, California, 1988)
- 1991: *Cobb* (premiered New Haven, Connecticut, 1989)
- 1991: *Down the Road* (premiered La Jolla, California, 1989)
- 1992: *Fortinbras* (adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)
- 1993: *Lake Street Extension* (premiered New York, 1992)
- 1995: *Patient A*
- 1996: *Going To St. Ives* (premiered in Waterford, CT, 1996)
- 1999: *Chesapeake* (premiered in New York, NY, 1999)
- 2000: *The Winning Streak* (premiered in Waterford, CT, 1999)
- 2000: *Thief River* (premiered in Waterford, CT, 2000)
- 2001: *Black Sheep* (premiered in Waterford, CT, 2001)
- 2002: *The Roads That Lead Here*
- 2002: *Whores* (premiered in Waterford, CT, 2002)
- 2003: *Snapshot* (premiered in Louisville, KY, 2002)
- 2003: *Tyler Poked Taylor* (premiered in Louisville, KY, 2002)
- 2003: *The Road that Leads Here* (premiered in Minneapolis, MN, 2002)
- 2004: *Flag Day* (premiered in Shepherdstown, WV, 2004)
- 2005: *The Scottish Play*
- 2005: *A Body of Water*
- 2006: *Lonesome Hollow*
- 2007: *Moderation*
- 2008: *Great Falls*
- 2008: *Perilous Night'*
- 2009: *Into You*
- 2009: *Heaven's My Destination*
- 2013 *Courting Harry* (premiered in St. Paul, MN 2013)

Of all his plays, eight have been staged at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut during the National Playwrights Conference. Several of his works produced in New York City received Drama Desk nominations, awards, and nominations from the Outer Critics Circle.

Mr. Blessing would later return to teach at the Iowa's Playwrights Workshop and the Iowa Writers' Workshop in addition to his time as an instructor at the Playwright's Center in Minneapolis. Mr. Blessing currently serves at Rutgers University as head of the graduate playwriting program within the Mason Gross School of the Arts.

CHAPTER 2:

PLAY ANALYSIS

Hodge Analysis of Lee Blessing's *Two Rooms*

By Erick Wolfe

CHARACTERS

MICHAEL WELLS – 30's, educator

LAINIE WELLS – 30's, educator, married to Michael

WALKER HARRIS – 30's, reporter

ELLEN VAN OSS – 40's, representative of the State Department

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts:

1. Geographical location

- a) Room 1: A small dull-colored cell with one small matt, used to hold kidnapped Michael Wells who is always blindfolded and handcuffed.
- b) Room 2: Michael Wells' home office, emptied of all furniture, except a small rug, and the walls painted gray by his wife, Lainie Wells.

2. Date:

- a) The current past
- b) The present

3. Economic environment

- 1. Middle class American teachers

4. Political environment

- 1. Strained political relations with other countries
- 2. Election year(s) [this play takes place over 3 years, at one point an election campaign is indicated]

5. Social environment

- 1. Modern society
- 2. Middle East conflicts with all Americans & Westerners
- 3. Expected government cooperation by citizens
- 4. Tenacious inquiry by the press of government actions & inaction

6. Religious environment

1. Middle Eastern holy war / land war

B. Previous Action

1. Michael Wells and Mathison were kidnapped in Beirut.

2. Michael Wells was beaten.

3. Lainie moved from Beirut back to America.

4. Lainie Wells emptied Michael's office and painted it grey.

5. Lainie Wells has been in contact with the US state dept.

6. Lainie Wells has reached out to a reporter named Walker Harris

C. Polar attitudes of the principal characters, both in the beginning and at the ending

1. Michael Wells:

a) Beginning : Hopeful, reminiscent, practical

b) Ending : Dead

2. Lainie Wells

a) Beginning : Hopeful, lost, empty, disconnected

b) Ending: Empty, angry, hurt

3. Walker Harris

a) Beginning : Eager, helpful, hungry

b) Ending : Supportive, mad, Justified

4. Ellen Van Oss

a) Beginning : Cold, calculating, cautious

b) Ending : Cold, calculating, cautious

D. Significance of the facts in the total meaning of the play

1. The two facts that dominate this play are:

1. Michael Wells has been kidnaped and is being held hostage.
2. Lainie Wells has emptied her husband's office.

Michael's kidnapping is the central focus of each scene in the play.

Whether it is us seeing him bound and alone, or in how the other characters are dealing with this issue.

Lainie emptying her husband's home office, sets the tone for her emotional state, and the way it relates to those trying to "help" her.

Both of these facts create the "two rooms" of the play.

II. Dialogue

The dialect and structure of all characters fit in the style of basic American with no noticeable accent or word stresses. All dialog in this play follows standard conversation conventions and sentence structures. There are no word images that are not accompanied by projections of what they are talking about. Lainie, however, does relate stories of bird life on different occasions.

III. Dramatic Action

See **Chart A**

IV. Characters

See **Chart B**

V. *Idea*

A. Meaning of the title

1. Literally, the play is taking place in two rooms.
2. Figuratively, both main characters are in two rooms that are their prisons, one forced upon him, the other her choice of escape from society and to develop a connection with her husband.

B. Philosophical statements in the play: site actual quotations

1. Michael talks about how and why people stay in city's that tear themselves apart – "I don't know if there's ever been a city that has for this long been such a horror. That's taken itself apart brick by brick, life by life."
2. Michael talks about how war is our nature – "War isn't a tear in the fabric of things, it is the fabric. If earth is our mother, our father is war."
3. Lainie talks about the false value of hope – "And God or Allah or Nature or Fate – which we've already agreed is the author of hope – looks on with something more than indifference. With approval. The indentation in the cuckoo's back – that is the face of god. That is the chance of hope in the world."
4. Ellen talks about what it is like to hate Americans – "That to be an uneducated person in a small country speaking a bypassed language, worshipping an old-fashioned god is worse than death. That to be such a person without a revolution – or promise of a revolution – is to be shut in a room, blindfolded, with a chain around your ankle for life."

5. Walker talks about how to get the world to listen to you – “Nothing in this world happens because it ought to. You have to push people into it. Right now, you have a quality that lets you push.”
6. Michael talks about the illusion of time – “I never thought of time as a coat you could take off and put on again. Too cold to live without it – so we all keep it on. We hug it to ourselves, because if we can’t... Time is change. That’s all it is.”
7. Ellen talks about why the war on terror is important – “There are times when it becomes impossible to negotiate. When the very act of negotiating legitimizes a philosophy that’s... not human anymore. Those places where such a philosophy reigns have to be isolated. Those people who try to extend such a philosophy must be stopped. At any cost.”

C. How does the action lead directly to the idea (meaning)?

1. All of these ideas have at their core violence or loss. Violence took Michael away and created a loss for Lainie. Violence led to a terrorist getting killed, directly causing Michael to get killed. Loss is apparent not only in Lainie losing Michael, but when she empties the room, it loses its association with Michael. When Walker takes the photo, Lainie loses a piece of memorabilia. When Walker publishes his article, Lainie loses control of the situation. We are witness to several acts of loss and violence in this show.

VI. *Moods*

See **Chart A**

VII. *Tempos*

See **Chart A & Chat C**

VIII. *Tone*

Summarize the analysis by finding a word or phrase to declare the play as a whole.

“Devotion”

Chart A - Unit Breakdown

Act.Scene- Unit	Unit Title	Unit Breakdown	Unit Summery of Action	Mood	Mood Image	Tempo
A1.1-1	Michael's exposition	M- bound - remembers	Michael recounts	Reminiscing	A traveler longing for home	5
A1.1-2	Lainie's exposition	L-moving a rug-talking to herself	Lainie re-arranging, talking to herself	Frustration	Trying to figure out a problem	6
A1.1-3	Walker's Intro	W-meets L for first time W – questions L about room L –informs W it was his voice L – informs W about E arriving	Walker questions Lainie. Walker finds out about Ellen. Walker states he wants to tell Lainies story	Questioning and Hesitation	An awkward blind date	4
A1.1-4	Ellen's Intro	E – gives L info W – brings in tea E- upset about W's presence L – questions E about Michael W & E talk about hope L – directly asks about M's release	Ellen provides information Ellen dismayed at Lainie's openness with the press Lainie searches for information about Michael Ellen dodges Walker interrogates Ellen Ellen deflects	Inquisitive and side-stepping	Trying to get a stubborn friend to admit they were wrong	6-7

		E – evades the question W – attacks E about policy E – explains why she comes to L’s house E & W argue again E – leaves W - Leaves	Lainie seeks solitude			
A1.1-5	Michael remembers & questions	M – relates his situation M – remembers the hand M – questions why	Michael remembers the lost hand Michael ponders the need to stay Michael is angry about a city destroying itself	Reminiscent and angry	Remembering an ex who betrayed you	7
A1.1-6	Lainie pictures Michael	L – discusses Michaels aging face	Lainie talk to Michael’s memory about his aging face	Longing	Imagining a loved one unseen seen in a long time	3
A1.2-7	Lainie Reminisces	L – shows W photos	Lainie reveals to Walker photos Michael took	explaining	Showing slides	5
A1.2-8	Walker wants permission	L – struggles with photos W – presses for interview L – explains she no longer teaches L – explains her research	Lainie stops viewing photos due to difficulty Walker presses for interview Lainie evades by talking about her research	Pressing Evasion Anger	Trying to get a friend to see your point of view	4 building to 7

		W – presses harder for interview L – gets upset and kicks W out	Walker becomes insistent about interview Lainie kicks Walker out			
A1.2-9	War as Human Nature	W – examines war W – feels alive W – justifies his captors behavior	Walker existential ponderings on war Walker feels alive and part of the real world Walker relates to his captors	Connected	Empathizing with those you disagree with	7
A1.3-10	Consequences of Article	E – informs L of article L – upset about article E – tries to get L to disavow article L – accuses E of not caring E – tries to give L hope L – gets irate L – relates the story of te cuckoo & Warbler	Walker has published the article without Lainies knowledge. Ellen accuses Lainie of making things worse Lainie blames Ellen for not doing enough to help her husband Ellen tries to lend hope to Lainie Lainie relates a story of how hope is of no use in nature	Betrayal Hope	Trying to find the bright side of bad news	6
A1.3-11	Ellen's Dream	M – enters E's thoughts E – is not surprised, unbothered	Michael enters Ellens' thoughts Ellen unbothered by Michael and his situation	Indifference	Trying to get someone to feel your pain	5

		<p>M – explains being a stored object</p> <p>E – claims indifference</p>	<p>Michael explains how he is feeling like a stored object</p> <p>Ellen bluntly states she is indifferent to his situation</p>			
A1.4-12	Lainie Feels Betrayed	<p>W – tries to explain his situation</p> <p>L – berates W</p> <p>L – explains the room</p> <p>L – agrees to do an interview</p>	<p>Lainie feels betrayed after walker publishes an article about her and the room.</p> <p>Walker tries to explain, but Lainie is having none of it.</p> <p>After a heated exchange, Lainie decides to do an interview.</p>	<p>Betrayal</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Loss of privacy</p>	A deep secrete publicly exposed by a friend	9
A1.4-13	Michaels Mind	<p>M – remembers his office</p> <p>M – talks of the child they never had</p>	<p>Michael explains how he fills his time.</p> <p>Michael remembers his old office</p> <p>Michael dreams of the child they never had, and how he would have looked</p>	<p>Reminiscent</p> <p>Hopeful</p> <p>Dreamy</p>	Talking about a dream	5
A2.1-14	Ellen delivers the facts	<p>E – shows photos</p> <p>E – explains terrorism</p>	<p>Ellen shows photos of terrorist, hostages, and the damage of war</p> <p>Ellen explains what it means to be American</p> <p>Ellen relates the politics of terrorism</p>	Blunt	Explaining facts to a class	6

A2.1-15	Lainie & Michael talk	<p>L & M talk about what's been going on</p> <p>M – opens the window</p>	<p>In a dream moment, Lainie and Michael catch up as if together in real life.</p> <p>Lainie explains all that has been going on with Walker & the interviews, and Michael opens the window to let the light in.</p>	<p>Connected</p> <p>Accepting</p>	Getting to share a touching moment talking about nothing	5
A2.1-16	Crisis Management	<p>E – accuses L of creating a problem</p> <p>L – upset that E isn't trying to help M</p> <p>E – tries to explain the current situation to L</p> <p>E – states M is not a priority</p>	<p>Ellen is upset that Lainie has been reaching out to the press during a current hostage situation.</p> <p>Lainie is trying to get Michael released with the current hostages</p> <p>Ellen informs Lainie that Michael is not an immediate cause and that he is more long-term</p>	<p>Frustration</p> <p>Dismissive</p>	Waiting in line while everyone but you, get helped	7
A2.1-17	The Picture	<p>L- gives W a picture to use for the interview</p> <p>W – gets excited about putting pressure on the government</p>	<p>Lainie gives Walker a picture of Michael and Mathison together</p> <p>Walker is excited to get the picture out to the papers and TV</p> <p>Lainie is nervous</p> <p>Walker reassures her</p>	<p>Nervous</p> <p>Excited</p>	Giving someone a present that is very valuable to you	8

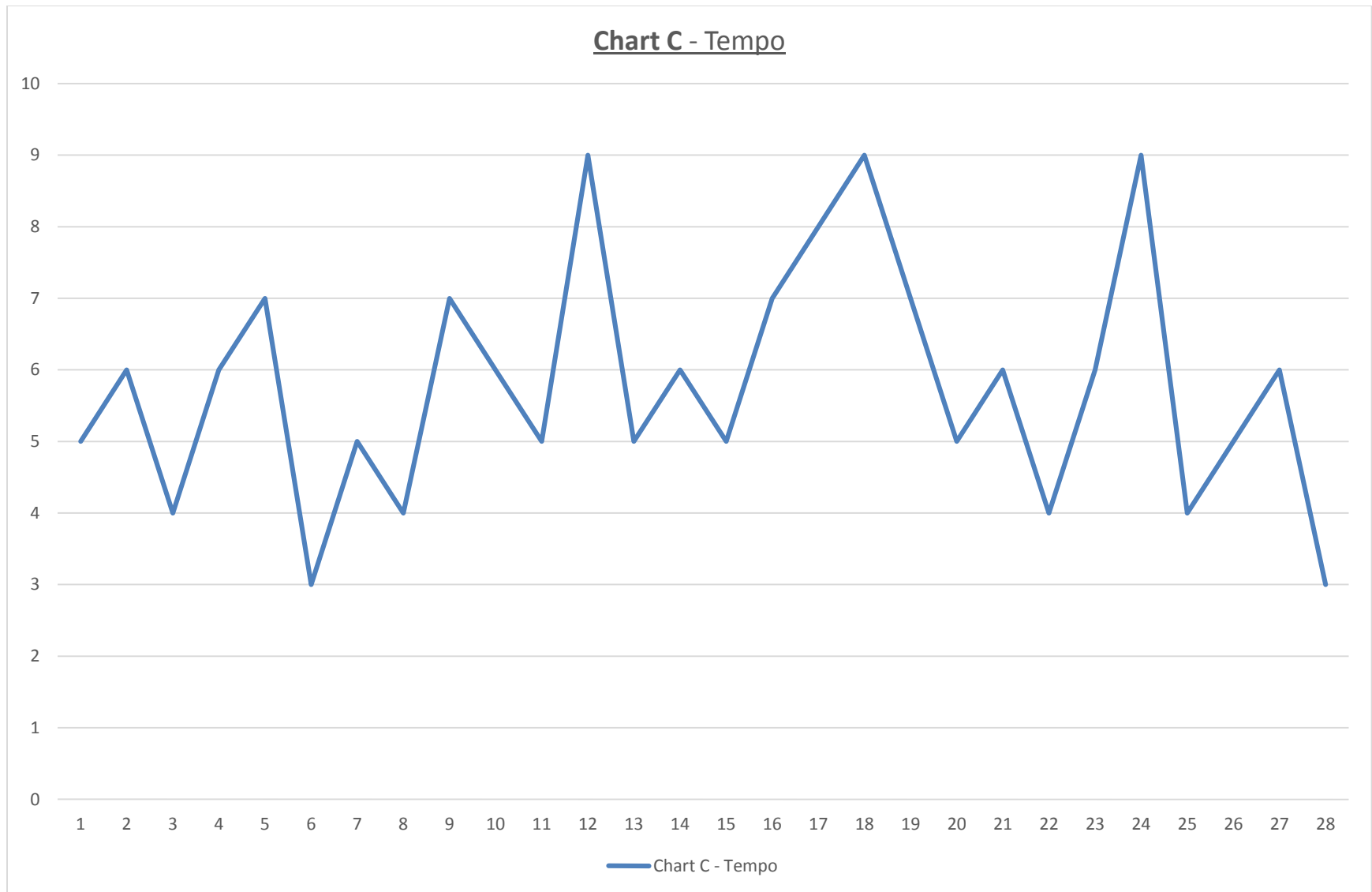
A2.1-18	Remembering Mathison	M – remembers Mathison passing	<p>Michael dreams he is moved again.</p> <p>Michael hears Mathison and calls out his name</p> <p>Michael is beaten again</p>	Panic	Waking from a nightmare	9
A2.2-19	Celebration	<p>W – tries to get L to celebrate</p> <p>L – uncomfortable</p> <p>W – pushes</p> <p>L – pulls back</p>	<p>Walker is excited about the picture and the effect it is having</p> <p>Lainie is uncertain if what they did was right</p> <p>Walker explains how pressure on the government works</p> <p>Lainie gets upset, kicks Walker out</p>	<p>Excitement</p> <p>Eager</p> <p>Angry</p>	Trying to convince yourself what you did was the right thing	7
A2.2-20	Time	L – Lainie examines time	Lainie examines and laments time and its loss	loss	Thinking of what could have been	5
A2.2-21	Mathison's Release	<p>W – tries to encourage l</p> <p>L – upset about Mathison being released</p> <p>L – no longer feels M</p> <p>W – comforts L</p>	<p>Walker enters while Lainie is hiding in the corner</p> <p>Walker tries to convince Lainie that her actions helped</p> <p>Lainie upset that it was Mathison and not Michael that was released</p> <p>Walker comforts Lainie as she cries</p>	<p>Anger</p> <p>Avoidance</p> <p>Reassurance</p>	Finding a silver lining on a dark cloud	6

A2.2-22	Loss of Time	M – ponders the importance of time	Michael ponders the meaning of time when time has no meaning	Isolation loss	Trying to remember something you’ve forgotten	4
A2.3-23	Killing one of theirs	E – returns from vacation E – delivers news of terrorist killed L – gets upset E – delivers cold facts	Ellen returns from yearly vacation to deliver news to Lainie of a terrorist leader killed in Italy Lainie fears that this may cause problems for Michael Ellen talks cold facts about war Lainie is upset	Surprise Fear anger	Having to deliver bad news and justifying it as necessary	6
A2.3-24	Death Threat	W – tries to console L L – upset about death threat against m W – tries to calm L down L – rages on	Lainie becomes upset about a death threat on Michael Walker tries to talk her down Lainie starts to panic Lainie becomes violently upset Walker holds her	Panic Reassurance Anger Violent Concern	Helping someone cope with bad news	9
A2.3-25	The Final Move	M – is moved M – talks about all that happens constantly in the world Michael is killed	Michael recounts being moved Michael listens to the world around him and all that happens in the world simultaneously Michael is shot to death	Calm Peaceful Reminiscent	That moment of pure clarity	4

A2.4-26	Final news	<p>E & W – wait for Lainie</p> <p>E – tells W how they miscalculated</p>	<p>Ellen and Walker wait for Lainie to arrive</p> <p>Ellen tells Walker how she normally delivers bad news</p> <p>Ellen explains to Walker how she is going to tell Lainie the truth</p>	<p>Remorse</p> <p>Honesty</p>	Confessing a sin	5
A2.4-27	The discovery	<p>L – enters and hears E tell W the facts</p> <p>L – releases her frustration on E</p>	<p>Lainie walks in as Ellen explains what happened to Michael</p> <p>Ellen tries to apologise and Lainie will have none of it</p> <p>Ellen goes into her standard government apology</p> <p>Lainie tells her to go to hell</p> <p>Lainie explains how she wishes she could forget the pain and put people away</p>	<p>Sympathetic</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>cold</p>	Finally getting closure	Start at 4 building to 6
A2.4-28	Devotion	L – talks to Michael	<p>Lainie tells Michael about the African hornbill</p> <p>Lainie explains how it's not a prison but a fortress for their devotion</p>	<p>Contentment</p> <p>Devotion</p>	Coming to peace with an event	3

Chart B – Character Chart

Name	Desire	Will	Moral Stance	Decorum	Adjectives
<u>Michael Wells</u>	To be released. To be reunited with Lainie. To return to his previous life. To live.	Starts MEDIUM , then becomes Weak at end of play: At the start he is hopeful and practical. By the end of the play he is disorganized and lost. He never has control in the play, and is always the subject of control by others.	A teacher who believes that life matters. Though he is forced to be away from his wife, she is always in his thoughts. Complete devotion to his wife.	Unshaven, bound, wearing prisoner uniform, unwashed.	Devoted, wishful, reminiscent, disoriented, hopeful
<u>Lainie Wells</u>	To be reunited with Michael. To be heard and listened too.	Starts MEDIUM , then becomes STRONGER at end of play: at the beginning she is lost, confused, disconnected with people. By the end of the play she has a strong conviction. She is angry and upset at the situation and how things are handled. She is constantly manipulated throughout the play.	Separated from her husband, she maintains her devotion to him even when unsure if he is alive.	Plane clothing, uninterested in appearance. Detached from social expectations.	Devoted, lost, empty, hurt, reminiscent, disoriented, hopeful
<u>Walker Harris</u>	To report the story. To connect with Lainie. To get the scoop.	STRONG: throughout the entire play he is determined and focused on the story at hand. He is supportive, though manipulative at points, of Lainie. Constantly initiates actions throughout the play.	A reporter who will do anything to get the story due to his devotion to his job.	A disheveled professional appearance. Well-manicured, with a slight ego.	Devoted, eager, determined, focused, supportive
<u>Ellen Van Oss</u>	To maintain the status quo. To do her job. Maintain the integrity of the State Department.	MEDIUM: She maintains a constant focus of ridding the middle line of policy. Always making sure to be slightly supportive without guaranteeing any results. Gets upset when she is not listened too, but never directly initiates any action.	Believes America is the best country, and that everyone should respect the government and its processes. Devoted to her job and country.	Clean pressed, professional appearance. Everything in its place. Very "Government" look	Devoted, cold, calculating, cautious, focused



Two Rooms Scene Break Downs

	Act 1													Act 2														
	Scene 1						2			3		4		Scene 1					2				3			4		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Arielle -Lainie		x	x	x		x	x	x		x		x	(x)		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x			x	x
Nathan - Walker			x	x			x	x				x					x		x		x			x		x	x	
Tiffany - Ellen				x						x	x			x		x							x			x	x	
Zachary - Michael	x				x	(x)			x		x		x		x		(x)	x				x			x			x

(x) = non speaking

Two Rooms Prop Break Downs

	Act 1													Act 2														
	Scene 1						2			3		4		Scene 1					2				3			4		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
chair				x						x	x			x									x			x	x	
tray				x																			x					
Tea set				x																			x					
Tea cup				x							x												x					
Coffee cup																			x									
photograph																	x											
Glass of Champagne																			x									
Binders	x				x	x			x		x		x		x		(x)	x				x			x			
Blindfold	x				x	x			x		x		x		x							x						
Projections							x							x														

CHAPTER 3:

REHEARSAL JOURNAL

Design meeting Saturday, Aug 29th 10:30 am - Two Rooms & Agnes of God

In attendance:

Diane Bass – Lighting Design

Kevin Griffith – Set Design

Tony French – Costume Design

Beau Bratcher – Agnes of God Director

Erick Wolfe – Two Rooms Director

I presented my ideas for what I envisioned my overall themes to be. Tony stated he has not begun work on the plays yet, and it would be a few weeks before he even started working on them. I presented him with my photo concepts for how I envisioned the four characters. Even though I do not have the full show cast yet, I was able to present the costumes I felt would best fit the show. Next Diane and I talked about the lighting needs, especially focusing on the projections needed for the show. Afterward, Kevin and I talked about the overall feel I wanted to achieve with the set design. I wanted to keep it as simple as possible while conveying the ideas of isolation, confinement, and despair. He presented a quick sketch for an initial set. I liked it very much. He is keeping the shapes simple, and the color muted. I am excited to see what direction he goes in with his understanding of my point of view.

