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Creating the Role of Dabby Bryant in Timberlake Wertenbaker's Our Country's Good

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CREATING THE ROLE OF DABBY BRYANT IN TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER'S
OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

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
Drama and Communications

by

Tiffany Patrick

B.A. Theatre Northeastern State University, 1996
M.A. Theatre Oklahoma State University, 1999

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to create the character of Dabby Bryant in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, which was selected for the third production in the University of New Orleans' 2004-2005 theatre season.

The steps involved in creating Dabby Bryant's character involve using specific methods as outlined by the Acting Program of UNO as well as the text *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, et. al. I also utilized specific instructions from the director of the production, David Hoover, also my major professor. I also had to use the novel *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally as this is the text from which the Wertenbaker play is taken.

The process also includes the journal kept during the rehearsal process and performance run as well as scene scores created as a blueprint for the creation of the character.

INTRODUCTION

The process of this thesis has been both a joy and a hardship. The rehearsal process and production run was amazing. It was one of the best productions I have ever been involved with. I know that the great cast and director was the reason why it was such a wonderful experience.

But the process had many hardships as well. As far as research, the main source was Thomas Keneally's novel. I was able to find some other interesting facts about Australia, the penal colonies that established the continent, and information about London in the late 1700's. There are also a number of novels written about some of the people involved in this play. However, there are many contradictions between the texts. It was a challenge to find the truth for the production and creation of the character.

Another difficulty in the process was creating the other characters I was cast as. Part of this play involved double casting. I was also chosen to play the part of Lt. Faddy. The concept of this production also insisted that the actors play the part of cast members in a London theatre company in the late 1700's. It became a challenge to change from character to character between each scene.

However, I have chosen to make my thesis not about the character of Lt. Faddy or the character of the London theatre company member. While there were challenges involved with both of the characters, they did not detract from the main goal of creating the character of Dabby Bryant. She is the main character between the three and the idea of the third character is a conceptual decision made by the director and has no direct affect on the character of Dabby Bryant. The challenges in portraying three characters were actually quite minimal. In fact, I found the use of the Standard British dialect very helpful in creating and maintaining the Cockney dialect used throughout the majority of the play by the character of Dabby Bryant. The

difficulty came in simply remembering that there was one scene where I, as an actor, had to remember to speak differently. The character of Lt. Faddy was not a difficult one to portray since there is no real character arc. Lt. Faddy is only included in one scene of the play and is never mentioned again.

As for the third character, the London theatre company member from the late 1700's, I found that challenge to be welcome also. In the concept of the play, the director decided to keep all of the actors on stage at all times as members of the theatre company that would have been doing the play in the late 1700's. We were also utilized in the scene changes and it helped with the idea that this is a play and not reality. It was a welcome addition and helped me as an actor stay focused on the play itself and my job in it.

In this thesis, I have used all of my knowledge attained through my class work while at UNO and through rehearsal work and information attained from research. It is a strong character I have created and shows strong objectives achieved through strong choices of actions.

RESEARCH

Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker was chosen for the second slot in the spring theatre season at the University of New Orleans. I auditioned to be selected as a cast member in the play in partial fulfillment of my degree requirements for the MFA Acting program. I was chosen to play the character of Dabby Bryant and Lt. William Faddy. After being cast and reading the play, I chose to make my thesis about the creation of the character of Dabby Bryant. Dabby Bryant is the larger role of the two. Lt. Faddy is only in one scene of the play and has no character arc. There is not much to create as far as his character is concerned. However, there is a challenge of the dialect of Lt. Faddy's. It is Standard British as opposed to Cockney and while it could have been a challenge, it actually was very helpful in working on the dialect needed for the character of Dabby Bryant.

Once I made the choice to focus this thesis work on Dabby Bryant's character, there was the task of creating her. After doing research from several different aspects, including climate and conditions of the Australian penal colony, and the conditions in London in the late 18th century, I chose to focus my research on the book *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally. While all of the other information is very interesting and gives an insight into the way people lived, *The Playmaker* is a better source since it is the actual text from which the play *Our Country's Good* is taken. Wertenbaker created the play directly from this one source. I chose to focus my research on the similarities and differences between the Dabby Bryant in the novel and the Dabby Bryant in the play. Wertenbaker creates a character that is made of the same framework as Keneally's, but lacks the specific qualities detailed in Keneally's novel. It was up to me as an actor to bring those qualities from Keneally to the character of Wertenbaker's play.