Beau and I set an audition date for next Tuesday evening, so we can finish casting our shows. At which time, we will sit down with our schedules and develop a rehearsal schedule, focusing our attention on what will work with having to share a space, and make the best use of our time.

Stage managers have not been selected for these two shows at this time.

Next meeting tentatively set for September 18th.

9/28/15 – First Read through 6pm

In attendance:

Milan

Tiffany

Arielle (and her son)

Zach

Nathan

Absent: Brittney

After introductions, I discussed my concept for the show, the history of the time period the play was written in, basic set design, what I expected from the performers, and fielded any questions.

The read through went well, though there were some corrections on pronunciations, and explaining of some words. Arielle is going to have to focus on hitting all the consonants, and not drop off the end of words. Tiffany's biggest issue is going to be not stopping at every comma and period as if it is a new thought. She needs to learn to connect the language of the text or else she is going to drag down the tempo and rhythm of her scenes. I have always noted this issue about her in all her previous productions at UNO.

After the read though, I fielded a few more questions, then broke early.

9/29/15 – Second Production Meeting

Quick meeting today. In attendance:

Milan

Diane

Tony

Kevin

Myself.

Tony let me know he has ordered the orange jumpsuit. We also touched base about the blindfold just being a strip of black fabric, which he will provide. As he puts together the rest of the costumes, he will call me in to go over them.

Diane and I touched base on lighting, then discussed binders for Zach to wear instead of handcuffs.

Diane, Milan, and myself went down to Kevin's office to look at the set model, and to discuss prop ideas. Options were presented for various mats for the floor. We also discussed tea sets. As he does more research, I will look over it to find the objects I think will work best for this production.

9-29-15 – Second Read through 6pm

In attendance:

Brittney

Tiffany

Arielle

Zachary

Nathan

Absent: Milan

Tonight's read through went very well, with a lot of energy. As we read through the script we stopped after each unit and asked questions, and thought of ideas and energies. Everyone is working very well together and communicating clearly and respectfully. We discovered some interesting ideas I am looking forward to putting on stage in later rehearsals.

Next rehearsal we will start staging, and by Thursday I will send out a scene breakdown and call schedule.

10-1-15

So I get my schedule done, triple checking everyone's availability. We have 17 possibly 18 rehearsals before tech, due to schedule conflicts, Fall Break, and Halloween. I get it all done, and emailed out, and Arielle who is the main lead, and also the one with the most conflicts, comes by to tell me she has a conflict this Saturday that she didn't list, so now instead of working the 10am to 3pm schedule, she can only make 10-11:30. Joy...

10-2-15 rehearsal

After the scheduling issue was resolved, I was able to run a good rehearsal. Made some nice discoveries for all involved.

10-3-15 rehearsal

I called Tiffany, to see if she could come in early, and she did. This allowed us to really delve into her mono at the top of Act 2. Also worked in depth on Zachary's Monologues. Made some nice connections. He will find more when he is able to get his script out of his hand.

10-4-15 rehearsal

You have got to be kidding me! I get a call from Zachary, he can't make rehearsal today due to a work meeting he forgot to put on the conflict schedule. Had to change rehearsal schedule from 10-3 to 1-3. Worked on the scene between Arielle and Tiffany for 2 hours. Made some great discoveries, will see if they can keep it when we do a room run tomorrow (hopefully, if I can get everyone to show up at rehearsal, including my ASM who I only have seen once).

10-5-15 rehearsal

All call, Milan has schedule conflicts on Mondays, so Britany was to cover for him, she was an hour and a half late. We ran the show strait through, after run, cut Arielle and Zach, then did some scene work between Tiff and Nathan. We found some great discoveries in their two shared scenes. I am looking forward to see how much of it sticks, as they are both still working with books in their hands.

10-6-15 Production meeting

In attendance

Diane

Kevin

Milan

Myself

Talked about tech schedule, and finalized it. Kevin and I talked about the set, and props for use. We decided on a nice tray for the tea / coffee set.

I notified everyone I would not be available due to oral defense next week, we all decided we would just catch each other in the halls if we needed to talk about anything.

10-6-15 rehearsal

Great rehearsal between Nathan and Arielle (who was late). Tiff had car issues and was unable to attend rehearsals. For the scenes where Nathan was off book, there was some great progress being made. But when both he and Arielle were on book, discoveries took a back seat to them just getting their lines correct. After starting at 5, by 8:30 everyone was exhausted and work was not really moving forward, so we called it an early night. I am looking forward to seeing this all together next week. We will be dark for the next 4 days, so our next rehearsal will be Sunday. Hopefully everyone can remember what they worked on, and bring it all back to the next rehearsal.

10-11-15 rehearsal

Worked with Zach on his monologues. We found some really nice moments he can play with as he sits there bound and blindfolded middle stage. We were able to incorporate some levels into his movement, and find the right vocal quality for the moments. After we finished working all his moments, it was ten till 12pm. I had forgotten that Tiff had requested off the 9 through 12 on the schedule. So I went ahead and released Zach, as Arielle was not scheduled till 1pm. However, about ten min after Zach leaves, Tiff comes walking in, her plans were canceled. Though I was happy to have her in rehearsal, I wish she could have let me know a little sooner. We worked her big act 2 monologue for a while. We found some great moments, and good movement patterns. Arielle and Nathan (who said he might be able to make it) showed up at 1. We worked the big scene at the end of the play with all three of them. We made some good discoveries. When Arielle gets off book I am looking forward to some great work.

10-12-15 rehearsal – 1st off book night

Tonight I made an actor cry. Well, not really, I will get to that later. Rehearsal started at 6. I had no stage management. Milan cannot do Mondays, so I am supposed to have an ASM. However, my ASM, Britney, has only made it to two rehearsals, and texted me this afternoon, that she would not be able to make it. So on our first off book night, I get to spend it with my face in the script, instead of working with the actors, or even getting to see what they are doing. But at the moment that doesn't even matter, because Arielle isn't at rehearsal. So I work with the other three on individual scenes. At 8pm (2 hours late) Arielle finally shows up for rehearsal, and we jump right into a full run of the show. Arielle cannot accomplish getting through one sentence without calling for line. I tell her to just grab her book. Even on book she is stumbling all over the place, and slowing down the other actors, all of whom are off book. As we hit the end of the play, I congratulated everyone on their hard work, give some scheduling notes, and thank them all again. Arielle is sitting in the middle of the stage. After everyone leaves, she starts crying. She is mad at herself, and starts giving several excuses. I tell her to let it go, and come back strong tomorrow. She pulls herself together and goes. So, technically she was upset at herself and made herself cry.

10-13-15 1pm

I officially pass my Comps. *Two Rooms* becomes my official thesis project.

10-13-15 – rehearsal

Nice rehearsal tonight. We were able to really work the scenes where Tiff, Arielle, and Nathan are all on stage together. Arielle was able to come back strong from last night's stress, and she really came back with determination. She is still horribly dependent on line calls, but she is

getting there. The hardest part about working with her is the fact that she easily becomes distracted during rehearsals and tries to apologize for everything. This becomes distracting to her scene partners, and me. However, she was able to work her way through the scenes, and some nice discoveries were made. For Arielle, you have to find the emotional motivation for her character. Giving her an action, or reason does not help her connect with the moment on stage. You have to tell her what her character's emotional need is in the moment. I feel this is the job of the actor, not the director. She should know what the emotional needs of her character are, but she does not. I am not fully confident she has done much work on her own, in regards to developing her character. All too often, she resorts to anger as her character's emotion, even in scenes where no anger is needed. This is balanced out by Tiffany who has trouble presenting any emotion on stage, and usually presents a flat emotionless persona who needs pushing to present emotion. When talking with Tiffany about her character, she understands the emotions, actions, desires, and circumstances of the scene, but once she is on stage and talking, all that work seems to go out the window. With her, it appears the best way to work it is almost line by line, finding the connection, and praying that Arielle gives her something to work off of. When Tiffany is working with Nathan she has no problem reacting to the text and the action. Nathan, I would have to say, is my strongest performer. He comes in prepared and ready, and knows, not only his lines, but the meaning and actions behind them. With him, it is mostly about blocking and vocal tone. It is very easy for him to use the upper register of his voice. He does stumble when working with Arielle, especially when she is not on her game. Nathan works well with Tiffany, and can find the underlying meaning in the two scenes they share.

10-16-15 – Rehearsal

Tonight's rehearsal went well, I was able to work with Zach on his monologues, and we found some nice moments. In working with Zach, I find that it is best to give him suggestions on where to pause, speed up, show emotion, and breath. If it were up to him, he would just barrel through the monologues at a monotone. However, once you help him connect thoughts to voice, and thoughts to actions, he finds the most beautiful moments in the text.

10-17-15 rehearsal

Today we spent most of our time working scenes with Arielle and Tiff. Of the three scenes they share together, we were able to get through one and a half. The process today was very slow. As we broke each scene down line by line, to help them discover and find moments of acting and blocking. Tomorrow we will pick up where we left off, and try to run them all.

10-18-15 rehearsal

Today we finished working on the shared scenes from yesterday. It was not as slow as yesterday, as each went home and did their homework on the scenes. Wish they would have done that earlier. At the end of rehearsal, we were able to run each scene, and kept 90% of the work that was done.

10-19-15 rehearsal

Tonight's rehearsal was a little rough, as I am still without an ASM, and Milan is not available on Monday nights. For the first half I was on book, and that was taking too much of my attention away from what was happening on stage, so for the second act, I just focused on the stage. We also started late due to Arielle showing up late and then having to go to a fitting that

was supposed to happen at 5:45, but had to wait till 6:15 due to her tardiness. Several, and by that I mean the other three, voiced their concern about her “lack of respect” for the show. They explained they are tired of her being late to rehearsals, and also being unprepared for the work we are scheduled to do. I apologized to the cast, and at the end of rehearsal made an announcement that covered all the issues commented on earlier. Hopefully this will take care of it, if not I will talk to Arielle privately. I did, however, come up with something I will try out Friday at our next full run. I would like to see what it looks like when I keep all the actors on stage during the show. They will sit on their respective sides. Still a rough idea, but I would like to explore it. I think keeping the actors on stage will create a nice picture, along with creating a sense of separation for the audience. To think about it in an artsy way, it could represent each character is nothing more than a spectator to the events, each character except Michael, who will always sit on stage blindfolded and with his back to the group.

10-20-15 – Production meeting

I first met with Tony, and went to look at costumes. Everything works well, although the jumpsuit does need to be toned down and dirtied down a bit. Almost everyone’s costumes work, Arielle’s costumes didn’t fit, so Tony is still working on that. Afterward, Milan and I sat in the design room for about 10 minutes then finally just went down to Kevin and Diane’s office. They forgot the meeting, and were eating. So we just finished up the meeting in their office. We talked about finding a new ASM, and props. We are still without a chair, and Kevin is going to move that up on his list. The tea cup and champagne glass works perfectly, and the tea tray will work once they fix it. The new mat works perfectly; it will just need to be toned down depending on the flooring used for the stage. We decided that wood would probably be best for the platform. The binders that Kevin ordered are also working well for the production and we

should keep using them. At this point, it looks like we are in great shape for our next full run-through Friday.

10-20-15 rehearsal

Arielle was late again, and this time by late I mean she showed up right at 5, so we had to wait for her before we could get started. We worked all the scenes with Arielle and Nathan. Made some good connections. Nathan is a work horse. He comes to rehearsal prepared and ready. He fully immerses himself into each scene, and takes direction well. He does work off his partner, and if his partner is only half-assing it, then his performance suffers. Arielle is still having trouble connecting to the text, and it is clear that she has not done any work. Just talking to her about the text and asking her to define what it means, she is then able to connect to it. This is work that she should be doing on her own time. What actor doesn't read the text and make character connections. This does affect our rehearsal pace. Fortunately, we finish at 8pm. Tiffany was called at 8, and showed up at 7:30. We then proceed to work the two scenes with Arielle, Tiffany, and Nathan. We were able to finally make all the finite adjustments to those scenes, especially the final scene. It was getting a little tiresome trying to keep Arielle off her cell phone when I was giving notes to the other two actors and would turn to her, and she was not paying attention. I look forward to putting all this together on Friday for the full run through.

10-23-15 rehearsal

Tonight we ran the full show from start to finish. Milan had a friend come in and be on book for us while he took blocking notes, and I paid attention to the action on stage. Each act is running about 45min. So I am happy with the pace, even when we had to slow down for Arielle to call for lines. Everyone was in costume, and we had almost all our props. The only thing we are

missing as far as show props go, is our final chair. I like the idea of having the actors on stage while not in the scenes, I think the idea will work for the space we are in, and will set the idea of separation nicely. However, this will be an issue with lights. Right now, the stage is just flooded with lights so the actors are very visible, but I think once the lights get set, the actors will almost disappear into the background.

The main issue from tonight's rehearsal was volume, and talking down to the floor. These are all quick fix issues in rehearsals over the next few days. A majority of my notes are about Arielle learning her lines, and blocking issues. But for a first run of the entire show in costumes, I think it went well. Considering we have two weeks, I am very confident in the choices the cast and I have made. I could tell by the energy levels tonight, that when we finished I wasn't going to get a lot more out of them, and our guest ASM had to leave, so we ended rehearsal early.

10-24-15 Rehearsal

Zach is a monster! He ran his scenes with the notes I gave him and rocked it! The boy is on top of his lines, and has a very good understanding of his character. He is the kind of actor you want in all your shows. Arielle is getting better at taking notes, but still wants to give me a five-minute explanation on her reasons when I ask for something different. Nathan is another powerhouse performer. He comes in ready to work, lines ready and memorized, and takes notes like a champion. We spent several hours working his and Arielle's scenes, and made some nice discoveries. This caused me to run late in working with Tiffany, who showed up on time (by that I mean 15 min early). Tiffany is bringing a whole new level to her work in this show that I have not seen in previous shows. I can tell both Tiff and Nathan are getting frustrated with Arielle, but they both remain professional and keep giving their best. I think we finally nailed down the two scenes where all three of them are in, and found great little moments for each

actor. I look forward to what Monday will bring, when we run the show twice in a row.

Tomorrow I will focus on just Tiff and Arielle's scenes.

10-25-15 rehearsal

Today was a bit slow. Although we did manage to get through the three major scenes I wanted to work today, I find it frustrating to be giving notes, and look up and see Arielle on her cell phone. By the end of rehearsal both Tiffany and Arielle felt more confident in their scenes, so I look forward to seeing them added in and worked within the run of the show. Tomorrow is going to be exciting to see everything put together. I will only have Milan take line notes on one of the two runs, so that he can focus on what he needs to do. We do have our chair now, so we have all props and costumes for the show. Though I am still not in love with the sweater that Lainie wears, I will talk to Tony about that at Tuesdays production meeting. Also we need to tone down the jump suite, but Tony and I have already talked about that. Milan's friend will be able to help us Friday and Sunday of next week, so that is a bonus until (hopefully) we can get a replacement ASM.

10-26-15 rehearsal

We ran the show twice tonight, and took promo photos. The first run through was rough, and worrisome. To be honest, I was a bit disappointed and concerned for the production. However, the second run was fantastic. Everyone pushed themselves and did some fantastic work! Each performer found a solid connection with their character and with their scene partners. I was genuinely excited by the end of the second run. I do have some notes, but I will give them tomorrow when we are in the dance studio working the show. I talked with Nathan afterwards, complementing him on his work, and he informed me that he had told Arielle to "just go crazy

and give me something, anything to work with”, and work it did. She is still only connecting to about half the lines, the other half she is just saying with no emotion or connection. Everyone else did a great job, both Zach and Tiff showed their best work tonight.

10-27-15 production meeting

Tony said he will try to find another sweater / pull over for Arielle. Set, props, lights, and all other technical issues are all in good shape, and nothing to report. Kevin showed me the color choice for the stage, and I like it, so it is a go.

10-27-15 rehearsal

We ran through each scene and made adjustments per last night’s runs. Fixed several main issues that were still occurring. Cleaned up a few scenes where the blocking was muddy.

Arielle is connecting better to the text, but there is still work to be done. I told her if she needs help I am more than willing to sit with her and take it line by line. She passed on the offer. Our next run will be Friday, and Milan’s friend will be back to help ASM for us. I am hopeful that all the work we did tonight will be repeated Friday.

10-30-15 rehearsal

Arielle was an hour late to rehearsal causing the energy in the room to drop, as it seems the cast were getting very frustrated by her work ethic. Diane did not get the chance to hang lights, so there will not be a light over today, which was fine as it was just a bonus day for her, tech starts Sunday. The set was in place and painted. The matt has also been painted, but the paint seems to rub off on the actors and the costumes, so we will have to go back to the natural color of the matt. Once Arielle does arrive, we jumped into rehearsal and ran the full show. The energy of the actors was low, and there were not many moments happening on stage. After we ran the

show, I restaged all the transitions to help things move faster. Afterwards we took a break then ran the first act again. The energy was even lower this time, as Arielle's need to call line and jumping around the text was throwing everyone off. After act one, I worked on a couple of moments from the first act that needed attention, and released everyone. Technically we would have been able to run the show twice if we were able to start on time. I liked the necklace that Tiffany was wearing, so we will keep that. No matter how many times I seem to tell Arielle to put her hair back she doesn't seem to understand what I mean, tonight she just pinned her hair back, and throughout the scenes the pins would come out. At the end of the night, I asked her to pull it back in a tie or a bun. Let us see what Sunday brings, that is if she can show up on time.

11-1-16 First Day of Tech

Well it was an interesting tech day. Two lamps were out and one fixture was missing, so there really was not much in the way of lighting issues that could be resolved. We were able to work on projections, and work the cues for light shifts. We ran the first act through, and then did a full run Q2Q, followed by a full run of the show. An actress from Agnus of God interrupted us, again, at the end of our rehearsal. This makes the third time she has just entered our rehearsal space while we were working. Lines were better but not perfect, energy was low, but not as low as last rehearsal. Made some blocking changes to help with timing and smooth out some rough spots. We will see how Monday night tech goes.

11-2-15 day 2 of tech

So in today's moment of craziness, the light board deleted the programming, and we lost all our light cues. Diane had to program as we ran the show, so we had no light cues for our final tech. My mentor and department chair, David Hoover, sat in on the run. We did a straight run with only

a 5 min intermission for technical issues. David's response was well received. He did have a couple of suggestions that I am taking into account. First is Michaels exit at the end, instead of him exiting off the stage, he will just exit stage left. We will also have a little light on stage during the transitions, instead of going to a full blackout. All in all it was a good run, with no line calls, and very few line notes. Zach and Nathan were perfect with lines, and Arielle and Tiff had minimal line notes. The new blocking is working well. The main problem of last night was volume. For some reason everyone was quiet last night. We do not have another run until Wed, which is our final dress before opening. I am confident about this show. I am in a place where I do not feel another week would help. The energy was good last night, and I think it will hold throughout the run of the show. Almost done.

11-4-15 Final Dress Rehearsal

So this is it. I gave the actors notes before the run. We tested out the spot light paths, and tested the projector. Everyone was early and ready to go, so we started 15min early. Run went well, with minimal notes given at the end of each act. There are still some lighting issues, and I talked to Diane after the run so we could address them. All of which she was already aware of. Arielle was a little flat with the acting, but you know what they say, bad dress = good show. Now it is a two-day wait while Agnes opens, and then we open *Two Rooms* Saturday. I feel the play is ready. Sometimes the mantra of a director on opening week is "If we only had another week to polish", however I do not feel that way. I think this show is ready. Arielle is the weakest link, but compared to where she was a week ago, I feel I have done my best. Tiffany has greatly improved over the course of this show. It was a pleasure working with Nathan and Zachary, both of whom were on the ball from the beginning and were the first to be off book. I agree with what David Hoover and I were talking about the other day, Zachary just needs to trust himself a

bit more. Now I am done. It is the waiting game to see what the respondents say on Sunday, and what my cast and crew say at the talkback after we close.

I will journal opening night reception and all the talkbacks.

11-8-15 Opening night

The house is half-full, there is a nervous energy in the air. My stomach is full of the butterflies. A friend and colleague sits in front of me waiting for the show. The music stops, my ASM gives a short curtain speech, then disappears behind the stage. The lights go down....silence. The lights come up on stage and nothing. Nobody is on stage. This is my opening night, and the stage is empty as the audience sits in silence. Lights go down again, I hear rustling, lights come back on and there is my cast on stage, second times a charm, and we are off.

Arielle shows her two emotions, and everyone else does their best to pull her along. There is no energy on stage. The performance is flat. Two days in the dark and the show has lost all its momentum. Arielle jumps all over the place with her speeches, even Tiff and Zach mess up a few lines here and there. Thankfully the respondents are not here tonight. Let us see what tomorrow brings.

11-8-15 performance 2

Hey everyone is on stage when the lights come up, bonus. The respondents are here today. The energy on stage is better, however Tiffany is still low volume, especially when she is upstage and in the chair. Zach is much better with his monologues today than yesterday. It is a smaller audience than last night, but still bigger than Agnes 2nd show audience. There is a Saints game, plus the opening weekend of the fringe theatre festival. The male respondent talked my ear off before the show, he seems very smitten with me, I'm sure that will change during the feedback.

I gave Arielle the note about volume, though I did not want to give notes after opening. Now I can hear her during the second act in my office. One extreme or the other, there is no in-between.

Respondent's feedback: Pia Wyatt and Michael Boudewyns

The first issue addressed was the temperature of the theatre, as usual it was freezing cold in the room. Next they discussed housekeeping issues. Pia thought the set design was very geometric and that it represented doors, Michael did not have the same issue. Pia also wanted the sound (music) that I used before show to carry into the play and be used at the end of act 1, the beginning of act 2 and at the end of the play. Pia also commented on the electric cables that were hanging off the 2nd and 3rd electrics. Both felt that Zach was speaking too fast and unclear at the top of act 1, and that everyone needed to increase their volume. Both felt that Tiffany was a bit too monotone and predictable with her speech, and that she never really showed much character. They both also disliked Arielle and Tiffany's red nails. I did not notice their nail polish, but that is unacceptable for "professional" actors. They also got onto Tiff for her tattoos, which I have asked her to cover, and her hair. They also criticized Arielle's earrings. Pia also dug into Tony about the costume design, then Michael followed by explaining what a costume designer is supposed to do. They felt that Ellen's costumes didn't really tell a story. Also they commented on Zach having a wedding band, which was completely my choice, even though the exact same point was brought up by Zach when I made my decision.

One of the suggestions was to go further with keeping everyone on stage. They liked my idea of having the cast on stage the entire show, but felt having them go upstage to get the props or to enter during a scene broke that convention and that I should just keep everything on stage fully. They liked the avoidance of the rug, but felt the idea was lost during the second act. They liked

my blocking, but wished the stage was a bit bigger so that more diagonals could have been worked. They didn't understand the leg bruise, and to be honest neither do I, but it was done on the first run, and I never fixed it. They also felt the jumpsuit that Zach is wearing could have been dirtier and more torn up. They also noticed the light issue when Zach would stand, and the light would cut off at his shoulders, leaving his head in the shadows. They were divided on the meaning of the binders, and both wanted the slide projections to be larger. There was excessive light spill on stage left of the platform, but considering I did not even get to see my lights until opening night, not a big issue.

They focused on Nathan for a few min, talking about his posture. They also said the blocking was a little weak during his and Arielle's "exclusive interview" moment. They also commented on where he should keep his pen and notepad. Then talking about scene changes, having my assistant stage manager place the chair in two scenes created issues for Pia, as she said that drew her out of the play. Nor did she like that Arielle touched the matt so often. She also wanted a cleaner shift or lighting change when in the dream state. Pia also had issues with some paint mistakes that I could not see on the back wall of the set. They also did not care for the spot on Zach as he walked off stage after being killed. Both said they would rather the window be down stage, and for lighting to use a window gobo when we were in Lainie's room. They also suggested that Zach could have given the death speech from stage left of the platform so that we could keep Michael and Lainie more central focus. And on that note, they wanted a stronger posture / pose from Michael and Lainie in that moment. They also felt that the blindfold removal by Zach was underwhelming, and needed more of a moment.

They then focused on Arielle. They commented on her hair, nails, earrings (again), but most of all they focused on her choices about when she would wear her sweater. I told her to keep it on

the entire show, but per Arielle's usual attitude, she does what she wants. After discussions about Arielle, both adjudicators felt the weakest part of the play was the last scene with Arielle and Zach. They both provided ideas for what they thought would be a better ending for the play, and they did not like Zach's costume for that moment. Then they commented on the bows and curtain call. They felt that for such a small group, they did not need to have it split up in a two by two way.

At the end, Arielle tried to defend herself and her choices, and they just laid into her. After all was said and done, Nathan and Arielle are recommended for Iren Ryan and I am nominating Zach, I was awarded an "Excellence in Directing" award, and they want us to present a scene at festival.

11-9-15

Received a note from an audience member. The note read:

"Dear Two Rooms cast & Crew, WOW!

Thank you for putting so much heart and commitment into this performance.

This story needed to be told. I was in tears, a wreck, so completely moved by what I watched.

Thank you,

A Fan, Michelle L."

11-22-15 Post Mortem

In attendance from Agnes of God was the stage manager, and two of the actors. My cast was just coming down from post show energy, and was all over the place. We first talked about Agnes, then after about an hour moved over to discuss Two Rooms. There really was not that

much in the way of constructive criticism, mostly it was a lot of excited “happy” talk about the show. When we finally did get on topic, Tiffany & Arielle stated they did not really understand the reason or purpose for having the actors sit on stage. I guess that 30min talk we all had about it during rehearsals was not enough. Arielle talked a lot for everyone else’s sake about her internal process and how she struggled with this character and the choices she made. Nathan did comment that he struggled with Zach’s death scene, as he felt he never really found the right moment. A majority of the actors did feel we ran too many full runs, and not enough scene work. Quickly the conversation left the topic of Two Rooms and moved on to academic issues, and picking their own scripts.

My Final Thoughts:

Not having a choice in script, nor in the actresses in my show, I feel made a difference in what I produced, but in the end it really didn’t matter. I feel we put on a good show and overcame some huge obstacles. Our show was well received by audience and critics alike. My stage manager was awesome, especially considering this was his first time stage-managing, and he is an undergrad freshman. I feel that as a director I learned a lot on this project. Trusting in my choices was the biggest lesson I learned in this show. Another lesson was working with difficult actors and how to handle them in a respectful and productive manor. I also feel I repaired any pervious damage in my relationships with Kevin and Diane in this production. Finally, I learned how to love a script I hated.

CHAPTER 4:

A DIRECTOR'S REFLECTION ON THE JOURNEY FROM PAGE TO STAGE

INTRODUCTION

In approaching Two Rooms, I faced three major problems. The first being a script I did not care for or like. The second issue was on the technical side. Due to sharing the theatre space, I must use a sparse set design which works within the small Lab theatre while working with light design which can accommodate two different shows. Finally, taking a political play, which is over twenty years old, and making it relevant and interesting to today's audience. With Two Rooms, my goals were to put on a good show, tell an interesting story, serve the playwright, serve my actors, and be proud of the work I produced as my thesis project and as my final show at UNO.

In order for me to direct this play, I had to not only solve the three problems facing me, but also figure out how I was going to make this play my own, overcome the unforeseen obstacles which lay ahead, and reach my goals. To say I was nervous would be a drastic understatement. The truth is I was terrified. I had directed a show at the University of New Orleans before. I have even directed in the Lab theatre, so the space was not unfamiliar to me. Yet in my short career at UNO I had never faced challenges like the ones before me, and I was worried. Anne Bogart writes of this in her book A Director Prepares:

Every time I begin work on a new production I feel as though I am out of my league; that I know nothing and have no notion how to begin and I'm sure that someone else should be doing my job, someone assured, who knows what to do, someone who is really a professional. I feel unbalanced, uncomfortable and out of place. I feel like a sham. In short, I am terrified. (Bogart, 84)

I was feeling the exact same way.

What follows will be my journey of taking Two Rooms from the page to the stage. I will explore the issues facing me and how I overcame those challenges, put on a show, and eventually won the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Region VI Excellence in Directing award. Although this was not an easy journey, it was an enjoyable learning experience providing knowledge and tools I will use again in future productions.

My goal with this reflection is to explore ideas, challenges, and issues more in-depth than what my daily journal covers. Here I will examine my methods, look at the methods of others, and share my thoughts on the process. In this, I will be able to look back at my choices and determine if my course was correct, or if I could have done more.

I have divided this reflection into six sections. The first being the introduction you are currently reading. Sections two through four will deal with one of the three major issues faced in this production. Section five will explore my work with the actors. Finally, I will end with a epilogue of my journey, wherein I will examine the final product of my work, the reactions to the work, and determine if I achieved my personal goals I set forth going into this project.

The Script Issue

Love the script you're working with. Those are the words from every director and instructor I have worked with. However, I don't always have a choice in the script I am handed. Such was the case with Two Rooms by Lee Blessing.

In 2014, during the fall semester, I put forth a request to use Bertolt Brecht's Three Penny Opera. I felt the play with its musical numbers would go over well at the University of New Orleans. I thought, at the time, it would provide some nice thesis roles for some of the graduate

students who were in need of thesis roles. I also thought the play would provide a great opportunity to work with the music department in a collaborative project.

Although it seemed as though my idea was liked, and had the possibility of happening, the project was eventually turned down in the end. I understood and accepted the reasoning behind the choice, however I was disappointed with the outcome. Later I was informed the play selections were Two Rooms, and it was going to run alongside Agnes of God. One of the other shows selected for the season was The Misanthrope by Molière. Again I felt disappointment.

The Misanthrope is a wonderful Restoration Comedy, and a piece I have always wanted to try. With my background in period styles and movement, I felt I would have been a good choice to direct this piece. However, this was not the case. Professor David Hoover would be directing The Misanthrope in the spring, and I would be directing Two Rooms the following fall. Due to budget cuts, The Misanthrope was rescheduled and pushed back to the fall semester, same as Two Rooms. In conversation with Professor Hoover, there was a possibility in which we might end up switching shows due to some personal scheduling issues, and I would take over The Misanthrope, with the cast he had selected, minus the students who graduated the previous semester, of which I would have to recast those roles. Needless to say, I was excited for the opportunity to work on the show. The schedule issues were resolved, and I was back on to Two Rooms, and informed of the two cast members who were assigned to the show for their thesis. Welcome back disappointment.

In my first reading of Two Rooms, I felt the play was written in a style very dry and did not convey the emotion of the characters in order to focus on the political message of the piece. In fact, it took several re-readings for me to even discover the slight moments of comedy and the underlying emotions of the work. As a director, having this much trouble with the text, even with

the script in front of me, worried me. I was concerned I may not be able to get my actors to convincingly convey these moments.

The more I read the script the more concerned I was for the pacing of the piece. According to the script, every scene ended with a full blackout. My initial fear with this was if my actors couldn't keep the pace moving along, these blackouts would drag the show down and make it lose whatever energy had just been established in the scene before. I knew my actors were going to have to work hard to make this flow, especially with the heavy monologue scenes, with a small set, the energy is going to have to come from the actors' performance and not on physical actions.

After casting my two male characters, as the female characters were assigned to me for their thesis roles, we sat down for our first table read. The great thing about actors is each one of them bring their unique point of view to the show. Each actor had read the script and brought forth their idea of what their character should be. I know when I am reading a script, it is always me creating the characters, however it is always at the first table read when I get to hear the real characters speak. It was great to hear the script out loud, it allowed me, for the first time, to sit back and listen to what the script had to offer. It was in the reading where I was able to find subtle moments of comedy, and dare I say, romance. I honestly think it is possible for Walker and Lainie to have a romantic connection, although not a strong, in your face, kind of way.

At this first read through I also discovered my biggest challenge now facing me, my actresses. Even if I manage to solve the original three problems, if I cannot fix my actresses, this show is dead in the water. My older actress is flat emotionally and has no emotion when she speaks. I have seen this from her before in other shows, but I thought that was representative of how she was directed. The younger actress only seems to have two emotions, sad or angry, there

doesn't seem to be much of an in-between. My older male actor playing Walker, has some good talent, however he has a tendency to go into an upper vocal range. This makes it hard to believe he could be a love interest of Lainie. The younger male actor playing Michael is solid. His scenes are almost totally monologues, and he only shares the stage a couple of times with other actors. His biggest challenge will be volume and acting while bound and blindfolded. These issues will be covered more in the section on The Actors, for now I will only look at their process as it relates to the script.

After our first read through, I talked with my actors on the thoughts I had about the story. I explained where I felt we would encounter trouble with the script, and solutions I thought might help the actors with these challenges. After the actors left, I reexamined my view on the script, and found moments where I could emphasize the comedy, and how to approach the tempo of each scene to help the pacing. The Hodge Analysis of the play was extremely useful in developing the tempo and theme I wanted to focus on. I would bring these ideas into our next reading.

As we started the second and final read through before staging rehearsal would start, I shared my ideas of tempo and focus with the actors. The actors were very receptive to my ideas, and contributed to the conversation with their point of view and suggestions. The pace of the read through was much better, with clear choices being made by each actor. The pace was quick and the energy high, two things we were going to have to keep focused on when we moved it to the stage. I felt at this point the issues being faced were manageable, and we could make this script work.

At our first staging rehearsal we ran the whole play with scripts in hand. I honestly believe you can have the best actors in the world, but as soon as you put them on stage with a

book in their hand, they become incapable of walking and talking like normal humans. The energy and pacing went right out the window, and it was a slow and painful rehearsal. I now felt like I was a horrible director and this will be the worst show ever put on by UNO. Why am I doing this to myself becomes an hourly thought.

Over the next few weeks, the actors and I work on recapturing the pace and energy of our last staged reading. We did this by focusing on the immediacy of the text, and the emotions the characters were dealing with while talking. We finally accomplish finding the fluidity of the text, and the energy comes back on the stage in the process. This is punctuated even more once the actors are off book. However, it seems as though I will only get comedy from one of my actors, and although I can live with it, I still work on trying to get the other actors to find the comic moments, and to play with those moments, however, in the end this was a futile endeavor.

Working the tempo of each scene helped with the pacing issue, and made the transition moments work, for the time being. Even though the scene may call for a quick dialogue, the tempo needed to match the mood and energy of the scene. The trick was finding the slower tempos without slowing down the energy of the show. To do this, I had the actors put more connection and urgency into the words, so the energy remains even as the tempo slowed down. When dealing with the quicker tempos, the trick became making sure the dialogue was clear, the energy high, and the situation real. I feel it is all too easy to allow a scene to become too farcical when doing quick tempo scenes, and my goal was to keep the scene moving yet keep it grounded in psychological realism at the same time. For some of my actors this was no problem, for others, it seemed to be a harder challenge.

Anger is used all too often by actors as an emotion, which I feel is over used, or used incorrectly, by many actors who feel a quick tempo and high emotion are required for a scene.

To help actors find the ways to show emotions, other than anger, I ask the actor what they feel the character is experiencing. From there, we work on creating a simple emotional word for the moment. Having a clear word choice and action for the emotion helps steer the performer away from anger, and start developing an action based dialogue with the text. From the action, we move to the emotion of the moment, and explore what the character is doing during this emotion. Once emotion and action are determined, we then focus on the situation as a whole, combining the emotion, action, and dialogue to find the appropriate energy needed for the scene.

Sometimes this process is so quick the actor does not realize we worked it, other times it may take several rehearsals to find the moment. I have found the process moves with greater direction when the actor fully understands the scene, character, and moment we are working on. If the actor is unclear of the choices their character is making, or does not understand the text they are saying, the process does not work as well, and the actor becomes frustrated as they feel they are not progressing. Once the frustration sets in, I try to move away from the scene so the actor can approach it later with a fresh view and energy.

Breaking from a scene in this text was harder to do than in other plays due to the fragmented nature of the text. With the constant blackouts and time shifts, consecutive scenes are not always related, and emotions and tempos are on completely different levels. Due to the fragmented nature of the script, I would work scenes for three of the rehearsals, and work the full show on the other two days of rehearsals. The purpose of which was so the actors could always have a feeling of connection to the play as a whole, while still having time to work individual scenes which were still problem moments for the actors. Working this way also helped me see where we needed more work, what stuck with each actor during the scene work, and what was lost from previous rehearsals.

The actor playing Walker has done a great job of finding the comedy in his scenes, and has established a clear through-line for himself. At one of our table reads, I had mentioned to the actors the possibility of a romantic interest between Walker and Lainie. The actress playing Lainie seemed to try too hard to push this subtext through on stage. After working the scene one evening it became apparent this emotional connection was not the romantic nature as I had first thought. Working through several of their shared moments, it became clear it was more of a genuine concern and care for the character, and not a romantic feeling. Once we made the shift in our approach, the scenes and connections improved greatly, helping the text move the story forward.

About half way through our rehearsal schedule the script finally started to come together for everyone. The scene shifts smoothed out with the pace and tempo work we had done, along with a technical change I made to the staging. We were able to cleanly display the inner life of each character without sacrificing the political messages in the play. Best of all, we had a clear story with a solid grounding in real emotional characters being told on stage. Somewhere along the rehearsal process the strangest thing of all occurred. I fell in love with the script. Rather I should say, I fell in love with the story my actors were telling. I still disliked several moments of the written dialogue, and feel a couple of the scenes would be better suited to be in the trash than presented on stage, however, my actors took those moments and made them presentable and relevant to the story being told.

The Technical Issue

The challenge regarding the technical issues faced in this production are not as drastic as the other issues, however I feel it is important to address the technical side, as it had an important impact on the overall quality of the production. No play can be fully recognized without the

creative talent of the production team. In my production of Two Rooms, I was fortunate to work with the faculty design staff, and utilize their talent, art, and passion in my show, for without their skills and support, my show would not have been a success.

When I first started reading and developing the concepts for Two Rooms, I knew I wanted to keep the designs as simple as possible due to the space it was presented in. The main reason for this was the fact the show had to occupy and share a space with another show over a three-week run. Another reason was the show was being presented in the Lab Theatre, a very small proscenium theatre space in comparison to the Nims thrust theatre space. I felt the simpler the space design, the more freedom the actors would have on stage to tell the story. The script called for minimal props and set pieces, and I wanted to help facilitate this aspect of the play with a sparse set design.

In the first production meeting, I explained to my Set Designer the overall feeling of isolation I wanted my characters to feel, the needed sense of timelessness, while at the same time creating an environment which could be used for both of the locations with minimal work with the scene changes. The last part was very important to me, as I felt the quick scene changes were going to be an important part of the show's success. After I shared my thoughts with him, he sat there in his seat looking at me in silence. I was worried I may have been too abstract in description of what I was looking for, because now the silence was starting to feel uncomfortable.

Suddenly he stands up and goes over to the black board. As he does this he is trying to communicate his idea, however he is so full of energy and excitement he is not explaining it clearly. He then draws out his idea on the board, and it is clean and simple. It is a drawing of two rectangles and a square. One rectangle on the horizontal plain and one on a vertical plain, with the square hanging on the stage right side. He explains the horizontal one is the lifted platform

the actors would perform on, the upstage vertical one would be the wall. The square would be a window. I loved the idea of the two rectangles representing the two rooms, however I did not care for the idea of a physical window. Yet before I could say anything, the lighting designer stood up, walked over and suggested the removal of the window. I approved! To be honest, I loved the idea of the set design. It was simple, clean, and most of all efficient. The set could be moved in and out of the theatre easily, to help aid in the double use of the space. The upstage wall would also help facilitate the use of projections the script called for.

Next, the lighting designer and I spoke about the light design concept. I started by explaining with this set, I think it would be best to use light to convey the two locations. By using a cooler blue, we could create the cold empty feeling of Lainie's room, and using a light amber we could create the warm isolation of a Middle-Eastern prison cell. Unfortunately, color would not be an option, I was informed. Due to the limited lighting available for both productions, the designer would not be able to add or swap color gels to the lights in-between performances. Although I understood the reasoning, I was still a little disappointed, as I felt color would have really helped tell this story.

Instead of color, I then focused on the shape of the lights. I felt it would be good to have a special on the mat in the center of the stage, although the mat does move around in the second unit, its' position is stationary for the remainder of the play. The lighting designer agreed, and we talked about incorporating the mat light into the overall design. We also discussed the possible use of a follow spot for two of the scenes in the play.

Following the lighting conversation, I spoke with the costume designer. I handed him pictures I had printed out for each character's overall look. I was informed he has not started

working on my show yet as he was still in production with another show, and it would be several weeks before he began working on Two Rooms.

At the end of the meeting we discussed props. My set designer was also handling my props. We discussed various ideas about the rug, chair, and tea set which would be used. The rug I wanted to keep simple, but felt if there were color on the set, the rug would be the only source of the color. The chair we wanted to keep simple, as if it were a kitchen chair, as Lainie had removed all furniture out of the room. So the chair would need to look like it did not belong in this room, but did belong in her house somewhere else. The tea set was the focus of most of our talk. We both agreed it would be nice if the tea set reflected the fact Lainie and her husband traveled. So we started looking at sets which had a Middle Eastern feel and look to them.

By the end of the meeting, I felt the technical issues we not only addressed, but resolved. I now had a set design which looked great and worked within the parameters set up for the space and show structure. I had a clear idea of the lighting to be used and worked with during some of the more abstract scenes. Although I did not have a costume design yet, I felt I conveyed my idea of a universal and timeless look for each character through the images I provided. Finally, the props were decided on, and a clean look for the show was established. However, at this point I still had no stage manager, and no assistant stage manager.

I asked around over the next few days trying to find someone who would be willing to take on the important position of stage manager. I knew I wanted to find someone who would be as excited for this show as I was. The main problem was none of our students had stage management experience. I felt comfortable enough with the size of this show to take on an inexperienced stage manager (SM), as long as they were willing to learn and work hard. I was fortunate to find a new undergraduate freshman who was willing and eager to take on this role. A

week later I was able to find someone who was willing to take on the role of assistant stage manager (ASM). However, the lady who took on the role of ASM, had to drop out of my production on the first off book rehearsal, and a desperate search for a replacement commenced. I was very lucky due to the girlfriend of one of my male actors, and also a student herself, offered her services. I eagerly accepted her help, and I will have to say she truly helped save our show.

The Question of Relevancy

How does one take a political play written in the 1980's and make it relevant to an audience 26 years later? A question I would end up asking myself over the next few months as I developed my concept of Two Rooms. Unfortunately, the issue of Americans being held hostage in the Middle East is as much an issue now as it was 26 years ago. By using modern photos and clothing, it was fairly easy to move this to modern times. There were no direct textual links to the 1980's, so this adaptation to modern was fairly easy.