After reading the novel, I went back through it to find all of the exact places where Dabby Bryant was referred. Using the information from the novel, I was able to begin creating the character. I was able to see more into the actual human being that was Dabby Bryant through Keneally's work to help bring Wertebaker's character to life on the stage.

What we know of the real Dabby Bryant is this: She was born Mary Broad in Fowey, Cornwall in 1765. In the 1780's, like so many others from the small villages, she moved from Fowey to London in search of a better life. She became a resident of the nearby forest and lived much better than she ever did when in Fowey. With her parents, there was often little to eat. In the forest with all of the other criminals, there was always plenty. Broad found the life of plenty much to her liking. She knew the consequences of being a criminal and saw many of them hanged in the public gallows. But she also knew that she had to be caught to be hanged and many of the criminals were never caught. She and two other girls tried their hand at highway robbery. Unfortunately for Broad, she was not very good at this particular trade and was caught after robbing a wealthy farmer's wife, taking from her a silk bonnet, the woman's clothes and twelve pounds. She was arrested later that night and later convicted of highway robbery. Mary Broad was sentenced to death by hanging. At the last minute, her sentence was commuted and she was sentenced to transport to a prison colony. Because of the American Revolution, and the loss by the British, there was no longer a place in the American colonies for the prisoners. While the British government searched for a new place to send the criminals, the convicts were placed on ships moored in the harbors.

While awaiting transport aboard the hulk of the *Dunkirk*, Mary met William Bryant. Bryant was 27 years old and had been convicted of smuggling spirits to avoid taxation. The two

became lovers and soon Broad was pregnant. The child is thought to have been William Bryant's, but it is not certain as Broad had another acquaintance, a man named Spence.

In 1787, the First Fleet of the Marines was commissioned to set sail for Australia. As of yet, the land had not been settled, but Captain James Cook's discovery of the continent and his descriptions of the lush, fertile land made this a prime location to start a new colony. The prisoners were boarded onto ships and locked in the holds for the 3000 mile journey. Mary Broad was aboard the *Charlotte*.

The voyage was long. The ships were dens of filth and disease. Many of the prisoners died en route to the new land. While docked in Rio de Janeiro, Mary gave birth to a daughter named Charlotte Spence. She survived the trip to Australia.

In 1789, the ships landed at Botany Bay. After an excursion on the land, the Governor, Arthur Phillip, found the land unsuitable and they moved on to Sydney Cove. It was a beautiful paradise and the colony was established. Because of Governor Phillip's moral values, about 30 couples were married upon landing in Sydney Cove. Mary Broad and William Bryant were one of those couples. The two were married. Mary's new husband also brought her a new standing among the convicts. Because William Bryant was skilled at fishing, he was put in charge of the fishing trade for the colony. The Bryants were given a hut instead of a tent and Mary's status was set.

I also used the journals of Lt. Ralph Clark as part of my research and did not find much about the convicts of the colony. There was also no information about the play in which the majority of Keneally's novel deals. However, it is a fact that a play was performed, *The Recruiting Officer*. Only Keneally's book mentions Bryant's performance as Rose. And in

Wertebaker's play, there is hope that Bryant escapes after the performance of *The Recruiting Officer*.

However, it is documented in Keneally's novel that on March 28, 1791, Mary Bryant, along with her husband, two children and seven other convicts were able to escape from the prison colony. They made it as far as Kupang, Timor, in the Dutch East Indies. William Bryant, along with Mary's youngest child Emanuel died of fever while imprisoned in Batavia awaiting transport back to England. Mary and Charlotte, who was now five, were placed on board the *Gorgon*, a transport ship for Marines back to England. Charlotte died from exhaustion aboard the *Gorgon*. Upon returning to England, Mary was returned to Newgate Prison to await trial for escape from the Australian colony. However, she attracted the attention of James Boswell, a Scottish lawyer and renowned biographer of Samuel Johnson, was able to attain a pardon for Mary Bryant. Some say they were lovers, but it is not a fact. However, we do know that he gave her money. In fact, the last correspondence from Mary Bryant is a letter from her to Boswell after her return to Fowey thanking him for a bank draft. This is the last we hear of Mary Bryant.

This is the factual information recovered on the remarkable life of this woman. The challenge now comes of taking the information in the novel of Thomas Keneally, a novel of historical fiction, and the words of Timberlake Wertebaker's play, also fiction, and combining them in a logical and believable manner to create the character of Dabby Bryant. It becomes a challenge, because intellectually, I want to portray the real woman. I want to show the realities of whom she was and what she accomplished. But the play is not real. It is a work of fiction and I am limited by the text to portray a true vision of the author.

To accomplish this task I have chosen to use *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeline Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previto and

Scott Zigler. It is the clearest, most concise method of creating a character using Sanford Meisner's methodology of action and objective. When analyzing a scene and creating the character, the choice of action is the most important since it will lead the character to his or her goal. There are nine steps involved in this process:

The action must

1. be physically capable of being done.
2. be fun to do.
3. be specific.
4. have its test be in the other person.
5. not be an errand.
6. not presuppose any physical or emotional state.
7. not be manipulative.
8. not have a "cap".
9. be in line with the intentions of the playwright.

The second part of this process is analyzing the scene. In the analysis, the actions chosen are tested through the formula outlined in chapter two of *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*.

The formula consists of three parts:

1. What is the character literally doing?
2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in this scene?
3. What is the action like to me? (It's as if...)

Using these three questions of analysis along with the nine guidelines of an action outlined in the book, I can create a real character that uses the parameters set in Wertebaker's play along with part of the details in Keneally's novel. I must use the novel to inform my choices in actions,

keeping in mind that they may not fit with the character created by Wertebaker. Ultimately, the play itself must be what overrides any contradiction between the two texts since Wertebaker's play is the actual text used in this case.

In Thomas Keneally's book, he takes the character of Dabby Bryant and fully fleshes her out. He creates her as a strong woman with supernatural powers of relieving pained minds through sexual encounter. He also shows her to be a caring individual who tries to help others, not because of a code between criminals, but because she truly does have a good heart.

In the novel she has powers of seeing the future and erasing past horrors. She claims that she has seen herself in the new land and escaping back to England. She can travel through dreams with the Aborigine to ease his suffering. And when she has carnal relations with Lt. Ralph Clark, he is relieved of his nightmares about his beloved wife. Keneally creates a fascinating woman with a lot of strength and power. However, Wertebaker's play does not give much to this effect. There are two times when her abilities are alluded to, but other than that it is not mentioned.

Wertebaker also creates a stronger sense of survival in Dabby Bryant that is not as strong in Keneally's novel. In *Our Country's Good*, There is a moment when the audience discovers that Dabby Bryant "sells" another convict, Mary Brenham, to a sailor aboard the ship for more food. In Keneally's novel, Bryant is created as a protector of sorts to Mary Brenham. In this same scene Bryant appeals to Brenham saying that it was for her own good. It was a sort of protection for Brenham. But then it is again quickly turned back to the issue of receiving more food for the sale of Brenham's body to the sailor. Wertebaker creates a harder edge on Bryant than Keneally.

Another discrepancy is the relationship between Bryant and Lt. Clark. In Keneally's novel, there is a sense of mutual respect for Bryant from Clark, and almost fear of her powers and ability to create his demise. The relationship is forged, however, by a common desire to create the best life for Mary Brenham. And the two are bonded together in their common goal. It is also stated in Keneally's book that factual information indicates that on the voyage back to England after her escape from the penal colony that she was reunited once again with Lt. Clark and he repaid her and Charlotte with many kindnesses. Wertenbaker places the two characters almost at odds with one another. Clearly Dabby wants Brenham to become a companion of Ralph's, but the two characters of Ralph and Dabby have many moments of conflict.