The relevancy was created with the connection to the characters. Keeping the stakes high, and the relationships true, help set the relevancy, and gloss over the fact this play was written in 1989. Although the numbers which Ellen used in her speech at the top of act two were out dated, the connection she established and the meaning of her speech was not.

Finally, in using Walker as a catalyst to the actions, helped keep current the idea of the media covering every aspect about a person's life. This, along with his insinuations about the lack of response from a government too concerned with its own image, struck just as true today as it did 26 years ago. My concern of this being a relevant play was put to rest opening night, when I received a letter from an audience member thanking us for telling a story which needed to

be told. The audience will always be an honest indicator of the work you put into the show, and if it holds any value.

The Actors

When I was presented with this show, I was also assigned two actresses for their thesis roles. As the show's cast was made up of two men and two women, all I had to audition for were the men. This worked in tandem with the Agnes of God auditions, because the director needed to audition one woman, as the show needed three women and two students were assigned to thesis roles. We were able to have auditions on the same night, and split the actors by gender into the audition rooms.

I am always impressed with the quality of work students bring into UNO's auditions. I had the pleasure of watching 21 young actors audition. These students varied from first time actors to experienced performers. All the performers gave their best, and it showed. After careful consideration I used the new graduate student for the role of Walker, and an experienced undergrad for the role of Michael. Of all the talent present during auditions, I felt these two actors best fit the role and look I was going for. Fortunately, both actors accepted the role when offered. I had considered double casting the show, seeing as how we had six performances, but decided against it due to time, and I did not want to take energy away from one cast to focus on a second cast. With my cast selected, I moved forward with excitement towards our first table read.

I love and hate a table read-through. I think they are great in respect to finally hearing the characters' voices, and hearing the dynamics of the script out of my head. I hate them because with the first couple of read-throughs you do not get any connection or sense of character. When

we first get together, I try to not give any directions or corrections to the actors. I try to just let them present it as they wish, and hear what comes from the text. Sometimes this works, sometimes it does not.

On our first night it felt as though my lead female actress had never read the script before. Not only was there an extreme number of mispronounced words, but she would skip sentences or lose what page we were on. My other actress was adding extended pauses to lines, or over exaggerating commas and periods. The actor playing Walker would read quickly, while the actor reading Michael was reading softly and a bit slow. This was the first time I was ever mentally exhausted from a table read. After the read, we talked about the show concept and I asked each actor about their character. It was nice to see how many of them had already done some character work, and had some interesting ideas. The one actress who it seemed had not read the script, tried to give an explanation of her character, however it was very apparent she was making it up on the spot, and had not given it much thought. Finally, I gave a couple of notes on pronunciation and flow, then thanked everyone for their work. Knowing this was only the start, I knew we could only improve upon what we did, and I was looking forward to the next reading.

At the start of our next reading, I asked the actors to go ahead and add some personality into their work. It was nice to see many of the notes corrected by the actors on our second read. However, there were still several of the same mispronunciations by one actress. Everyone added characterization to the words, and though the engagements were not always right for the scene, it was nice to hear the addition. The flow and energy was strong in this reading, and by the end we were all excited to get the play up on its feet and start moving around. Again, I gave some notes about the text, thanked everyone for their work and improvement, and communicated my excitement to start working on this show.

In order for this not to read like a rehash of my journal entries, I will focus on the work of one actor at a time. I will look at the ups and downs, and talk about the challenges we faced. I will also examine the moments which were successful contrasted with the moments which were not so successful. I will be referring to each actor by their character name.

For the actor playing Walker, it was his first semester at UNO as a graduate student, this was also his first show with UNO. In his audition he demonstrated an excellent range of acting and a good presence on stage. Throughout the entirety of the rehearsal and performance process his attitude and behavior were professional and enjoyable. He was the first actor off book ahead of the deadline, and his attendance was exemplary. The problem he faced the most was with his vocal performance. He would slip into an upper vocal range, changing his characterization. Another issue he faced was body awareness.

As we started the rehearsal process we both kept focus on his vocal and physical work. Each rehearsal was an improvement from the previous one, with him taking the notes and adjusting his work. He also was strong with collaboration and often presented ideas which worked very well for both his character and the scene. Even when he was tired he still came to rehearsal and gave his full energy and attention.

We worked on developing Walker as a person who was hungry for the story, and would ultimately do anything for the scoop. As I mentioned earlier, originally I thought there might be a possible romantic connection between Walker and Lainie, however as we started exploring his character we decided this was not the case. Instead we moved to a genuine care and concern his character developed for Lainie.

In working these emotional scenes, we were able to touch at the heart of Walker's character. Once we established this, many of the scenes he had trouble connecting with fell into place. Walker is one of the few characters to go through the play constantly changing energy and tactics. The moment-to-moment work was crucial for this to happen. In working with him on these scenes, finding the justification for the shifts worked best. Once the actor had his justification, he was able to internalize the choice and physicalize the performance. Presenting actionable objectives for his character seemed to cause more trouble for the actor as he would be too much in his head, and would lose the character he was presenting. To work around this, I would guide him by offering choices to his character, and exploring with him the questions and reasons for these choices.

A great attribute the actor possessed was a solid sense of connection. When he was on stage with someone, he would respond to and provide an equal energy which helped liven up the stage. The draw back to this is when he was working with an actor who had no energy, or incorrect energy for the scene, he too would lose energy. This became very apparent when working scenes with Lainie. The Lainie / Walker scenes are a complicated mix of emotions and objectives. What starts out as a clinical observational interview turns into a deeply caring relationship between the two characters over the course of the play.

Solving the relationship issue of Lainie and Walker was no easy task. For Walker, we focused on internal energy for consistency. We mapped out the tempo of the scenes, and worked on building those changes through character choices. We also tried applying actions and objectives to these moments, however this seemed to bring more problems when working with this partner. In the end it was decided when his partner was not giving him the energy the scene needed he would add extra energy to counteract the moment, and deliver what was necessary.

Throughout the process, I feel working with Walker was my easiest task. Approaching his style of acting was enjoyable, and helped to make what felt like an effortless process from start to finish. Trouble spots, which presented themselves, were smoothly worked out by various methods, and I always knew where both the character and actor stood emotionally.

The role of Michael was a challenging role. The character spent a majority of his time isolated, bound, and blindfolded center stage. Most of his dialogue was spent in monologues, and only a few times did he interact with other characters in the show. Finding the right balance for this character was the main challenge. Too much, and he would seem fake, not enough and he would be too quiet and not only would he be unheard, but his character would lose any emotion.

The actor and I started with finding the motivation behind each scene. We examined his emotional state, and what he was trying to get across. Once we delved into the reasons and emotions, we worked on expressing them with subtle physical actions which could be accomplished in his captive state. For this we worked on using levels, both physically and vocally, to present this, and tried to stay clear of any mime or abstract movements.

The physical challenge for the actor was one of facial reactions. The actor had been working in several film and television projects where about 80% of his acting was accomplished with expressions. However, in my show, 80% of his acting was done while blindfolded and bound. In order to work physically, the actor used head positions, and his bound hands to emphasize emotions. These actions did have to be used sparingly, as too many made the actor look too animated and more of a caricature and not a character.

Volume was another factor to consider when working with Michael. He is being kept in a cell, and starts the play talking about how his captors come in and beat him. We used this with

his dialogue, so whenever he raised his voice, he would look nervously towards the cell entrance in concern of them coming in to beat him. I am not totally sure this worked from the audience point of view, however it did help with the actor and characterization. The challenging problem all the way through till closing night was the actor talking down to the ground and losing volume. When he did this, it was hard to hear him in the audience. Though I gave the note several times in rehearsals, and after opening night, it was still an issue the KC/ACTF respondents picked up on.

The next challenge came when working the scenes with Michael and other characters. Several of the scenes between he and Lainie are “dream moments” where one is dreaming about being with the other. We tried to keep these scenes soft, like the lighting. Although the actor responded well to the other actor on stage with him, keeping it a soft dreamy atmosphere may have been lost to the audience. We made sure to have absolutely no contact between Michael and Lainie until the final scene of the play. However, it was before the final scene, when Lainie and Walker are embraced center stage, when we allowed Michael the opportunity to move around the stage for the first time. He does this as he is explaining his death. He then walks off stage left. It was originally staged where he would walk off stage and exit through the house. However, it quickly became apparent this would cause too much distraction to the scene and bring the play to a halt pacing wise. We explored several different variations on the exit after his death, but it was not until Professor Hoover watched one night, and made the suggestion we just move him off stage left through the curtain.

In the final scene we decided Michael should be in normal clothing for the dream moment with Lainie as they embrace at the end of the play. I felt this brought a sense of remembrance to Lainie’s memories, and set the tone for Michael’s death. Unfortunately, only on

closing night could we have the actor playing Michael shave his beard off. It had a great effect on the audience, but unfortunately it was not something which could be done every night, as we do not have access to a believable beard for the production, and a fake beard would just drop the quality of the show, and take the audience out of the moment.

Ellen was not an easy character to find. As a representative with the United States' State Department, she had to be emotionally detached from the central conflict. However, her character does develop a kind of friendship with Lainie, but not a deep connection. This presented several challenges when developing Ellen's character. The first challenge is how to develop her in a way which allows an audience to connect with her while she keeps everyone at arm's length. To do this, we tried to find moments when she would let her guard down and display genuine emotion. We tried to find one moment in each of her speeches which would allow for this emotional vulnerability.

Another challenge was helping the actress develop her character, and present her on stage in a believable fashion. The actress playing Ellen has a tendency to be flat and non-emotional in all the previous roles I have seen her play. Though these are the characteristics of Ellen, it is important for the actress to create a believable character the audience wants to watch. To do this I first asked her to ignore all the punctuation in the script. As she had a tendency to over exaggerate every comma or period. This led to a slow and drawn out speech pattern which conveyed no characterization or emotion. Once I was able to help her get past the flow of her dialogue we then started working on inflections and rhythm. We would sit and watch former state department speakers, and copy the way they spoke with authority and conviction. We utilized this most effectively in the long monologue at the top of ACT II, where Ellen is addressing the audience during a slide show presentation. We found the proper cadence to help

her connect to the dialogue and find the moments where a pause was necessary for the points to be made.

The final challenge with Ellen's character was movement. The actress stated at the beginning she preferred moving around when talking, however as she started rehearsals this did not seem to be the case. Often she would stand stark still, and not move at all. This, of course, led to flat monotone acting from her. As we started exploring each scene, we found the moments and motivations for her to move around the stage. Sometimes these were simple actions, sometimes they were emotionally driven escapes. For other moments we used actions with the tea cup, or the chair to help the actress find the appropriate movement and emotion for her scene.

Like other actors in the cast, the actress playing Ellen reacts and responds to the energy given to her during her scenes by the other actors. In the Ellen / Walker scenes the energy was always high, and you could sense a solid connection between the actors. The Ellen / Michael scene, was strong and dynamic, after some work. We enhanced it by having Ellen walk away before Michael's line "But I am real" and Ellen's reply over her shoulder to him of "Yes, but I don't have to treat you that way". Once we found the moment, the whole scene came together in a high tension moment. The real challenge came when working the Ellen / Lainie scenes. Unlike the actor playing Walker, working with the actress on internal tempo and energy did not work. She would only respond to the energy given to her. This often led to scenes emotionally going the wrong way, or a complete lack of emotion and energy. These moments will be discussed below in the section on Lainie.

Before I delve into the work with the actress playing Lainie, there are a few things I need to make clear. Please understand I am not using this as a medium for me to vent any frustrations or aggression towards the actress. I am going to do my best at keeping all comments related to

the methods and techniques I employed during the rehearsal process to bring this show to the stage. However, please understand, my dear readers, working with this actress was one of the most difficult and “challenging” processes I have ever faced while working in theatre. During our rehearsal process, the actress was going through some issues. She was dealing with issues in Mississippi, and having to travel back and forth. She was also competing in the Miss Black Louisiana Pageant, and teaching full time at a middle school while pursuing her graduate degree. However, with difficulty and challenges comes learning and lessons, so let me begin.

There were many challenges in bringing the character of Lainie to the stage. The biggest of which was the emotional challenges which Lainie must travel through in order to tell her story. It is in this challenge where I feel I did not succeed fully with this play. The play follows Lainie over the course of three years, while her husband is held hostage in the Middle East. To connect with Michael, Lainie removes all the furniture out of his old office, paints the walls and floor, and has nothing except a small rug in the middle of the room. This room becomes her version of his prison, thus making it her own prison.

The actress had difficulty in finding the emotion behind this scene. When asking the actress how she views Lainie’s actions at a particular part of the text, she responds with “angry”. When I asked why the actress felt the character was angry, her response was “because that’s how I would feel”. Upon this statement, we explored the text of the scene thoroughly. Through the text we were able to determine the internal action of the scene. This would become a regular occurrence in all our scene work together. Developing a connection was the hardest obstacle. On several occasions I offered to help the actress away from rehearsal to dig through the text and find the emotions behind the scenes, and each time the actress declined. I tried to work this into rehearsals where we would examine the connection to the text or the scene. Each time I was met

with the same blank expression and simple physical terms such as “tired”, “mad”, or the often used “angry”.

Another challenge the actress faced in her role of Lainie was in pronouncing words correctly. This issue extended beyond just regional or cultural dialect. I knew from watching her performances in other shows, her Mississippi accent was always going to always be present and I could do nothing to change this fact. However, complete mispronouncing of words was becoming a common issue. To overcome this obstacle, I would write out the word phonetically, and help her with the proper pronunciation, and definition when needed. This also led to us working on proper enunciation while on stage. Though I may not be able to clear her of her accent, I can at least make sure she is heard and saying the right words. However, volume is a note I had to give her often, and was even mentioned by the adjudicators when they watched the show.

A challenge which affected the entire group of actors was her attitude towards attendance. On multiple occasions she would arrive late for rehearsals in which we were working scenes with her and other actors, or, on one occasion, just not showing up for rehearsal at all. This would cause us to have to wait and delay work. The attitude of the cast was becoming more frustrated and bitter towards her. To address this issue I would thank them for their patience and professionalism while we waited, and would do whatever work we could in her absence. However, this was not possible where rehearsals were only Lainie and Walker, as Walker has no scenes alone. The cast’s frustrations were coming out during rehearsals, especially when the actress would be late and unprepared for the scenes she was to work. It would usually take about an hour or more to get everyone back on track and focused on the work. To help with this I would just run the scene multiple times until personal emotions were removed from the acting.

We would then start to explore the characters' emotional situations of the scene, and layer in the motivation. At the end of the rehearsal I would thank everyone for their work, and remind them of what the start time the next day was. When addressing her directly about her tardiness, she would apologize and give multiple excuses.

I would have to say my work with the actress playing Lainie was not a success. Though I tried approaching the moments in different methods, using objectives, obstacles, emotions, connections, actions, and even "As If's", nothing seemed to really help the actress connect. I feel the production would have been an amazing show if somehow I would have been able to help the actress truly connect to the text. Sadly, I never accomplished the goal of doing so, and I feel the production suffered for it.

Epilogue: My Reflection Back

In looking back over the entirety of the production process I feel confident in the work I put forth, and the collaborations which happened on and off stage. There were some high and low moments, however overall this production was a positive experience. This was also a fantastic learning experience for me, more so than I thought it was going to be.

Having a small stage helped me think outside the box. Normally I would use the wings, or back stage area for the actors, however half way through the rehearsal process I had the idea of keeping the actors on stage. I talked to the actors about my idea, explaining how we could use the side of the stage for the actors. I explained how I wanted to keep the audience aware of the 'two rooms' of the audience and the actors, and how I wanted to create the sense in which all events were being witnessed by all the characters. All but Michael, his character remained restrained and blindfolded on the side of the stage with his back to the other actors. While my

three main actors occupied chairs on the stage right side of the set, Michael was sitting on the floor alone on the stage left side of the stage. Even off stage, I wanted to keep his character isolated. I felt this would create a nice sense of isolation to the audience, reminded them they are spectators of the events.

The small stage forced me to use extreme diagonals when actors were talking, which I think again led to a sense of hyper-reality. Then limiting the playable space even more by making the rug off limits to all but Michael and Walker. This limitation helped establish Walkers disregard for the space, and Michaels limitations to it. I wanted Lainie to see it as sacred, while Ellen payed it no attention yet didn't walk on it. Again I was creating two rooms within the room the actors occupied. I was not intending for the play to become meta, nor was this my goal. I just wanted to create these moments for the actors and their characters, and some of it read to the audience, while others did not. However, I feel a lot of the work helped the actors define their role in the space they occupied.

In the process of bringing Two Rooms to the stage, I felt I learned more about my sense and style of directing than I had from previous productions. My experience has mostly been in comedies, and I work very well with them. However, I have found through this production my style when working with actors in emotionally focused dramas. I tend to start with the mental and move to the physical. By starting with the base idea, then layering all the actions and objectives on top, I help build a solid character which the actor, hopefully, can connect with and physically explore. This is different from my comic acting where I take the physical and add the mental afterwards. It was a fun and challenging process of discovery for me, and helped me learn about directing in a different way than previously explored. This is a method I will be building, exploring, and using for the rest of my life, and I look forward to the challenge.

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Work Cited

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APPENDIX A

PRODUCTION BOOK FOR TWO ROOMS

*actor as creator
father than
Actor as interpreter*

TWO ROOMS received its world premiere at the La Jolla Playhouse (Des McAnuff, Artistic Director; Alan Levey, Managing Director), La Jolla, California, on June 21, 1988. It was directed by Des McAnuff; the set was designed by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg; the costumes were designed by Susan Hilferty; the lighting was designed by Peter A. Kaczorowski; the music was by Michael S. Roth; the sound was by Serge Ossorguine; video production was by Dennis McNabb; and slide photography was by Harry Hendrickson. The cast was as follows:

LAINIE WELLS Amanda Plummer
WALKER HARRIS Brent Jennings
ELLEN VAN OSS Jo Henderson
MICHAEL WELLS Jon De Vries

A revised version of TWO ROOMS was produced at the Cricket Theatre (William Partlan, Artistic Director) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October 1989. It was directed by Jeanne Blake; the set design was by Rick Polenek; the lighting design was by Tina Charney; the costume design was by Anne Ruben; and technical direction was by John David Paul. The cast was as follows:

MICHAEL WELLS Terry Edward Moore
LAINIE WELLS Camille D'Ambrose
WALKER HARRIS Steven Hendrickson
ELLEN VAN OSS Shirley Venard

*Two Rooms
by
Lee Blessing*

CHARACTERS

MICHAEL WELLS 30's, educator
LAINIE WELLS *And* 30's, educator, married to Michael
WALKER HARRIS 30's, reporter
ELLEN VAN OSS *T.H.O. 8* 40's, representative of the State Department

PLACE

A room

TIME

The recent past, the present

-1
1/2-2
out 3

TWO ROOMS

ACT ONE

Scene One

UI Michael's expo - <Q4

start
6:28

Lights rise to reveal a dull-colored emptiness. A narrow mat lies on the floor. The sense of an entry upstage, but no more than that. Michael lies on the mat. He has an unkempt beard, wears a t-shirt and pajamas. He also wears handcuffs. He is blindfolded.

1
Tempo
5
exposition

MICHAEL. Mathison had a gun. Under his jacket. A little automatic pistol or something — I'd never seen it before. Silver. I remember it gleamed in the sunlight when he pulled it out. It was just as they were forcing us both into the car — just as he put one hand on the roof of the car. He was right in front of me, there was nowhere I could go. And suddenly, this shining little fantasy pistol appeared. Can you imagine? I taught for two years with the guy and never knew he carried it. As though that was supposed to save us. As though that pitiful gun — that absurd, miniscule tribute to one man's utter lack of realism . . . I mean, he had to know what the world can do — if it just feels like it — to a man. To any man. And to carry a gun? The size of a cigarette case? In Beirut? (He starts to laugh, stops because it hurts.) He didn't even know what to do once he pulled it out. I think he really believed all those kidnappers would take one look at this mighty weapon of the West, drop their AK-47's and flee. "Run! It's a trap! He's got a tiny gun!" (Starts to laugh again, stops.) God, Lainie, I love

No
wiggling

you. I wish this was a real letter. (A beat.) What Mathison forgot was these people have been taking hostages for thousands of years. They know how to do it. He yelled, "I'm afraid!" I remember, and that same instant one of them shot it out of his hand, along with some of his fingers, and they slammed us into the car, did the old Kalashnikov-to-the-forehead routine, wrapped Mathison's hand up with his own shirt, blindfolded us and drove us . . . wherever this is. No one spoke. The only sound was Mathison weeping. I wasn't paying that much attention. I was busy counting my own fingers. And toes. (A beat.) Ok, this is a digression, but I'm suddenly thinking of your toes. Really. I'm remembering them on the beach at the ocean. (First few dates — somewhere in there.) You had a bathing suit on — which could have been the first time I saw you in one — and we were lying on towels and you dug your toes down in the wet sand. You dug them around very slowly, and suddenly I felt overwhelmed by this powerful image of . . . a sea turtle, coming ashore, digging in the sand and laying millions, or hundreds — you'd know — of eggs. And it's stupid, but it made me feel connected in a way I'd never felt before, to amphibians. I mean, there they are — forever faced with the choice: go on land and risk their life to lay eggs, or stay in the sea where it's warm and safe and eventually die out. And it occurred to me in that moment that marriage is exactly the same proposition. And I looked at your toes in the sand once more, and . . . married you anyway. (A beat.) I wear a blindfold. I can take it off, but if I do they beat me. Or if they come in and it looks re-tied they beat me. Sometimes it doesn't look like I've taken it off, but since I'm an American they're sure I must have, and they beat me anyway. Their voices are so young. I'm sure it's a delusion, but sometimes I think I've had one or two of them in my class. (A beat.) Now I'm in theirs. (The lights fade quickly to black. When they rise again, Lainie is alone in the room. She stands staring at the empty mat. The room is much brighter — light from an unseen window surrounds her. When she speaks, she addresses the mat at first, then moves around the room. She does not address the audience.)

LAINIE. I'm talking to myself. All last night, taking the

expo

5 min
Black 2
LO5

LO6

2 III
Lainie
expo
Tempo
6

Wistful
expo

(No Beer)

3
III
Walker
Intro
Tempo
4

furniture out of this room. I was talking to myself. It's not the worst habit. (Resides, for the last year, what else have I had going?) (She upsets the mat with her hand, slides it to another corner, then sits on it, celebrating its new position.) Talking to myself is, of course, the definition of talking to yourself. I don't know about it here. It'd probably be in a corner, but this one? Which one? (Sliding it to another corner of the room.) It's hard to know which was worse: talking to Moslems or talking to Christians. Talking to Lebanese or talking to Syrians. Going across the Green Line to beg, or to Damascus — or Washington. (Suddenly nods her head decisively.) Washington. Definitely Washington. The Arabs wouldn't help me, but at least they'd respect the pain. In Washington, I was the pain. (Of the position of the mat.) This is absolutely wrong. (She moves it to another corner, stares at it.) The head of the University said they'd do everything humanly possible to get you back. So did the head of Amal. So did the Lebanese President. So did the Syrian Foreign Minister, our ambassador in Beirut, our embassy in Damascus, the Undersecretary of State, the President, and everyone running for President. This doesn't work at all. (She moves the mat to the center of the room again.) This is just going to have to stand for all the corners of the room. Why not? It's . . . not an exact science. (She stares at the mat.) You'll be here. (She moves towards the source of light from outside, mimes pulling down a shade and lights dim. She goes to the mat, sits on one side of it, then lies on it, allowing space as though another person were lying on it with her. Tentatively, she reaches out as though stroking the cheek of her 'companion'.) From now on, I'm only talking to you. (Lights fade to black. When they rise again, Lainie sits on the floor a few feet from the mat, staring at it. Walker stands staring at her.)

WALKER. How long has this room been like this? (A beat.) Do you redecorate often? (A beat.) Rest of the house looks real nice. Very normal. (A beat.) This room, though. This room you seem to have done something to. (A beat.) Lainie? Can I call you Lainie? (A beat.) I want to thank you for letting me come. I know a lot of other reporters would like to be here. I'm glad you chose to talk to me. (A beat.) Lainie? (A beat.)

V-2

choice

LQ7

LO8

Speak

up shot

U. sitting
Nice
change in opening
voice

8
does Lainie sit on mat?

So — what is it you'd say you've done to this room?

LAINIE. I cleansed it.

WALKER. Cleansed it? (Attempting to break the mood.) Is that a new thing? In decor? Cleansing? (A beat.) Lainie? (A beat.) It's hard to ask the right questions if you won't —

LAINIE. I scrubbed and painted all the walls. I took all his things out.

WALKER. Was this his room? I mean — is it?

LAINIE. His office. His things were here.

WALKER. Where are they now?

LAINIE. In the basement.

WALKER. What if he comes back? Soon, I mean.

LAINIE. I painted everything. Walls, ceiling.

WALKER. A lot of consistency. What's the mat for?

LAINIE. I look at it.

WALKER. Why? (A beat.) Do you mind if I open the shade? (A beat.) Lainie? (Without attempting to open the shade.) So —

does the government keep in contact with you?

LAINIE. She's coming today.

WALKER. She?

LAINIE. The government. Her name is Ellen. She's been attached to me. My case. (A beat.)

WALKER. Ellen. What time is she coming?

LAINIE. I liked your voice. (A beat.)

WALKER. What?

LAINIE. Your voice on the phone. I liked it.

WALKER. Why?

LAINIE. It took its time. (She stares steadily at the mat.)

WALKER. When is Ellen coming? (A beat.) Did you want me to meet her? Is that why I'm here? (A beat.) The government

hasn't always told the truth on this issue. You do know that.

(A beat.) I could write about this right now. With what I've got. Just having been here. I could write about this room. What you're saying, what you're not saying. But I won't — if you'll just look at me. (Again, no response.) What is it you're staring at?

LAINIE. His hands. (Lights fade to black. Quickly they fade up again. Ellen now stands where Walker did. Lainie remains in the

same position.

ELLEN. We think they've moved him. (A beat.) A different section of town, perhaps. Or even just across the street. It's reasonably certain it's no further than that. It's good strategy for them to move him from time to time. It enhances their power. (A beat.) Still, they may have moved him off there, to the Bekaa Valley. That is possible. (A beat.) They may not have moved him at all. They may only be pretending to move him. As you know, our intelligence in Beirut isn't the best. Even pretending to move him could enhance their power. (She sighs.) Frankly, almost everything enhances their power. It would be hard for Michael's captors to make a mistake, at the moment. Lainie, are you listening to me? (Walker enters with a small

chair.)

WALKER. Here you go.

ELLEN. Thank you.

WALKER. (Setting it down for her.) I'm getting your tea. Lainie?

LAINIE. Nothing. (Walker exits U.)

ELLEN. Why is he here?

LAINIE. Shouldn't he be here?

ELLEN. He's from a newspaper. What have we been talking about for the last year, Lainie?

LAINIE. It's better to be quiet.

ELLEN. We have no way of knowing what public statements by hostage relatives may do. No way at all. (I could make it even harder for us to secure a safe return. I'm disappointed that you called him.)

LAINIE. He called me.

ELLEN. I'm disappointed he's here. It's absurd for you to talk to newspapers. Besides, one doesn't talk to newspapers in any case. One lights their fuse. Please, get rid of him.

LAINIE. I can't do that.

ELLEN. (Starting to go.) Then I'll go.

LAINIE. No.

ELLEN. I won't be able to be free with information.

LAINIE. When is there ever any information?

ELLEN. (Sighs sits.) When are you going to do something about this room? (A beat.) Where were we?

4
U.II.2
Ellen's
entra
Tempo
6

can
can
Time Jump?
5/10/2

Tiff
Mou
Power of Voice

Ellen exits SL

13/3/2

new

na

1
LAINIE. You said they were moving him. Or maybe they weren't.

ELLEN. The most important thing to remember is that we're not speaking of a country of terrorists here. We're barely speaking of a country at all. We're speaking of factions. Some friendly to Iran, some to Syria, some to Israel, some to us. They're all fighting for power. For all we know your husband —

LAINIE. Michael.

ELLEN. Michael may be liberated by a faction that favors something like that could happen at any time.

LAINIE. What are the chances?

ELLEN. The important thing is to maintain cautious optimism. Advised hope, I call it. We're hopeful, but we're advised. We're not unintelligent. We recognize the reality of the situation, then we inject hope. Into that reality. Because without hope there can be no foreign policy. (Walker reenters with a small tray-table. On it is a tea set. He sets it all down next to Ellen and pours.)

WALKER. I let it steep in the kitchen.

ELLEN. Thank you. (A beat.) I'm so odd. Everyone in Washington pumps down coffee all day as fast as they can. And then there's me — with my little cup of tea. I feel like a foreigner. (She studies the tea a moment.) The main thing — the crucial thing — is knowing that hope is a real and present possibility. Men have disappeared in Beirut, men have reappeared.

WALKER. So when's Michael Wells going to reappear?

ELLEN. Well — that is what I mean by hope. (A beat.)

WALKER. Sorry?

ELLEN. I mean, for example, there are pictures. We have pictures of Michael. Taken just a month ago. Pictures of him alive.

WALKER. He had the shit beat out of him. He was barely recognizable.

ELLEN. The point is, he's alive.

WALKER. He was alive then.

ELLEN. And hope keeps him alive right up to the present.

moment. That's why we use hope. Hope enhances our power.

LAINIE. When will my husband be released?

ELLEN. We can't say.

WALKER. What do you mean, you can't say?

ELLEN. I really should go. I didn't come here for a news conference. (Ellen moves to leave.)

LAINIE. Ellen. (Ellen stops.)

WALKER. It's our Middle-East policy that's keeping your husband hostage. Nothing else.

ELLEN. That's ridiculous.

WALKER. In terms of priorities, Michael comes below oil, below U.S.-Soviet relations —

ELLEN. He's totally uninformed —

WALKER. Below U.S.-Israeli relations, U.S.-Syrian relations —

ELLEN. Lainie —

WALKER. U.S.-Iranian relations —

ELLEN. (To Lainie.) You'd be well-advised to reflect on your relations with the press.

WALKER. Can I quote you? (To Lainie.) Have you ever wondered why other governments can get their hostages out and we can't?

ELLEN. They pay ransom.

WALKER. And it works!

ELLEN. This government is using every ethical means to bring your husband back to you.

WALKER. This government wouldn't care if your husband died.

ELLEN. Mr. Harris!

WALKER. Because then he's not a problem anymore.

ELLEN. Either he goes — right now — or I do.

WALKER. (To Ellen.) How does she get you to come out here, anyway? — It's a thirty-minute drive.

ELLEN. Lainie? —

LAINIE. I won't talk to her on the phone.

WALKER. Really?

LAINIE. I hang up the minute I hear her voice.

WALKER. How come?

ELLEN. Lainie? —

your mouth. It's a line here. A little tuck, almost. A wrinkle. It's not on the other side. I don't mind you growing older, but you should do it all over your face, evenly. Don't you think? (A beat.) This, though. Here at your temple. I like this. The way the hairs slide along the side, over your ear, into the tangle in back. Just these hairs on the side, running straight back, like they're in a hurry. (With a slight laugh.) But all this ear-hair. This has got to go. (Quieter.) A beard. I can't imagine it. (A beat.) I suppose you don't get enough sleep. Or maybe you do. Maybe all you do is sleep. I hope so. I wish you could sleep from first to last. That you'd never open your eyes again, till I was in front of you. Your eyes are so... Why do women love eyes so much? They say it's men that are blind. (A beat.) Michael? (Lights fade to black.)

circle
change
of
voice

SWII
Walker
needs
permission
no surge
12 up
4

LA15

Scene Two

A slide appears on the U. wall. It's a picture of a heavily-damaged building in Beirut. We see Lainie and Walker silhouetted on the floor, looking up at it.

7
UI
Lainie
Removes
Lamps
5

LAINIE. This is a hotel in Beirut near where we lived. It was destroyed in some shelling a couple of months before... before he was taken. (We hear the sound of a slide projector. The picture changes: the site of a car-bomb explosion.) A car bombing. Michael used to take pictures as he walked along. He wasn't looking for these kinds of things. You just couldn't avoid them. People at the University told him it was dangerous. It made people notice him. Even more. I mean. And he did stop a few weeks before... (Another slide: a Lebanese youth, perhaps 15, with an automatic weapon.) This guy commanded a whole block. He liked Michael. He wanted to work. (Another slide: the coast. A few indistinct figures at the shore.) Michael said that people had started fishing with grenades. They'd just stand there and people had started fishing with grenades. They'd just stand there and... fish that way. (Another slide: a Lebanese woman, weeping bitterly.) Michael said he couldn't take the picture a hundred times. He's not sure what it was about. He didn't know her. He saw something different in her. He said she was different. He said she was different. He said she was different.

LA16
Pro

1.3pg
2.3pg
3.3pg
4.3pg
5.3pg

if you, the war, she's dancing, or... whatever it is, and the subject just seems to... hold you. (Suddenly the projector shuts off. The image disappears. Blackness.)

LA17

Vocal
Change

WALKER. What's wrong?
LAINIE. I want to stop now.
WALKER. We just started.
LAINIE. I'm sorry.
WALKER. I'll get the lights.
LAINIE. Don't.

Property of
DAVID W. HODGINS
LA18

WALKER. You want to sit in the dark?
LAINIE. Do you think they still blindfold him?
WALKER. They might. Who can know?
LAINIE. Do they chain him?
WALKER. They might. (Walker picks up the light. He stands at the front of the room. Lainie still sits on the floor.) They are good pictures. They are good photographs.

LAINIE. He's a good teacher, isn't he? These pictures were harder than I thought. I shouldn't have spread to show them to you.

WALKER. It's a shame. They'd go awfully well with an interview. I would ever give you an interview.

LAINIE. I can't decide.

WALKER. It's been two months. (A beat.)

LAINIE. Why haven't you written anything up to now? You've got more than enough without me talking.

WALKER. I guess I'd like to have your permission. (With a self-deprecating laugh.) My editors think I'm crazy, of course. But that's why. (A beat.) I won't write anything if you don't want me to. It's a promise.

Scene Transition

LAINIE. What's a promise?

WALKER. You were teaching, weren't you? After you got... where? (Lainie nods.) But recently you took a leave of absence?

LAINIE. You've been asking about me?

WALKER. Why'd you leave?

LAINIE. It's hard to say. I mean... I mean... (She looks up.)

WALKER. When was that?

LAINIE. When... when... (A beat.)

WALKER. So... so... (A beat.)

LAINIE. No. I'm working on a project. It's something I couldn't do in Beirut.

WALKER. What is it?

LAINIE. I watch birds. I go down to the marsh a couple miles away and... Warblers, mostly. I'm working on them.

WALKER. Does it relax you?

LAINIE. It teaches me.

WALKER. And the rest of the time you're in here? Not much of a life. *(A beat.)*

LAINIE. Michael's here. I can't explain it, but for me he is. In this room. The moment I come in, I feel... the warmth of his body. The rest of the house — everywhere else — is cold.

WALKER. You need to talk to people. Away from here. At work, or —

LAINIE. I work in a marsh.

WALKER. You should talk to friends. How about the other hostage families?

LAINIE. It's like looking in a mirror.

WALKER. Then talk to the public. That really hasn't been tried enough. We could start with an interview. In depth, about —

LAINIE. My pain?

WALKER. Among other things. We could run it in the paper. Two, three installments. Maybe more.

LAINIE. We could run my pain in installments?

WALKER. It's better than hiding in a marsh. *(A beat.)*

LAINIE. Ellen says that won't help anyone but the kidnappers.

WALKER. No one knows what will help. That's the first thing. No one knows. All we know is what we've done, and what hasn't worked. Keeping silent hasn't worked.

LAINIE. Why do you care about this? You don't have anyone over there.

WALKER. I care about people who are going through what you're going through.

LAINIE. But why? Why our pain? There's so much to pick from. The world is full of terrible... outcomes. Why did you choose this?

Is it because you can win an award?

WALKER. An award? What are you talking about?

LAINIE. Intense suffering. A long series. Lots of installments. A

Pulitzer prize.

WALKER. Is that what you think I'm here for? I've been waiting for months! You think that's how I'd go after a Pulitzer prize? You think I'd wait for you to ask me here? I'd be on your doorstep every day. I'd be out in the marsh with you.

LAINIE. I'm sorry.

WALKER. I've stared into too many faces — yours included — of people who've been told, "Your husband's gone. He may be dead. There's nothing you can do." *(A beat.)* The reason I'm here is because more than anyone this has happened to — any family, I mean — you understand what's really going on.

LAINIE. What's really going on?

WALKER. What's really going on is that they'll let him die. They've already made the value judgment on him and the others. To this administration, it's more effective to use his captivity — and even his death — to push a bunch of policy points, than it is to use every means to get him back.

LAINIE. You really think that?

WALKER. I know it. So do you. The day he's reported dead, do you think they'll be taking any responsibility? They'll be all over TV pointing the finger at every terrorist in the Middle East and saying, "These are barbarians. Don't try to understand them, just let us do what we must do." And we'll let them.

LAINIE. What do you think I should do?

WALKER. I've said. Speak out. Do interviews. Go on TV if you have to. *(She considers this.)*

LAINIE. No.

WALKER. Why not?

LAINIE. *(Shakes her head.)* It's too public for me. It's too... public.

WALKER. Well. Fear of speaking. Right up there with — what? Fear of falling, fear of loud noises —

LAINIE. That's not fair.

WALKER. Oh, I'm not being fair? Sorry. You're right. Loud noises can be pretty rough. *(He suddenly claps his hand loudly behind her ear. She pulls away from it, holding her ear in pain.)*

LAINIE. Stop that!

WALKER. That's probably going to be the last thing Michael ever hears. Or if it won't be two hands clapping, it'll be a gun.

Pu. litz er

Pulitzer

19

LAINIE. Get out of here!

WALKER. Care about your husband.

LAINIE. I do!

WALKER. Do something!

LAINIE. I am!

WALKER. Do more!

LAINIE. No! (A beat.) You know what will get him back? Nothing we can understand. Whatever took Michael, whatever will bring him back is a power so incomprehensible we'll never understand it. And all the running around screaming about injustice won't change a thing. All we can do—all anyone can do—is take pictures, of mourning widows. Write stories about mourning widows. Become fascinated with widows of men who aren't even dead yet. But nothing—nothing—will make a difference.

WALKER. Lainie, I'm only—

LAINIE. Get out! If I want to see a scavenger, I'll go to the marsh.

(A beat. Walker hesitates, then exits. Lights fade to black. When they rise again, Michael sits alone on the mat. He is blindfolded.)

MICHAEL. (A beat.) War isn't a tear in the fabric of things, it is the fabric. If earth is our mother, our father is war. The chief priority we have on earth is to vie with each other for a place to stand. Does any of this make sense, Lainie? I'm trying to explain why this has happened to us. Americans fight all the time—lots of wars. But always far away. We haven't had to fight for the soil we stand on in a century. We've forgotten that level of sacrifice. These people haven't. Everyone in this country—Christian, Sunni Moslem, Shi'ite, Palestinian, Israeli—everyone is fighting for the ground. The ground itself. They stand here or nowhere. So it's easy for them to give up their lives. Small sacrifice. It's easy for them to kill, too. Small sacrifice. You know how being here, being swallowed up by it, makes me feel? Like I'm finally part of the real world. For the first time. Lainie, something in me never felt... affected... until this happened. You know what it makes me think of? Shiloh. Vicksburg. The Wilderness. What those places must have been like: suffocating, endless, bleeding disaster. Stacking of bodies ten deep for a few feet of our ground. Don't you see? We're not different from these people, we've just forgotten. We think this huge doesn't exist anymore. We abstract everything, we objectify. We talk about

global politics, how all this affects the balance of power. Do you know what a twenty-year-old Shi'ite thinks of the balance of power? (Lights fade to black.)

LQ21

Scene Three

LQ22

Lights fade up to reveal Ellen sitting in a chair. Lainie sits on the floor facing her.

add Tea cup for E.

ELLEN. I got a call today.

LAINIE. About Michael?

ELLEN. Not exactly. About Walker. He's been visiting you now and then, hasn't he?

LAINIE. What's wrong with that? - Turn? -

ELLEN. Nothing. He was here about a week ago. You looked at slides, I believe.

LAINIE. How do you know that? Did he tell you?

ELLEN. Walker? Oh, no. (Laughs slightly.) No, no, no. Sometimes we watch your house.

LAINIE. You do? React

ELLEN. Of course. You're on the list.

LAINIE. What list?

ELLEN. The Watch Your House list. You've made threats. You're a potential embarrassment. In the realm of international politics, that can be serious. Terrorists can use what you do. What Walker does, too. Americans are often naive in their efforts to affect things like the media, public opinion. They can end up helping this country's enemies far more than themselves. In a situation like this, where so little can be done, the temptation must be irresistible to do something irrational, counterproductive. That's the only way I can understand what Walker's done. - Turn

LAINIE. What's he done? - Stand

ELLEN. Oh, that's right. You don't know yet. That call I got? It was from one of his editors. Walker's written a story. About you. It'll be out tomorrow. Not an interview. He doesn't quote you directly. But he details the kidnapping, and all your various meetings with people during the early months, and... I'm afraid

...also this room. *not he would*

LAINIE. He'd never do that without telling me.

ELLEN. That's what I thought. That's why I'm here, in fact. To find out if he really has done this behind your back. *(beat)* Is that the case? *— red legs*

LAINIE. Can we get them not to print the story?

ELLEN. No. But I'd like to make a suggestion or two, if I could.

LAINIE. What?

ELLEN. If you were to make a public statement disavowing the article, *(that might help)*. Perhaps having a different reporter, from a newspaper we could recommend, come in and see this room in a more normal state —

LAINIE. No. *— unctous*

ELLEN. Whatever you like. *Perhaps only a photographer. Just a picture of you sitting in this room with furniture, the window open ... (Lainie is silent.)* Well. Let's see what damage is done before we look for solutions. *(A beat. Ellen rises.)* I probably should be getting back to the office. *(She moves to leave. Lainie is motionless.)* Lainie? *— no "stand"*

Are you all right? *— no "anything"*

LAINIE. Are you pretending to care?

ELLEN. I care very much. I think you know that. *stand*

LAINIE. If you did, you'd do something.

ELLEN. I told you, there's nothing we can do about Walker —

LAINIE. Not about Walker? About Michael.

ELLEN. We do things all the time. Every day. We just can't tell you about them.

LAINIE. Nothing happens.

ELLEN. Sometimes something happens. People do get released.

LAINIE. Not because of anything you do.

ELLEN. You can't know that.

LAINIE. I can't know much, given how little you tell me. *no "it's"*

ELLEN. A government must have secrets.

LAINIE. Why?

ELLEN. I'm not conducting a course for children. *(A beat.)* We need silence. From you, from all the hostage families. And a willingness to let us do our job. *(isn't)* easy for you, we know that. But talking with people like Walker doesn't help anyone, and as we've learned today, it's its own punishment. The one thing you

can do — the only thing that will be of any use — is to hope.

LAINIE. Hope?

ELLEN. Hope.

LAINIE. Hope doesn't come from you, does it?

ELLEN. What do you mean?

LAINIE. It comes from God, doesn't it? Or Allah? Jehovah? Fate? A higher power — isn't that right? Certainly not the government. The government doesn't dole out hope. *(It's not an entitlement program.)*

ELLEN. I don't see how this — *— red legs*

LAINIE. I study hope all the time. You know where? The marsh. I watch the warblers there, nesting. I know their whole life cycle. Little, friendly I-won't-bore-you-with-the-Latin-name warblers. Thousands of them. Going about their business. Not too many predators, plenty of insects to eat. They wouldn't need hope at all if it weren't for one thing. *not "wasn't"*

ELLEN. Which is?

LAINIE. The cuckoo. A much larger bird. Fewer of them, but, ... larger.

ELLEN. I'm not sure I see the connection.

LAINIE. You're right. Cuckoos don't eat warblers. They also eat insects. But cuckoos don't build nests. Instead, they wait till the warblers are away from theirs. Then they lay their eggs in the middle of all the warbler eggs. Neat, eh? Camouflage.

ELLEN. Sounds ... effective.

LAINIE. Oh, it works every time. *(The warblers return, and because they have — literally — bird brains, they don't seem to notice the great big egg among the little ones. They sit on them all. And what do you think happens? I mean, what's evolution for? The cuckoo hatches first. And there he is — nearly as big as his step-parents, demanding an immense volume of food, and waiting for the warbler eggs to hatch one by one. And when they do, do you know what happens then?)*

ELLEN. Inform me. *no "As"*

LAINIE. They crawl around — *(A)* blind, as the cuckoo chick is blind — in the nest, waiting for their parents to return with food. But as they do, one by one, they encounter a miracle of natural selection: the back of the baby cuckoo.