It became a daunting task to separate the character in the novel with the character in the play. Keneally creates such an interesting woman that has so much more depth than Wertenbaker's. I wanted to put every bit of both characters in my performance, but it became impossible due to discrepancies in the texts. I found Keneally's character much more rich and wanted to represent that Dabby Bryant in conjunction with the character created by Wertenbaker to create my own Dabby Bryant. But the text of Wertenbaker's play overruled any contradictions of my own.

Even though I found it difficult to choose between the two, I was able to use the novel, the basis for the play, as a basis for my creation of the character.

ANALYSIS

To proceed with the analysis, I will take each scene that contains my character of Dabby Bryant and apply each part of the process outlined in chapter two of *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. Each scene must be analyzed individually to create the character of Dabby Bryant. It will create an arc of the character from the beginning to the end and show the journey of the character in the context of the play.

ACT I, scene v.

1. What is the character literally doing?

In this scene, Dabby Bryant is literally trying to get a part in the play *The Recruiting Officer*.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene?

Dabby Bryant is using her power to force herself into the play.

3. What does the action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I am bullying the weak kid on the playground to be a part of the game.

ACT I, scene vii.

1. What is the character literally doing?

Dabby is literally trying to learn her lines.

2. What is the essential action of the scene?

Dabby Bryant is struggling to remember her lines and is trying to do her part for the play.

3. What does the action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I am struggling to put a puzzle together without having a picture to look at as a guide.

ACT I, scene xi.

1. What is the character literally doing?

Dabby is literally trying to follow the rehearsal process.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene?

Dabby is taking on a new skill.

3. What does the action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I am trying to learn how to knit with no previous experience.

ACT II, scene v.

1. What is the character literally doing?

Dabby is hiding from Major Ross so she won't be in trouble.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene?

Dabby is blending into the woodwork to hide herself from the man trying to hurt her.

3. What does the action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I were being chased by someone who wanted to beat and torture me and I had to get away and try to find a place to hide.

ACT II, scene vii.

1. What is the character literally doing?

Dabby is literally waiting for her chance to rehearse.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene?

Dabby is anxiously trying to show off what she has rehearsed to Lt. Clark.

3. What does this action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I have found the perfect dress and it fits me perfectly and I want to show myself off in it.

ACT II, scene xi.

1. What is the character literally doing?

Dabby is envisioning her escape from the colony.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene?

Dabby is seeing her success of escaping from the prison colony.

3. What does this action mean to me? It's as if...

It's as if I have pictured myself winning the gold medal at the Olympics.

Each scene has a very specific purpose that leads the character to his or her objective. In the case of Dabby Bryant, she wants to escape. Her entire purpose for being a part of the play is to get out of the penal colony of Sydney Cove. She must take the journey through each scene to reach this goal. As an actor, I have to find the best actions to get my character to her objective of escaping the colony. Using this form of analysis as outlined in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, gives a very simple, yet very clear map to get Dabby Bryant from the beginning of the

journey as trying to become a member of the company of players for Lt. Clark, to the end objective of escaping her destiny of living in the new land for the rest of her life.

SCENE SCORES

{THE SUPER-OBJECTIVE OF DABBY BRYANT IS TO ESCAPE HOME TO ENGLAND THROUGH ANY MEANS POSSIBLE.}

Act I, scene v.

{DABBY BRYANT'S OBJECTIVE IN THIS SCENE IS TO GET A PART IN THE PLAY.}

An Audition.

RALPH CLARK, MEG LONG. MEG LONG is very old and very smelly. She hovers over RALPH.

MEG. We heard you was looking for some women, Lieutenant. Here I am.

RALPH. I've asked to see some women to play certain parts in a play.

MEG. I can play, Lieutenant. I can play with any part you like. There ain't nothing puts
Meg off. That's how I got my name: Shitty Meg.

RALPH. The play has four particular parts for young women.

MEG. You don't want a young woman for your peculiar, Lieutenant, they don't know
nothing. Shut your eyes and I'll play you as tight as a virgin.

RALPH. You don't understand, Long. Here's the play. It's called "The Recruiting

Officer”.

MEG. Oh, I can do that too.

RALPH. What?

MEG. Recruiting. Anybody you like. *(She whispers.)* You want women: you ask Meg.

Who do you want?

RALPH. I want to try some out.

MEG. Good idea, Lieutenant, good idea. Ha! Ha! Ha!

RALPH. Now if you don't mind –

(Meg doesn't move)

Long!

MEG. *(frightened but still holding her ground.)* We thought you was a madge cull.

Ha! Ha!

RALPH. What?

MEG. You know, a fluter, a mollie. *(Impatiently.)* A prissy cove, a girl! You having no she-lag on the ship. Nor here, neither. On the ship maybe you was seasick. But all these months here. And now we here you want a lot of women, all at once. Well, I'm glad to hear that Lieutenant, I am. You let me know when want Meg, old Shitty Meg. Ha! Ha!

(She goes off quickly and ROBERT SIDEWAY comes straight on.)

SIDEWAY. Ah, Mr Clark.

(He does a flourish.)

I am calling you Mr Clark as one calls Mr Garrick Mr Garrick, we have not had the pleasure of meeting before.

RALPH. I've seen you on the ship.

SIDEWAY. Different circumstances, Mr Clark, best forgotten. I was a gentleman. My fortune has turned. The wheel... You are doing a play, I hear, ah, Drury Lane, Mr Garrick, the lovely Peg Woffington. *(Conspiratorially.)* He was so cruel to her. She was so pale –

RALPH. You say you were a gentleman, Sideway?

SIDEWAY. Top of my profession, Mr Clark, pickpocket, born and bred in Bermondsey. Do you know London, Sir, don't you miss it? In these my darkest hours, I remember my happy days in that great city. London Bridge at dawn – hand on cold iron for good luck. Down Cheapside with the market traders – never refuse a mince pie. Into St Paul's Churchyard – I do love a good Church – and begin work in Bond Street. There, I've spotted her, rich plump, not of the best class, stands in front of the shop, plucking up courage, I pluck her. Time for coffee until five o'clock and the pinnacle, the glory of the day: Drury Lane. The coaches, the actors scuttling, the gentlemen watching, the ladies tittering, the perfumes, the clothes, the handkerchiefs.

(He hands RALPH the handkerchief he has just stolen from him.)

Here, Mr Clark, you see the skill. Ah, Mr Clark, I beg you, I entreat you, to let me perform on your stage, to let me feel once again the thrill of a play about to begin.

Ah, I see ladies approaching: our future Woffingtons, Siddons.

{To SHOCK SIDEWAY OUT OF MY SPACE}

(DABBY BRYANT comes on, with a shrinking MARY BRENHAM in tow.

SIDEWAY bows.)

Ladies.

I shall await your word of command, Mr Clark, I shall be in the wings.

(SIDEWAY scuttles off.)

DABBY. You asked to see Mary Brenham, Lieutenant. Here she is. **{To CONVINC**

LT. CLARK TO PUT ME INTO THE PLAY TOO}

RALPH. Yes – the Governor has asked me to put on a play. *(To Mary.)*

You know what a play is?

DABBY. I've seen lots of plays, Lieutenant, so has Mary. **{To KEEP ATTENTION}**

RALPH. Have you Brenham?

MARY. *(inaudibly.)* Yes.

RALPH. Can you remember which plays you've seen?

MARY. (*inaudibly.*) No.

DABBY. I can't remember what they were called, but I always knew when they were going to end badly. I knew right from the beginning. How does this one end, Lieutenant? **{To PROMOTE MY KNOWLEDGE OF PLAYS}**

RALPH. It ends happily. It's called "The Recruiting Officer".

DABBY. Mary wants to be in your play, Lieutenant, and so do I. **{To PERSUADE LT. CLARK TO INCLUDE ME}**

RALPH. Do you think you have a talent for acting, Brenham?

DABBY. Of course she does, and so do I. I want to play Mary's friend.

RALPH. Do you know "The Recruiting Officer", Bryant?