Nice build

Kookoo

NO "Now"

Connect w/Text.

ELLEN. The back?

LAINIE. Its back, unlike other birds' backs, is indented. There's a hollow. And you know what it's shaped like? What it's just big enough for? A baby warbler. And yet another miracle of nature: the baby cuckoo has an instinct. To do what? Push against anything that touches its back. Push and push until that thing is not there anymore. (And with great effectiveness, one by one, this blind, newborn, totally innocent bird murders each of the blind, newborn, totally innocent warblers, by pushing them out of the nest where they'll starve or be eaten by rats and snakes.)

ELLEN. Thank you for sharing such a wonderful story.

LAINIE. I'm not done. Warbler Mom and Dad come home. What do they find? One baby — which is as big as a Buick, and doesn't chirp like them. What do they think? Who will ever know? What do they do? Feed the only baby they have. Until one day it flies off, fully-fledged, a different species. And God or Allah or Nature or Fate — which we've already agreed is the author of hope — looks on with something more than indifference. With approval. (A beat.) The indentation in the cuckoo's back — that is the face of God. That is the chance of hope in the world.

ELLEN. Not every nest is visited by a cuckoo.

LAINIE. Mine was. Now offer me hope. (Lainie turns, exits quickly U. Ellen sighs, starts to follow after her. Before she can reach the door, Michael enters, in handcuffs. He is blindfolded. Ellen is unsurprised to see him.)

MICHAEL. They take me to the bathroom once a day. If I'm lucky I can shower once a month. Pardon my appearance.

ELLEN. That's perfectly all right.

MICHAEL. I imagine you dream about all your hostages.

ELLEN. Just you.

MICHAEL. Really?

ELLEN. Well, I'm assigned to you. The State Department is very big. Other hostages are dreamt about by others.

MICHAEL. (Nods.) ~~Laugh~~

ELLEN. Don't misunderstand. The dreams don't bother me.

MICHAEL. They don't?

ELLEN. What do you ... think about all day?

MICHAEL. I think about a man as a stored object. As a broom in

a broom closet. I think about brine shrimp in the Kalahari.

ELLEN. Brine shrimp?

MICHAEL. Tiny shrimp that live in the desert, in Africa. Lainie told me about them. They can live for years in suspended animation in the mud of a dry lakebed. When rain comes — if it comes — they wake up, and swim around, and procreate as fast as they can and get eaten by everything around them. (Then after a week or two the lake dries up again, and the lucky ones hit the mud for another ... decade. Ninety-nine percent of their life is spent waiting for their life. You get out of the United States, you see a lot of that. Whole cultures waiting to be alive.)

ELLEN. You're sympathetic to your captors' cause. The Stockholm Effect. A common syndrome — it's documented.

MICHAEL. It's convenient. You're sure your dreams don't bother you?

ELLEN. No more than the student's dream of being late to the exam bothers the student. There's some real anxiety at first, but ultimately —

MICHAEL. Indifference?

ELLEN. I realize it's not real.

MICHAEL. I am real.

ELLEN. Of course. But I'm not required to treat you that way. (She exits quickly U. Lights fade to black.)

LQ 24

Time Jump?

Scene Four

Lights rise to reveal Lainie and Walker. (The chair is gone.)

WALKER. I want to be able to give you my side of things. (A beat.)

I want to show you that what I did —

LAINIE. You promised me. (A beat.)

WALKER. That what I did —

LAINIE. You promised me.

WALKER. Lainie —

LAINIE. This room. You put this room in a newspaper.

WALKER. It's in a newspaper every day. It's Michael's room.

(11)
AII
Ellen's dream
Time Jump
g

(12)
AII
Lainie's
feels
Betwined
Time Jump
g

LQ 25
d'Void done
gone

the room they're all in. Hell, everyone's in it. We can't get out. LAINIE. People call me. They've been calling all week. They want to know if this room really exists. They want to know if they can come over.

WALKER. I'm sorry.

LAINIE. You're sorry? My life hasn't been that different, you know. I've had friends take advantage of me before. I've had them hurt me, betray me. I know what it's like. But I never thought someone would come into my life now — as it is now — and do this.

WALKER. Lainie —

LAINIE. Why?

WALKER. 'Cause you were smothering, that's why. You were sitting in here and pumping the air out, and for all Washington cared you could do it forever. Your husband, the men in Lebanon, the people in this country need you. They need you to say "I hurt" — in public. They need you to say, "I don't believe my government," and "We have to try new ways." They need to hear you say it over and over.

LAINIE. That's for me to decide! That's my choice! You took my choice! (A silence.) You think that just because you've been in this room, you understand it? It's the one place I can go and find Michael. Where I can feel — however imperfectly — what he's experiencing. No barrier between us. No one coming between. No one I don't have to hear about him from a government spokesperson, or a reporter or concerned friends — I have him here. He's mine.

WALKER. (Quietly.) It's an illusion.

LAINIE. What isn't? How do you want me to experience Michael? On the news? In the faces of all the sick human beings I've had to beg for his freedom? Holding hands with how many other helpless relatives? You're a great one to talk about illusions — that's your whole business. If I can have Michael — no matter how I do it — I'm going to have him. Do you understand?

WALKER. Lainie —

LAINIE. Do you understand? (A beat. Walker nods, turns to leave.) People are calling me. Reporters — other reporters — want to do articles about me and this room. What are we going to do about that?

WALKER. I don't know. I'm sorry. (A beat. He starts out again.)

LAINIE. I'm going to give you an exclusive interview.

WALKER. Why?

LAINIE. Because now that you've written what you've written talking to someone is inevitable. Unless I just want to be thought of as ... odd, I'll have to speak out. A lot of reporters would work, I suppose. But with you there's a special advantage. I know how far I can trust you. (Walker exits. Lights fade quickly to black and quickly rise again. Lainie is with Michael, who is blindfolded.)

MICHAEL. Some days I go around a room at home. Any room. Doesn't matter, they're all wonderlands compared to where I'm kept. Today it's my office. I try to remember everything about every piece of furniture. Where I bought it, what it was like that day, the smells in the air. It's really very sobering, how much the mind recalls when it's forced to. I remember my chair, my filing cabinet — and not just my filing cabinet, but the exact order of files: household, course-plans, medical, automobile, retirement — all of it. As if I took a picture. I remember the smell of my desk. And each day. I think I remember each day in my office — all of them. Cold days, wet days, days of incredible light. (A beat.) Don't tell you I was making a new country? On the wall. I feel the tiny bumps. They're mountains, of course. And the cracks are rivers. I work on it all day, sometimes. Every mountain has a name. There's Mount Freedom — of course. There's Mount Hope and Mount Sense of Humor. And Mount Forgiveness. There's Mount Forgiveness. Most days though, I fill up with the people we know. You, mostly. (Lainie carefully removes Michael's blindfold. He smiles at her.) You know that child we thought about having? We had him. He's um ... almost six months now. I'm aging him faster than normal so we can talk together sooner. His name is Andrew. Because I like it. He has your hair and eyes, and ... I can't tell about his nose yet. We may have a daughter later, I'm not ruling it out. (A beat. They stare at each other.) Who can predict the future? (Lights fade quickly to black.)

END OF ACT ONE

(14) CSR
UI
Ellen
delivers
the facts
Tempo
6

6:50

ACT TWO
Scene One

L30-House
Y2
LQ 31-Black
LQ 32-up
possible follow

A tight spot comes up on Ellen, sitting on a chair in the room. She smiles.

ELLEN. What does it mean to be an American? Well, here it means — for most of us — "to be comfortable." Elsewhere in the world it means to be punished. To be punished justly, some would say, for the crime of having been born here and not there. (We suddenly see a slide of a young Shi'ite terrorist on the same wall Laine's slides appeared in Act One.) This is one of those who does the punishing. He may be college-educated. He may well be a graduate of the American University in Beirut. He may be a shepherd, with no education whatsoever. He may speak English, or only Arabic. He may be devout — he may not. He may be utterly committed to his cause, or only doing this because it provides work and food and some measure of security. Perhaps he likes the excitement. Perhaps, like most young men, he just likes the guns. He may be relatively humane; he may be monstrous. (Another slide — another young Shi'ite terrorist.) Here's another one. (Another slide — another young Shi'ite terrorist.) And another. (Another slide — another young Shi'ite terrorist, then several more in quick succession. She speaks as they flash past.) And another, and another, and — thousands in this country. And this of course is only one country. Think of it — enormous numbers of people all over the world hating Americans. Hating other Westerners too, of course, but particularly Americans. Willing to kill even the most innocent of us. To make an example of our men, women, children, infants, of the aged, the infirm — of any American. To imprison us without trial. For years. Why? (Another slide — a very young Shi'ite terrorist, complete with rocket-launcher.) (They watch our television, you know. See our films, wear our clothes, drive our cars, listen to our music. They use our technology — what they can understand. They learn in our universities. What do they learn? That by sheerest accident, they have been born in a part of the world which has a power. That to be an uneducated person in a small country, some kind of a bypassed language, worshipping an old-

move
use
DSR
1. Jpg
plot
DSC
2
3 change
4-9
move
DSC
10. Jpg
move
DSC
Time?

move down

fashioned god is worse than death. That to be such a person without a revolution — or promise of a revolution — is to be shut in a room, blindfolded, with a chain around your ankle for life. (More slides — pictures of slain hostages William Buckley, Peter Kilburn and William Higgins.) These men are dead. They were American hostages taken in Lebanon, and later apparently murdered. They were not killed for who they were so much as for who they might have been: that is, any of us. They were our representatives in death. Their lives were erased by those whose lives otherwise might never have been written. (Another slide — Shi'ite militiamen celebrating in a Beirut street.) Men whose only reality is to reject and destroy what they can of the Western world — which floats before them as an unreachable illusion, both detested and desired. Infinitely powerful, infinitely weak. In a real sense, the Crusades are here again. We in the State Department understand that. It's our job to be ready to sacrifice the few for the many when necessary, and we do. It's our job to look down the road, to ascertain what is and isn't likely to happen, and form our judgments accordingly. For example. (More slides: Americans who have been kidnapped in Lebanon since 1984.) These men, all kidnap victims, are of course undergoing dehumanizing conditions in their false imprisonment. No one denies this. They are being held by men who would as soon kill them as anything else. Yet, since 1984 out of the total of more than sixty foreigners taken, only a few have died. Over thirty have been released. We in State have to believe that the kidnappers are no more interested in dead hostages than we are. We have to believe that time is therefore on our side, not theirs. That ultimately the situation will be resolved — after a presidential election here, or a shift in the military or political situation there or whatever. A break will come. (The slides stop on a picture of Peter Kilburn.) But if I'm wrong, if these men in fact all suffer torture and die as a direct result of this country's policy in the Middle East, I must be ready to accept that too. American citizens have to realize that when we take a risk, the U.S. government can't always save us. That the time comes when we — on an individual basis — will simply have to pay. (The slide goes out. Total blackness. When lights rise again, Laine and Michael sit on the mat in the same position as at the end of Act One.)

DSR
11-

down
DSR

move left

ZQ33
→ LQ34 - Prereq

⑬
Lainie
Michael
Talk
Reps
5

Blindfold?

LAINIE. Do they move you very often?
MICHAEL. Now and then.
LAINIE. Are the rooms ever different?
MICHAEL. It's always the same room. Whatever it looks like.
LAINIE. Why do they move you?
MICHAEL. They're nervous. I'm a prize, remember? The Army could steal me away, another faction could steal me. Sort of like sea gulls fighting over an orange rind on the beach.
LAINIE. What do you do all day?
MICHAEL. Write letters to you. What do you do?
LAINIE. Well, I... I do a lot of things. I do my work.
MICHAEL. And how's that?
LAINIE. Oh, you know... never-ending.
MICHAEL. (With a smile.) That's the trouble with nature. What else do you do?
LAINIE. Nothing.
MICHAEL. Still?
LAINIE. I'm still getting used to it.
MICHAEL. It's been a —
LAINIE. I know how long it's been — it's been longer than my life, all right?
MICHAEL. I know.
LAINIE. I wish they kidnapped women.
MICHAEL. They do. Sometimes.
LAINIE. They let them go. (A beat.)
MICHAEL. Does anything make you happy?
LAINIE. Sometimes Walker does.
MICHAEL. What's he like?
LAINIE. He's like you. He likes to be where he's told he shouldn't be. (A beat.) I gave him an interview.
MICHAEL. You did?
LAINIE. I talked about you. I talked about how little anyone's doing. All the standard things. I feel like such a fool when it's all over and nothing's happened. We, all of us, seem that way to me sometimes — all the ones who speak out. Going around the country, grabbing the whole nation by the elbow, saying, "Please? Can't you do something?" (A beat.) Do you ever hear gunfire where you are? Or shelling?

⑮
Time
Jump
Lainie
Michael
Talk
Reps
5

MICHAEL. Yes.
LAINIE. Close?
MICHAEL. Close enough. I fantasize sometimes that the place gets hit. A hole opens up, and I run out of it. Like someone escaping from a crashed plane. About the same odds, I suppose. I like the room this way. Thanks.
LAINIE. Ellen always wants me to open the window.
MICHAEL. Maybe you should. — Rise —
LAINIE. You think so?
MICHAEL. You know what I'd give for a window? — LQ 35
LAINIE. Yes. (He rises, moves towards the window. He makes a gesture as though opening a curtain. Light pours into the room. He looks out, smiles. Lainie rises and joins him at the window. After a moment Michael exits U., leaving Lainie staring out. Lights fade to black. When they rise again, Ellen and Lainie stand across the room from each other. The light in the room window is apparently still open, since the light remains brighter.) — LQ 36
ELLEN. Well. This is certainly an improvement.
LAINIE. Thank you.
ELLEN. When did you start opening the window?
LAINIE. A couple of weeks ago. Right after you were here last.
ELLEN. Really. It's much more pleasant. Maybe I should stay away longer next time.
LAINIE. If you do, don't come back.
ELLEN. Don't be cross. You know I've had to be in the office every minute lately. That's the whole point of a crisis, isn't it? Keep the bureaucrats in their place.
LAINIE. How's the crisis coming?
ELLEN. You should know. You're doing enough to intensify it.
LAINIE. That's not what I'm doing.
ELLEN. It isn't? Let me remind you of your phone call to me yesterday.
LAINIE. You don't have to —
ELLEN. (From memory — perfectly, of course.) Walker says I should go on TV. I think he may be right. Maybe this is a real opportunity to put pressure on people.
LAINIE. I didn't mean you.
ELLEN. Of course you meant me. You meant the State Department.

LQ
36
LQ
37 + window

LAINIE. All right, so I did mean you. So what?

ELLEN. Lainie, this crisis has been manageable so far. But there's no telling what can happen. We have a lot of Americans trapped with some exceedingly dangerous terrorists in a very cramped charter terminal in Crete. If you and other hostage relatives start jumping onto TV screens now, God knows what effect it will have.

LAINIE. Maybe a good effect.

ELLEN. I doubt it. Lainie, there are twenty-three American lives in that building. We can't break in, they have the building rigged to explode. We have to bargain. Fast. It's important that no other issue gets involved.

LAINIE. You mean Michael.

ELLEN. We're speaking of innocent lives here.

LAINIE. What's Michael? Guilty?

ELLEN. *(With a frustrated sigh.)* There's a dead serviceman lying twenty feet from the door of that terminal. At the moment they won't even let us take his body away.

LAINIE. I know.

ELLEN. He just thought he was on vacation. He wasn't even in uniform. But he was unfortunate enough to have a military I.D., and —

LAINIE. I know. *(A beat.)* Can't we just wait them out? Can't we —?

ELLEN. This group likes to die for what they believe in. They're not like a bunch of bank robbers. As far as they're concerned, when they die, they win. *(A beat.)* Now, they *have* made demands. They want some fellow terrorists released. Those demands are being studied by various . . . governments, and just between you and me, we may be able to come to an agreement. Or somebody may. It's rather complicated, you can imagine. But believe me, when terrorists take a group as large as this, everyone understands it's a short-term project.

LAINIE. Project? Is that how you see it? What's Michael — a long-term project?

ELLEN. Sadly, in a sense, yes.

LAINIE. Because he wasn't lucky enough to be abducted in an airport? With a bunch of other people?

ELLEN. Lainie, there are physical realities.

32

LAINIE. What about moral realities?

ELLEN. Please — don't mix apples and oranges. If you go public, if you make demands, you'll only delay matters and increase the danger for everyone involved. And frankly, no matter what you do, we won't ask for Michael's release.

LAINIE. You won't?

ELLEN. It's not his time.

LAINIE. His *time*?

ELLEN. It's nice with the window open. You should leave it this way, I think. *(Rising to leave.)* Well, I don't have much free time. I'm afraid I'll only be able to talk on the phone, at least until this present emergency's over. It's hard for me to be away right now. Lainie? *(Lainie hasn't moved.)* Soon it will be over and everything will be back to normal. *(A beat.)* I am sorry it can't be now. *(Ellen exits. Lights fade to black, then quickly rise again on Walker entering with a photograph in his hand.)*

WALKER. *(Calling out loudly.)* Lainie! This is great! This is fantastic! Thank you!

LAINIE. *(Entering.)* It's just a picture.

WALKER. Are you kidding? Michael and Jim Mathison together at the University of Beirut? You never told me you had this.

LAINIE. I didn't see any reason to —

WALKER. Look at it. They've got their arms around each other, they look warm, human, vulnerable — it's perfect.

LAINIE. Walker —

WALKER. We've got to bring this along. They'll want to use it on the show, I know it.

LAINIE. You think so?

WALKER. They'd kill for it. It's got everything you'd want: simple, affecting — this'll communicate.

LAINIE. I don't want to bring it.

WALKER. You don't?

LAINIE. I look at that picture. I don't want it flashed all over the country.

WALKER. Why not? That's exactly what you want to do. It's the perfect one. It affects you. It'll affect other people. *(She takes it from him.)*

LAINIE. I'll find another one.

33

WALKER. No.

LAINIE. No?

WALKER. Either you're going to do this or you're not. You have a chance to make a statement here. But it's only going to be heard if you make it as strong as possible. "Quietest Hostage Wife Speaks Out" is a headline. "Quietest Hostage Wife Sort Of Speaks Out" isn't.

LAINIE. But this is a picture.

WALKER. Doesn't matter. It's all imagery. The pictures we choose, the copy we write, the interviews you give — it's all a matter of giving the proper image. That's how people think. Images — not ideas. Images.

LAINIE. (Of the picture.) If I give this up, I give it up. I won't be able to look at it. (A beat. She gives it to him.)

WALKER. Good. Thanks. They'll pick this up everywhere, believe me. They'll run it all over — all the networks. This is the perfect time. Couldn't be more perfect. I was afraid this would all be over by now, I really was.

LAINIE. Have they let anyone go? Women, children?

WALKER. Nobody. Not a one.

LAINIE. What if they decide to ... to —?

WALKER. Kill more of them? It's possible. But it's not all that likely. They've already made their point with the soldier. We know they're serious.

LAINIE. They could get nervous. Someone could make a mistake.

WALKER. No one's going to make a mistake. These things are rituals. Everyone knows the role they're playing. Our role is to get Michael into the deal. We can, too. We're going to help him — starting with this ... (Indicates the picture.) and one very intense interview. Come on — let's get you down to the studio. (He moves to leave, turns, sees that she's not moving.) Come on.

LAINIE. What happens after the interview?

WALKER. Another interview. Maybe a lot of them.

LAINIE. And after that?

WALKER. Everybody. Everybody who asks. 7 o'clock, 11 o'clock, late-night news shows. You name it.

LAINIE. And after that?

WALKER. I don't know. Threatening phone calls from the State

Department — or the White House, if we're lucky.

LAINIE. And from the families of the new hostages. They're going to hate me — you know that, don't you? If I try to complicate this negotiation by insisting that Michael —

WALKER. Bullshit.

LAINIE. It's not bullshit. They will.

WALKER. Do you care?

LAINIE. Of course I care. I know what they're going through —

WALKER. How long have they been going through it? (A beat.) You've been in line. It's your turn, too — not just theirs. (Michael enters, handcuffed but not blindfolded. Walker is oblivious to him, but Lainie sees him. Michael smiles at her, goes and lies down on the mat, closing his eyes.)

LAINIE. All right.

WALKER. (Taking her by the hand, exiting.) Come on. Believe me, you'll get used to it. (They exit. Michael suddenly bolts straight up, screaming.)

MICHAEL. LAINIE!! LAINIE!! (A beat. He looks around fearfully, as though expecting someone to enter. When no one does, he relaxes slightly.)

They moved me again. That's why I dreamed. They have a box that they put me in when they move me. It's the shape of a coffin. And it's soundproof. The first time they tried it, they put the box in the back of a van with a bad exhaust system. I was unconscious when they took me out. I know this is an illusion, but sometimes — usually right in the middle of the night — it occurs to me that I don't know. I don't absolutely know, whether I'm alive or dead. (A beat.) They brought Mathison here — you know that? No, of course you don't. I never actually saw him. They moved him into a room just down the hall. I could hear him go by once a day when they took him to the bathroom. He said something in the hall the first time he passed by. They shouted at him to shut up, but I could tell his voice. I was afraid they'd take him away again if I said anything back. I'd been warned about that sort of thing before. So for a week I'd just listen to him shuffle past, once a day. Then one day, I heard them moving him — for good, I thought — so I shouted to him. "Mathison!" Once, real loud. It got very silent in the hall. Then the sound of them shoving him out, and then my door opened. Two guards came into my room and beat me. They never would admit

18
UI

Remember
Mathison

Hold hands

Dreamy
LQ 40

cell
LQ 41

he'd been there. But I knew. I heard him. He heard me. (Lights
fade out on Michael.) 2a42

Scene Two

Lights up on the empty room. Walker enters carries a glass of
champagne. He calls out. Time June 243

19
UI
celebration

WALKER. Hey, Lainie! Come in here! What are you doing?
LAINIE. (Off.) I'm getting some coffee.
WALKER. Coffee?
LAINIE. (Off.) We need to sober up.
WALKER. Why!? We did it! We got the message out! We put those
bastards on the spot. They're going to have to ask for everybody —
I know it!
LAINIE. (Entering with a cup of coffee.) I can't remember the last
time I had alcohol.
WALKER. (Holding his glass towards her.) Have some more. I'm sure
it's a very good month.
LAINIE. No, thanks. This'll be fine. (Gradually a silence surrounds
them. They look at each other, can't help a smile and a slight laugh.)
WALKER. You were fantastic. Fantastic. Everybody in America felt
for you. And that picture. Was I right or what? The cameramen
were tearing up.
LAINIE. They were not.
WALKER. They were. I saw tears. Sixty-year-old union guys. Men
who've seen every disgusting, pitiful atrocity that ever happened. I
bet they haven't cried since the doctor hit 'em. But they cried
tonight. For Michael. For you.
LAINIE. No one has to cry for me.
WALKER. They do. That's the point. That's the power. You have
whatever it takes. You have authority. People feel what you say. You
can't help it. They look at you, and they trust what you say.
LAINIE. What if what I say isn't for the best?
WALKER. They'll believe it anyway. Right now — not a week ago,
not a week from now — but now, this instant, people believe what
you say. They're moved by it. They may even act on it. How do you

think things happen in the world? They happen because every
once in awhile enormous numbers of people become ready to hear
something. And if you've got what they're ready to hear, then
you're a very powerful person.

LAINIE. Walker —

WALKER. Use it. You have to use it. You have to push at the ones
who are pushing you.

LAINIE. No one's pushing me.

WALKER. Nothing in this world happens because it ought to. You
have to push people into it. Right now, you have a quality that lets
you push. You have a thing to say, and the means to say it. If you're
lucky, when you look back on it, it'll have been moral. If not, too
bad — you made your best guess.

LAINIE. When did you first decide I had this . . . quality?

WALKER. First time we talked.

LAINIE. And that's why you've kept at this? With me?

WALKER. Lainie —

LAINIE. I mean it. Is that all this has been? You've just been
waiting for me to . . . blossom into some kind of spokesperson for
you?

WALKER. Not for me, for yourself. For Michael. How do you
think you're going to get him back? ESP? You going to pray he'll
show up? He won't. You'll get him back when you make this
government uncomfortable enough to make some other govern-
ment uncomfortable enough to lean on somebody — that's it. (She
stares at her coffee.)

LAINIE. You'll write a lot of articles now, won't you? No matter
how it comes out.

WALKER. Yes, I will. That's my job. That's how I push. (A beat.)
So look — in my business, when you make the government uncom-
fortable you drink champagne, not coffee. What do you say? (He
offers her his glass. She doesn't take it.)

LAINIE. Go home.

WALKER. Go home?

LAINIE. I don't feel like celebrating.

WALKER. Why not?

LAINIE. Because for all I know, I haven't done anything more than
risk the lives of innocent people tonight. That's no reason to

Walker
Nice
fake exit

celebrate.

WALKER. That's not what you were saying earlier.

LAINIE. Earlier I didn't think I was with someone who — (She stops herself.)

WALKER. Someone who what? Who what, Lainie?

LAINIE. Who makes friends just so he can ... push.

WALKER. I have to be able to do my job.

LAINIE. That's what Ellen says. It's probably what the Shi'ites say.

WALKER. What's wrong with that? It's a world of work, Lainie.

LAINIE. It's a world of crime. We call it work so we can keep doing it. (A beat.)

WALKER. I'm sorry you feel this way. I think I've been pretty damn patient, all things considered. I've waited a year for a story that —

LAINIE. Michael's waiting. Not you. Not me. Michael.

WALKER. I know! That's why I'm writing about the stupid fuck!! (A long beat.) Lainie? (A beat. He takes a hesitant step towards her, pulls back.) I'll call you in the morning. (He exits quickly U. with the champagne, his glass and her cup. Lainie sits on the mat thoughtfully for a moment, then lies back on it, and closes her eyes. Lights change, isolating her on the mat.)

LAINIE. Michael? The first time I saw you, time turned a corner. I'd always thought of it as gray, impassive. But it wasn't. When I married you, I felt as though time were our child. That somehow we could ... (She stops, sits up.) We could shape it to our lives. (Lights fade. In the darkness we hear Walker's voice. When lights rise, Lainie is sitting in a corner on the floor.)

WALKER. (Off.) Lainie? It's me, Walker. Can I come in? (Off.)

Lainie? (Off.) Your car's in the garage; I know you're here. (Off.)

Lainie? (After a moment, Walker enters. He looks at Lainie with concern but not surprise.) It's not a defeat. It's a step closer. (No response. He moves to her.) They released Mathison. Plus everybody from the charter terminal. That's a step. They recognized a linkage. They bargained. We can take credit for that. You're as responsible as anyone that Jim Mathison's free now.

LAINIE. Why him?

WALKER. No one knows. (A beat.) You haven't been answering your phone.

LAINIE. Reporters call. (Of the mat.) I can't see him anymore. All

morning I haven't been able to feel him. I can't remember what he looks like.

WALKER. He'll come back. I know he will. (She moves to the mat on all fours, places a hand at its center.)

LAINIE. He may as well have disappeared into the earth. Right here. On this spot. I would feel more hope.

WALKER. Lainie, he's ... For God's sake, we got Mathison back.

LAINIE. Did you see the President? On the news? "We have them back now, after eight harrowing days of captivity."

WALKER. Plus Mathison.

LAINIE. Is that what they tell mothers of dead soldiers? "Your boy's dead, but don't worry — the one right next to him was just fine."

WALKER. I'm just saying that Mathison —

LAINIE. I didn't do this for Mathison! HE'S NOT MINE! (A beat. She collapses on the mat, crying. Walker hesitates, moves to the door, stops, moves to her. He strokes her shoulder and arm awkwardly, tenderly. She is on her side, facing away from him. He stares up and away while she cries. As her crying abates, his stroking moves to her hair. After a moment, she moves closer to him, so that her head rests on his lap. She slowly grows silent as he continues to stroke her hair. Lights fade to black. Lights back up on Michael sitting alone on the mat.)

MICHAEL. Sometimes I wake up with the most intense desire to know what day it is. Sunday? Thursday? I feel like I'm going to die the next minute if I don't find out. Other times I'll wake up and suddenly realize that months have gone by — must have gone by — since I last had a conscious thought about time. It makes me feel like the astronaut who travels forty years at the speed of light and then returns, no older. "What's happened to everyone?" he must think. "Time must be for them, not me." I never thought of time as a coat you could take off and put on again. Too cold to live without it — so we all keep it on. We hug it to ourselves, because if we can't ... (A beat.) Time is change. That's all it is. When there's no change. When there's no change ... Yesterday one of my guards told me I'd been here three years. (A beat.) I didn't know what he meant. (Lights fade to black.)

Revel

20

U II

Time

21

U II

Mathison Released

2244

Time jumps

22 U II

45 Loss

Time

22

what Hair?

22

47

slow fade

23
UI

Killing
one
of
theirs

Scene Three

Time Jump

LQ50

Lights rise on Ellen, sitting on the ottoman. The window is open.

LAINIE. (Off.) Oh — Darjeeling or English Breakfast? I can't remember.

ELLEN. English Breakfast. Always.

LAINIE. (Entering with the tray-table and tea.) Good. That's what I made. Imagine me forgetting. (She sets down the tray-table and pours tea for them both.) How've you been?

ELLEN. Fine. Just got back from a vacation, actually.

LAINIE. Really? Where'd you go?

ELLEN. St. Thomas.

LAINIE. You went there last year, didn't you?

ELLEN. It's where I go every year. I even go to the same hotel there every year. It's the one my husband and I used to stay in when we were married. We both still go there. Only he goes a month before I do now.

LAINIE. That's an interesting arrangement.

ELLEN. It's not an arrangement at all. It's a circumstance. (A beat.) How are you holding up?

LAINIE. About the same. It's been a long time.

ELLEN. We're aware of that —

LAINIE. Since I've seen you, I mean.

ELLEN. Yes, well —

LAINIE. I've just gone back to work.

ELLEN. Really?

LAINIE. Last month. I'm teaching again. Everyone there is being very considerate. No "What's it like?" questions.

ELLEN. Good.

LAINIE. Strange to be around so many people all day. I'd gotten out of the habit. (A beat.) Have you heard anything new about Michael?

ELLEN. Not specifically —

LAINIE. I thought when you called —

ELLEN. No, it wasn't that we'd heard anything new about Michael, precisely.

LAINIE. What was it then?

ELLEN. Nothing, actually. Nothing official.

LAINIE. Is there something you want to say to me?

ELLEN. Of course. I'm here, aren't I?

LAINIE. Then why don't you say it?

ELLEN. It's just a little tricky, to be frank. It's — well, I'd like to feel I'm not here in my official capacity this time. That is, if you could feel that way.

LAINIE. Why?

ELLEN. Could you feel that way? (A beat.)

LAINIE. All right.

ELLEN. Good. I wanted to tell you about something that happened last night. It, um — well, it certainly took me by surprise.

LAINIE. What happened?

ELLEN. We intercepted someone. A terrorist. Not a Shi'ite, not even Lebanese. But an Arab, and . . . we killed him.

LAINIE. You what?

ELLEN. He fought back. He resisted. It made no sense — he was completely surrounded, but . . . he resisted.

LAINIE. Where?

ELLEN. In a small Italian coastal town. It should be on the news within an hour or so. We've managed to hold it back a bit, but —

LAINIE. What are you saying?

ELLEN. I think you know what I'm saying.

LAINIE. Michael's in more danger now?

ELLEN. They all are. (A beat.) It was bad enough for Michael that we intercepted this man. But to kill him. I'm afraid it's a very dangerous situation.

LAINIE. Not for you.

ELLEN. Lainie —

LAINIE. Whose idea was this?

ELLEN. I couldn't tell you if I knew.

LAINIE. What was the point? What did you think you had to gain?

ELLEN. This man was implicated in the deaths of scores of American citizens. He was behind at least three bombings.

LAINIE. So somebody at State said, "Kill him."

ELLEN. They did not. They decided to capture him. If possible.

LAINIE. And it wasn't. So now Michael's going to —

Stand

move Back to sit

Walker's
Voice

ELLEN. Nothing will happen to Michael, for all we know. The risks were carefully analyzed, and —

LAINIE. The President's image — that's what was analyzed. Did he need to look forceful this week?

ELLEN. We can't assume that any of the hostages will be harmed simply because one terrorist leader was intercepted.

LAINIE. Killed! Use English! (A beat.)

ELLEN. Killed. It was the judgment of the Department that Michael and the others would not be overly . . . endangered.

LAINIE. Was that your judgment? (A beat.) You never answer questions like that, do you?

ELLEN. No.

LAINIE. Is it because you know if you started you'd never be able to stop? (A beat.)

ELLEN. Early in the war between Iran and Iraq, there was an offensive. Iranian soldiers — Shi'ites, like the people holding Michael — needed a way to break through Iraqi minefields. They chose an all-out frontal assault, classic World War I stuff. But with one difference. To clear the mine fields, the Iranian army — which has some significant technical limitations — used boys. The boys didn't go out and dig up the mines. They ran over them. The mines blew up, killing the boys, and the soldiers followed after, across the newly-cleared fields. These boys were fourteen, fifteen — up to twenty. Some were as young as ten. They had . . . volunteered for the duty. They wanted to be martyrs. And their families too, many of them, freely gave their sons to this honor. The boys wore white headbands, ran into the fields shouting "Shaheed", which means martyr. Some of them wrapped themselves in blankets first, so that when they were killed the explosions wouldn't blow them apart quite so much, and their bodies could be . . . gathered more easily, and returned home to inspire other boys to take the same path. Their parents do not grieve. They are proud, and satisfied their sons are in heaven — to them a place as tangible as this, without pain. (A beat.) There are times when it becomes impossible to negotiate. When the very act of negotiating legitimizes a philosophy that's . . . not human anymore. Those places where such a philosophy reigns have to be isolated. Those people who try to extend such a philosophy must be stopped. At any cost.

Lie

42

QJ
fine
grip
4/11
depth
street

LOS1

LAINIE. Any cost?

ELLEN. Any cost. (Lights fade to black. They come up quickly again on Lainie and Walker. Lainie is very agitated.) — LOS2

WALKER. I don't think it means anything.

LAINIE. What do you mean, it doesn't mean anything? They said they were going to kill him!

WALKER. It's a radio report. They've been wrong dozens of times. They're almost never right. .

LAINIE. What if they're right this time?

WALKER. It's a tactic. That's all it is. We hit them, they threaten the hostages. Nothing happens. It's just a pressure game.

LAINIE. This isn't a threat. They said they were going to kill him.

WALKER. That announcement didn't even come from his captors. It came from an entirely different faction. They wouldn't even know where he is, let alone how he is.

LAINIE. Oh, God — I can't stand this. I can't. Not knowing — this is . . . oh, GOD!!

WALKER. Lainie — (She moves away from him, pacing the room with increasing agitation.)

LAINIE. There is a circle of hell for these people. There is a circle of hell so deep —

WALKER. Lainie, calm down —

LAINIE. NO!!

WALKER. You know, there might even be an advantage in this.

LAINIE. Advantage!!

WALKER. Listen to me! A false story's been broadcast. Michael's kidnappers may have to show pictures of him alive now. There could be a video tape, or —

LAINIE. And if there's nothing?

WALKER. That doesn't mean anything either. They can play this a lot of different ways. The point is, they've kept him for three years. And now they're just going to kill him? When they've got nothing to gain? It's not rational.

LAINIE. What's rational about killing? (A beat.) I want to go on TV. I want to talk to somebody. To everybody. I want to —

WALKER. You shouldn't do that.

LAINIE. Why not?!

WALKER. Nothing's known yet. We have to wait and find out the

43

status of things.

LAINIE. Status!?

WALKER. We killed one of their people. I don't think Michael's captors want to hear from any American right now — even you.

LAINIE. I didn't kill anyone.

WALKER. We did. The country did. We have to wait for some time to pass.

LAINIE. How am I supposed to sleep? Till we hear. How am I supposed to live? Not knowing.

WALKER. I don't know. But that's the situation we're in. They can say he's alive, they can say he's dead —

LAINIE. They can say *anything*! They can do *anything*... to him. (A beat.) We should obliterate the city.

WALKER. Lainie —

LAINIE. Why not!!? Don't you want to!? Lebanon, the Middle East — let's get rid of it! (Walker grabs Lainie and hugs her to him tight.) I want to kill them.

WALKER. It's all right.

LAINIE. I want to kill them.

WALKER. I know. It's all right.

LAINIE. I want to kill a million people. (He continues to hold her. Reluctantly, her arms finally go around him. They freeze in this position. Michael enters — handcuffs, no blindfold. He circles them as he speaks, but doesn't look at them. He finishes his speech staring out the window.)

MICHAEL. One night someone came to move me. It was no one I knew — none of my guards. I was blindfolded, but I could tell by his voice. He spoke English better than any of them. He said I had to be moved at once — that the Syrian Army might have learned where I was. He was nervous, but there was a softness in his voice, too. I think he was young. (A beat.) Some clothes were thrown on me and I was hustled into the back seat of a car by three men. All the voices were new — not one of them was familiar. It was actually a cool night. The feeling of being outside was incredible. I listened for anything — any sound, any voice — over the noise of the car. Not because I was planning to escape. Just for the sheer, sensual pleasure of it. A sound, at random. A voice. Anything that was completely disconnected from my being a hostage. That just... existed in the world. And I thought for some reason about all the

things that always exist in the world simultaneously — with or without us. Innumerable parts of a system designed to not even recognize itself as a system. Dogs barking in the streets, wind in the shop awnings, people talking on corners, flowers letting go their fragrance, people riding bicycles, pigeons mourning nobody we know, people driving in cars, people buying oranges, distant explosions, people carrying guns, people dying of poison gas, oceans rocking on their stems, people making love for the first time in their lives, people designing clothes-hangers, people designing the end of the world, people in movie theaters, people singing in languages we don't understand, insects filling the world — filling the world — people in restaurants ordering the best meal of their lives, people using the phone, petting their cats, holding each other in each other's arms. (A beat.) All of it, at once. (A beat.) They drove me to a quiet neighborhood and shoved me into a building. I was taken down, still blindfolded, to a small, cramped room that smelled like... clay, and I was shot to death. (Michael exits, but not U. He passes through the 'wall' of the room. Lights fade to black.)

EXIT Through Theater LQ54

Scene Four

LQ55

Lights rise. The room is empty. Walker enters carrying the chair. He sets it down. Ellen appears at the door.

ELLEN. Do we have to be in here?

WALKER. That's what she wants. (A beat.)

ELLEN. There are three reporters outside. They seemed to know I was coming. Did you tell them?

WALKER. Not me. I like exclusives. Maybe they're just here because it's an important story. Then again, maybe they like watching the State Department deal with the consequences. (A beat.) So, when's the phone call from the President?

ELLEN. He's sending a letter.

WALKER. A letter? No post-game phone call? No national hookup?

ELLEN. Not this time.

WALKER. Have you done a lot of this kind of work? Bearer of ill-tidings?

ELLEN. Some. When I worked in the Defense Department.
 WALKER. Now there's a job.
 ELLEN. It's nothing one looks forward to.
 WALKER. What did you say to them?
 ELLEN. What can you say? I told them their men were heroes. I said, "Your husband, son, brother, father was a hero. He died of bad luck." Not bad planning at the top, not tactical mistakes of his commanders. Bad luck.
 WALKER. And they believed you?
 ELLEN. Oh, yes. *(A beat. He looks out the window.)*
 WALKER. Is that what you're going to tell Lainie? That Michael died of bad luck?
 ELLEN. No, Lainie gets the truth.
 WALKER. Which is?
 ELLEN. Off the record?
 WALKER. Nothing's off the record. *(Ellen shrugs, sits silently. Walker sighs and looks out the window.)* All right, all right — off the record. *(As Ellen speaks, Lainie enters silently U. Neither of them sees her.)*
 ELLEN. We miscalculated. We valued Michael's life below a chance to make an international point. We increased the danger for all the hostages. We chose to.
 LAINIE. Thank you. *(They turn with surprise.)*
 ELLEN. Lainie, I... I wasn't —
 LAINIE. Going to say it like that? I'm glad you did. *(A beat.)* Is that all your business?
 ELLEN. The President is sending you a letter.
 LAINIE. I'll burn it.
 ELLEN. Your husband's remains will arrive tomorrow morning at Andrews Air Force base. If you have no objections, there will be a short ceremony —
 LAINIE. I object.
 ELLEN. The body will be transported at government expense to a funeral home of your choice.
 LAINIE. I get a choice?
 ELLEN. Simply inform us where. *(A beat.)* Allow me to take this opportunity to convey the deep sympathy of the Secretary of State.
 LAINIE. Go to hell.
 ELLEN. And the President.

LAINIE. Why are you saying this?
 ELLEN. It's my job to say this.
 LAINIE. You don't have a job. You have a license to manipulate.
(A beat.) I want to be like you. Tell me how to be like you.
 ELLEN. What do you mean?
 LAINIE. I want to think like you. I want to be able to put people away, in my head. I want to forget them there. I want to lock them in whatever room you have for that.
 WALKER. Lainie —
 LAINIE. Teach me! *(A beat.)* You won't, will you? That's your most closely-guarded secret. That's where all the real weapons are.
 WALKER. *(To Ellen.)* You should go.
 LAINIE. No. Not till I say. Ellen, I think you and ^{the} government did your best. I think everyone did his best. Michael did his best. Walker did his best, you did, the Shi'ites — even the ones that killed Michael. Probably everyone has done his best. That's what frightens me. That's why I don't know if I'll ever be able to walk out of this room any more. Into what? A world filled with people doing their best?
 ELLEN. I wish I could take your pain away.
 LAINIE. I wish you could remember it. *(Ellen exits U. A beat.)*
 WALKER. Do you need me to be here?
 LAINIE. Not right now. Not for awhile.
 WALKER. I'd like to be.
 LAINIE. No.
 WALKER. Why not? *(A beat.)* I don't think you should be alone.
 LAINIE. I'm not. *(A beat.)*
 WALKER. What about tomorrow? I'll drive you to the Air Force base.
 LAINIE. Thank you. You should go now.
 WALKER. Are you sure? *(She nods, stares at the mat. He looks around the room.)* I'll call you later. All right? Lainie? *(A beat.)* Lainie? *(She moves to the mat, kneels down beside it, stares at it. Walker studies her for a moment, then starts out U.)*
 LAINIE. *(Pointing at the chair.)* Could you take that out? Too much furniture. *(Walker picks it up, stares at her, then leaves. She is again focussed on the mat.)* Her hand strokes through the air, as though caressing Michael's face. At this point Michael enters U., silently. He moves to the

UBH
devotion

mat and reclines on it, so that her hand now strokes his hair.) I think my favorite is the African hornbill.

MICHAEL. Of all birds. Why?

LAINIE. After they mate, the male walls the female up, in the hollow of a tree. He literally imprisons her. And all through the weeks of incubating the eggs, he flies off and finds food, and brings it back and feeds her — through a little hole in the wall he's built. After the eggs are hatched, he breaks down the wall again, and the whole family is united for the first time. You see? It hasn't been a prison at all. It's been ... a fortress.

MICHAEL. Their devotion, you mean?

LAINIE. Their devotion. (He smiles, closes his eyes. She continues to stroke his hair. Lights fade to black.)

Summary of 1/13

THE END

LQ 58
LQ 59 - Bows

LQ 60 - Haue

LQ 61 - drop
50m

6.40

Property List

Narrow floor mat -
Handcuffs -
Blindfold -
~~Small ottoman~~
Small tray table -
Tea set -
Tea -
Chair -
Photograph -
Glass of champagne -
Cup of coffee -

Rough Rehearsal Schedule for Two Rooms

NO REHEARSALS ON Wednesdays OR Thursdays
(until tech week)

Sept 28th, 1st read through

Sept 29, 2nd read through

Oct 2nd – Start blocking

Mondays, Tuesdays, & Fridays – rehearsals 6-10pm

Saturdays – 10am-3pm

Sundays – 10am-3pm

Tech week Nov 1-4

Show Opens Nov 7th

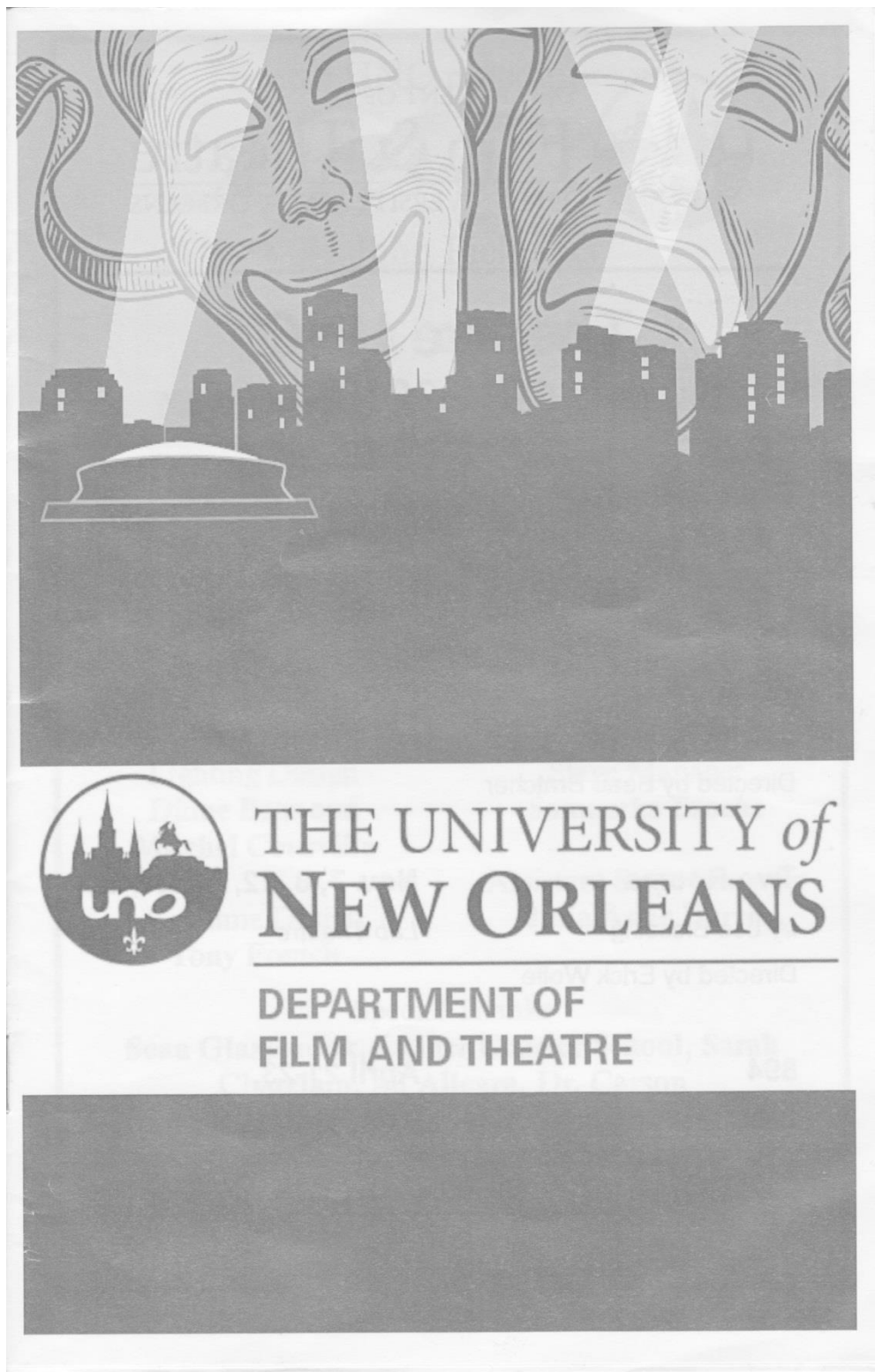
Runs Nov 7, 8, 12, 13, 21, 22

Two Rooms October Rehearsal Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thur	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1 Dark	2 All	3 Zach -10-2 Arielle 10-11:30 Tiff 1:00-3	4 Zach 10-12 Tiff 1-2:30 Arielle 1-3
5 All	6 Tiff 6-7 Nathan Arielle	7 Dark	8 Dark	9 Dark	10 Dark	11 ?
12 Off Book All No Tiff	13 Tiff 6-7 Nathan Arielle	14 Dark	15 Dark	16 No Nath All? Fall Break	17 Zach -10-12 Arielle 11-2 Tiff 12:30-3	18 Zach 10-12 Tiff 11:30-2:20 Arielle 1-3
19 All	20 Tiff 6-7 Nathan Arielle	21 Dark	22 Dark	23 All	24 Zach -10-12 Arielle 11-3 Nath – 12-3 Tiff 1:30-3	25 TBA - As Needed
26 All	27 All	28 Dark	29 Dark	30 All	31 Dark	

APPENDIX B
COPY OF PROGRAM

The Program





DEPARTMENT OF

Film & Theatre

THE UNIVERSITY *of* NEW ORLEANS

Theatre UNO

2015-2016

The Misanthrope

by Molière

Directed by David W. Hoover

Sept. 17-19, 24-27

Robert E. Nims Theatre

Agnes of God

by John Pielmeier

Directed by Beau Bratcher

Nov. 5, 6, 14, 15, 19, 20

Lab Theatre

Two Rooms

by Lee Blessing

Directed by Erick Wolfe

Nov. 7, 8, 12, 13, 21, 22

Lab Theatre

894

World Premiere

by Kate Bailey

April 21-23,

April 28-May 1

Robert E. Nims Theatre

BOX OFFICE: 280-SHOW (7469)

Theatre UNO proudly presents

Agnes of God

By John Pielmeier

Directed by Beau Bratcher

November 5-6, 14-15, and 19-20, 2015
Lab Theatre | UNO Performing Arts Center

Assistant Director
Jenny L. Billot

Scenic Design
Kevin Griffith

Crew
Scot Busurelo

Lighting Design
**Diane Baas and
Mitchel Courville**

Stage Manager
Samantha Eroche

Costume Design
Tony French

Assistant Stage Manager
Julia Anne Harris

Special Thanks
**Sean Glazebrook, Lusher Charter School, Sarah
Chatelain, AJ Allegra, Dr. Carson**

WARNING: This show uses cigarettes which
have **NO** tobacco content. Their use is limited.

There will be a ten minute intermission.

Agnes of God

Cast

Dr. Martha Livingstone..... Meghan Rose Shea*
AgnesNatalie Marie Collins
Mother Miriam Ruth Venita Matthews*
EnsembleCamille Collins

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree

Beau Bratcher (Director) is grateful for the opportunity to return to Theatre UNO to direct a play that he has thought about for over a decade. He is a proud member of The NOLA Project and a graduate of the University of New Orleans. Beau holds degrees from Grayson College, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Texas Woman's University, and the University of Texas at El Paso. Beau recently won a Big Easy Award for his direction of The NOLA Project's *A Truckload of Ink*. Other directing credits include Le Petit's *Peter and the Starcatcher*; The NOLA Project's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Robin Hood: Thief/Brigand*, *She Remembers*, and *Is He Dead?*; Theatre UNO's *The Night of the Iguana*, *Weird*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*; and The Elm Theatre's *The Gingham Dog*. By day, Beau is a theatre teacher at Lusher Charter School.

Jenny L. Billot (Assistant Director) recently graduated from UNO with a M.F.A. in Performance. She is known as a stage manager throughout New Orleans and has worked with various companies including The NOLA Project, Southern Rep, Rivertown, Broken Habit Productions, JPAS, The Elm Theatre, The Bayou Playhouse, See 'Em On Stage Productions, and InSideOut Productions. She is excited to continue working with Theatre UNO, especially on such an amazing show, and she thanks Beau for this opportunity.

Mitchel Courville (Lighting Designer) is currently a senior at UNO, graduating this fall with a B.A. in Film and Theatre. This is his first lighting design, but he was most recently seen on stage as Acaste in Theatre UNO's production of *The Misanthrope*. Some of his favorite credits include Bernstein (*Dogfight*), Sparky (*Forever Plaid*), Pony (*Suburbia*), and roles in *Gypsy*, *Reefer Madness*, and *Lysistrata*. He would like to thank his family, as always, for their unending support.

Diane K. Baas (Lighting Designer) is a freelance lighting designer and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans, where she is also the Technical Director. She holds a B.F.A. in Lighting and Scenic Design, and a B.A. in Art History and Painting, both from Tulane University in New Orleans. She also holds an M.F.A. in Lighting Design from the School of Drama at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Kevin Griffith (Scenic Design) is an Associate Professor of Design and Resident Scenic Designer for the Department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans. He is also in good standing as a member of The International Alliance Of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 478.

Tony French (Costume Design) is the New Orleans Theatre Association Endowed Professor and costume designer at the University of New Orleans. He has designed numerous productions at UNO, including many original plays. He has worked with Southern Rep, The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe Theatre, and The Cincinnati Playhouse.

Samantha Eroche (Stage Manager) is a sophomore studying Theatre at UNO and has worked on-and-off-stage for multiple entities, including the Thibodaux Playhouse, South Louisiana Casting & Production Company, South Louisiana Center for the Arts, Aria Relic Cinema, and Loyola University. Favorite roles include Luisa (*The Fantasticks*) and Christine Daaé (*Phantom*), both of which won her Viewers' Choice Awards, as well as the Caterpillar (*Alice in Wonderland*), Gwendolen Fairfax (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), and Woman 2 (Beckett's *PLAY*). Nothing gives her greater joy than freelance writing; reading weird, obscure, or new plays; and teaching kids theatre.

Julia Anne Harris (Assistant Stage Manager) is a twenty-year-old New Orleans native. She is in her third year studying Theatre at the University of New Orleans, and her focus is on theatrical design and production. When she's not around the theatre, she can be found in the forest or making jewelry with bones. She'd like to thank her parents and professors for their support, and she hopes to continue working on shows.

Meghan Rose Shea (Doctor Martha Livingstone) is both thrilled and terrified to be tackling Dr. Livingstone for her thesis project. She recently directed *Blackbird* and played in *The Misanthrope*, *Hamlet*, and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. You can see her next as the character woman in Southern Rep's *A Christmas Carol*. Meghan would like to thank her friends and family for their patience and support as she reaches for the finish line of grad school. She would also like to thank David Hoover for this wonderful opportunity and Beau Bratcher for making a miracle happen.

Natalie Marie Collins (Agnes) feels very blessed to be making her Theatre UNO debut in this fantastic production! She is studying Theatre, and this is her first semester at the University of New Orleans. She transferred from Howard Community College in her hometown, Columbia, Maryland. Her favorite and most recent roles include Lauren from Rep Stage's production of Annie Baker's *Circle Mirror Transformation* and Catherine Donohue from Arts Collective's production of *These Shining Lives* by Melanie Marnich. She's spent the majority of her performance career in ballet productions, dance competitions, and playing piano in small restaurants in her hometown. Recently, she excitedly released her first demo on iTunes, "My Mean Reds." She would like to thank her wonderful cast, director, stage manager, and crew and sincerely hopes everyone enjoys the show.

Venita Matthews (Mother Miriam Ruth) was last seen on Theatre UNO's stage searching for underwear, in the production of *RX*. She is a graduate student who believes she easily identifies with each of the characters in *Agnes of God*--as a Psychology major, she identifies with the doctor; having attended Catholic school and at one time desiring to become a nun, she identifies with Agnes; and because of her strong faith in God and belief that miracles are possible, even today, she identifies with Mother Superior. She dedicates this performance to her mother, Christine; her son, Paris Matthews; and her deceased father, Gino Leroi Gautreaux.

Camille Collins (Ensemble) is a Theatre freshman at UNO and is excited to be a part of her first Theatre UNO production. She is originally from Oklahoma where she worked

on productions such as *The Little Mermaid* (Carlotta and ensemble) with Theatre Tulsa, *Romeo and Juliet* (various roles), and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Olive Ostrovsky) with Eastern Oklahoma State College's Theatre troupe. She would like to thank her director, cast, and crew for such a great opportunity.

Inspired by a True Story

In the winter of 1977, a tragedy was painfully and painstakingly unfurled in the Monroe County, New York courtroom of Judge Hyman Maas. Eleven months earlier, on April 27, 1976, a Roman Catholic nun and school teacher, Sister Maureen Murphy, gave birth to a baby boy at the Our Lady of Lourdes parish convent in Brighton, just outside Rochester. It was alleged that she then shoved a pair of panties into the infant's mouth, asphyxiating him, and left his remains in a wastebasket.

After the body was found, the 36-year-old member of the Sisters of St. Joseph was questioned, but she denied ever being pregnant. Medical examiners at a nearby hospital concluded that she had, in fact, recently delivered a baby, and had apparently managed to conceal the pregnancy under a traditional nun's habit, but the Sister claimed she did not remember it. She was charged with first- and second-degree manslaughter along with criminally negligent homicide. It was a high profile case. *Ms.* magazine even covered the trial, which lasted ten days. The fact that Sister Maureen had waived her right to a jury trial only served to heighten the courtroom drama. On March 5, newspapers around the country carried news of the judge's verdict. The defense had conceded that Sister Maureen committed the act, but had also argued that blood loss during childbirth along with the overall trauma of the experience had impaired her judgment, that she may not even have been fully conscious during the episode, and that she had not actually meant to kill the baby. Judge Maas agreed and found her not guilty on all counts.

The plotline was apparently too good to allow it to remain simply a work of journalism. It also inspired a novel titled *Unholy Child* (1979). Additionally it inspired playwright John Pielmeier to write a play *Agnes of God* (1980), that would be adapted into a movie of the same name (1985).

In the hands of playwright and screenwriter John Pielmeier, who received his undergraduate degree at the Catholic University of America, Sister Maureen became Sister Agnes.

Pielmeier obviously knew what he was doing by choosing this name. In Latin, "Lamb of God" is *Agnus Dei*, a phrase that the title *Agnes of God* is obviously designed to evoke. In Pielmeier's adaptation of the story, Sister Agnes is the lamb who pays for the sins of others, without, however, actually taking them away. At best, the guilt and the stains of the sins committed against her are left unresolved. At the core of the movie is not the sin of someone who sins against the church and her own baby, but the innocence of a victim. Additionally, Agnes is derived from the Greek word *hagne*, which means "chaste, pure and sacred." The name also likely refers to St. Agnes of Rome, who is symbolized by a lamb and is considered a patron saint of both virgins and rape victims. The fictional story of Sister Agnes and the real story of Sister Maureen are very different. Pielmeier has been asked about these differences numerous times throughout his career. To set the record straight, he wrote: "For a good while I had been looking for an idea upon which to hang a play about questions of faith — looking, essentially, for a plot clothesline. About a year before I sat down to write the play I had seen a headline in the Post or the News shouting 'Nun Kills Baby!' I didn't read the actual story, but the headline stuck with me ..."

The original Broadway production opened at the Music Box Theater in March of 1982 and ran for 599 performances. The play has been produced numerous times and, as referenced above, was adapted into a film of the same name. John Pielmeier has seen several major stars step into the dynamic roles he created. Actresses such as Dianne Wiest, Elisabeth Ashley, Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft (for which she earned an Oscar Nomination), Meg Tilly (for which she won a Golden Globe and was nominated for an Oscar) and Amanda Plummer (for which she won a Tony Award).

Theatre UNO proudly presents

Two Rooms

By Lee Blessing

Directed by Erick Wolfe*

November 7-8, 12-13, and 21-22, 2015

Lab Theatre | UNO Performing Arts Center

There will be one 10-minute intermission.

Scenic Design
Kevin Griffith

Costume Design
Tony French

Lighting Design
Diane Baas

Stage Manager
Milan Holman

Special Thanks
Jamie Lloyd and Emily Poulliard

Cast

Michael	Zachary Olinger
Lainie	Arielle B. Brown*
Walker	Nathan Anderson
Ellen	Tiffany Anderson*

**In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree*

Erick Wolfe (Director) - Erick Wolfe has been training and directing professional actors and performers for over 15 years. He has worked internationally, including work in New York, London, and Wales. His credits include Opera, Ballet, Theatre, Commercials, Television, and Film. Erick is a Certified Teacher with the British Academy of Dramatic Combat and the Academy of Performance Combat, he is also the National Representative of Stage Combat for the Association of Theatrical Movement Educators. Erick is currently pursuing his MFA in Directing at UNO.

Zachary Olinger (Michael) - Originally from Eufaula, Oklahoma, Zachary Olinger is a senior theatre major at UNO. *Two Rooms* is Zachary's second appearance on the UNO stage after his role in last season's *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. He would like to thank his parents for their continued love and support as well as Erick Wolfe, the cast and crew for their tireless effort to help bring this story to life.

Arielle B. Brown (Lainie) - Arielle is a 26 year old, 3rd year MFA-Performance Graduate Student. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Theatre from Jackson State University. She graduated with honors receiving the 2012 student director of the year award as well as two nominations for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for both, directing and scenic design. Arielle is a television, film, and stage actress as well a Talented Theatre teacher at Riverdale High. One of her most notable accomplishments was her appearance in a National Pepsi commercial with Drew Brees receiving sag-eligibility credits. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Alpha Psi Omega Theatre Honors Society. She is grateful for the opportunity to work with such an Amazing cast and crew. Arielle sends a special thanks to her friends, family, and most importantly her son Ja'Corey for the continuing support, encouragement, and love.

Nathan Anderson (Walker) - Nathan Anderson is a first year MFA performance student at UNO. He is a recent graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi where he received a BA in Theatre. He has been active in the performing arts since Junior High and has performed at the internationally acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Nathan has performed such roles as Gupta in *The Indian Wants the Bronx*, King Berenger in *Exit the King*, and the Father in *Eurydice*. He has also played a lead in a SAG experimental short film titled *August*. Nathan is very excited to make his debut at UNO and would like to thank his family, friends, and Connor for all of their love and support.

Tiffany Anderson (Ellen) - Thank you to everyone involved in this project. Thank you to my family and friends for your continued support.

Milan Holman (Stage Manager) - Milan Is a first semester, international student from the Netherlands. He is at UNO to pursue his BA in Theatre and Film. He would like to thank the cast and crew of *Two Rooms* and especially Erick Wolfe for this great opportunity to get involved.

Kevin Griffith (Scenic Design) - Kevin is an Associate Professor in Design, and Resident Scenic Designer for the Department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans, and member in good standing with The International Alliance Of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 478.

Tony French (Costume Design) - Tony is the New Orleans Theatre Association Endowed Professor and costume designer at the University of New Orleans. He has designed numerous productions at UNO, including many original plays. He has worked with Southern Rep, The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe Theatre, and The Cincinnati Playhouse.

Diane K. Baas (Light Design) - Diane is a freelance lighting designer, and an Assistant Professor in the department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans, where she is also the Technical Director. She holds a BFA in Lighting and Scenic Design, a BA in Art History and Painting, both from Tulane University in New Orleans, and an MFA in Lighting Design from the School of Drama at the University of Washington in Seattle.

NAST

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE

The University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre is proud to be an accredited member of the **National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST)**.

NAST, founded in 1965, is an organization of higher education institutions (colleges, universities and conservatories). There are approximately 150 accredited institutional members. It establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees nationally.

UNO was first accredited by NAST in 2000. We continue to be the only NAST accredited program in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

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"PURE, DAZZLING, THEATRICAL ENTERTAINMENT IN KENNER"
-The Times Picayune

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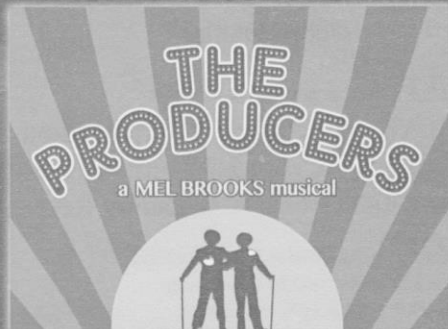
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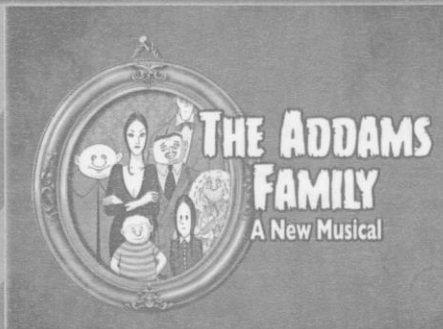
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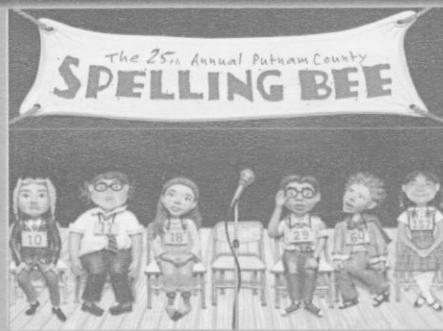
September 11-27, 2015



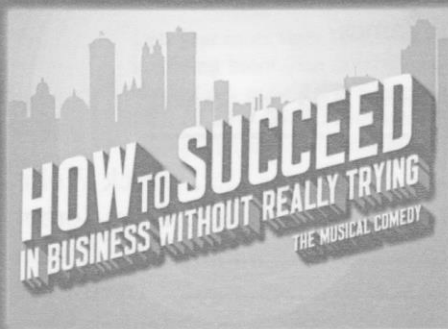
November 6-22, 2015



January 15-31, 2016



March 4-20, 2016



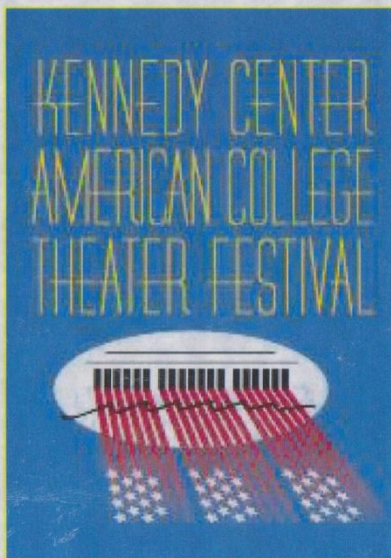
May 6-22, 2016



July 14-24, 2016

APPENDIX C

AWARDS



Congratulates and Commends

Erick Wolfe

For Excellence in

Directing

Two Rooms
University of New Orleans
November 8, 2015

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chase Waites".

Chase Waites, Region Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Burnett".

Mike Burnett, Region Vice-Chair

VI
REGION

VITA

Erick Wolfe has been training and directing professional actors and performers for over 15 years, he has worked with top rated performers and directors from all around the world. His credits include Opera, Ballet, Theatre, Commercials, Television, and Film. Erick grew up with the great action films of the 80's. With that love, he started pursuing action acting after a brief experiment at art school. Action acting led him to becoming a Certified Teacher with the British Academy of Dramatic Combat and the Academy of Performance Combat; he is also the National Representative of Stage Combat for the Association of Theatrical Movement Educators.