DABBY. No, but in all those plays there's always a friend. That's because a girl has to talk to someone and she talks to her friend. So I'll be Mary's friend. **{To INVITE MYSELF IN}**

RALPH. Silvia – that's the part I want to try Brenham for – doesn't have a friend. She has a cousin. But they don't like each other.

DABBY. Oh. Mary doesn't always like me. **{To MAKE A JOKE}**

RALPH. The Reverend Johnson told me you can read and write, Brenham?

DABBY. She went to school until she was ten. She used to read to us on the ship. We loved it. It put us to sleep. **{To PROMOTE MARY}**

RALPH. Shall we try reading some of the play?

(RALPH hands her the book. MARY reads silently, moving her lips.)

I meant read it aloud. As you did on the ship. I'll help you, I'll read Justice

Balance. That's your father.

DABBY. Doesn't she have a sweetheart? **{To INQUIRE}**

RALPH. Yes, but this scene is with her father.

DABBY. What's the name of her lover?

RALPH. Captain Plume.

DABBY. A Captain! Mary! **{To ENTICE MARY TO DO THE PLAY}**

RALPH. Start here, Brenham.

(MARY begins to read.)

MARY. 'Whilst there is life there is hope, sir'.

DABBY. Oh. I like that, Lieutenant. This is a good play, I can tell. **{To EXPOSE MY INTELLIGENCE OF PLAYS}**

RALPH. Shht. She hasn't finished yet. Start again, Brenham, that's good.

MARY. 'Whilst there is life there is hope, sir; perhaps my brother may recover'.

RALPH. That's excellent Brenham, very fluent. You could read a little louder. Now I'll read.

'We have but little reason to expect it. Poor Owen! But the decree is just; I was pleased with the death of my father, because he left me an estate, and now I'm punished with the loss of an heir to inherit mine.'

(Pause. He laughs a little.) **{To MISUNDERSTAND}**

This is a comedy. They don't really mean it. It's to make people laugh. 'The death of your brother makes you sole heiress to my estate, which you know is about twelve hundred pounds a year.'

DABBY. Twelve hundred pounds! It must be a comedy. **{To INCITE}**

MARY. 'My desire of being punctual in my obedience requires that you would be plain in your commands, sir.'

DABBY. Well said, Mary, well said. **{To CONGRATULATE}**

RALPH. I think that's enough. You read very well, Brenham. Would you also be able to copy the play? We only have two copies.

DABBY. Course she will. **{To ACCEPT}** Where do I come in, Lieutenant? The cousin?

{To FIND OUT}

RALPH. Can you read, Bryant?

DABBY. Not those marks in the books, Lieutenant, but I can read other things. I read dreams very well, Lieutenant. Very well. **{To ASSURE}**

RALPH. I don't think you're right for Melinda. I'm thinking of someone else. And if you can't read...

DABBY. Mary will read me the lines, Lieutenant. **{To STAND MY GROUND}**

RALPH. There's Rose...

DABBY. Rose. I like the name. I'll be Rose. **{To CONSENT}** Who is she? **{To**

LEARN}

RALPH. She's a country girl...

DABBY. I grew up in Devon, Lieutenant. I'm perfect for Rose. **{To DECLARE}** What

does she do? **{To QUERY}**

RALPH. She – well, it’s complicated. She falls in love with Silvia.

(MARY begins to giggle but tries to hold it back.)

But it’s because she thinks Silvia’s a man. And she – they – she sleeps with her.

Rose. With Silvia. Euh. Silvia too. With Rose. But nothing happens.

DABBY. It doesn’t? Nothing? **{To TAKE ISSUE WITH}**

(DABBY bursts out laughing.)

RALPH. Because Silvia is pretending to be a man, but of course she can’t –

DABBY. Play the flute? Ha! She’s not the only one around here. **{To MAKE FUN OF}**

I’ll do Rose. **{To ACCEPT}**

RALPH. I would like to hear you.

DABBY. I don’t know my lines yet, Lieutenant. When I know my lines, you can hear me

do them. Come on, Mary – **{To FORCE MYSELF IN}**

RALPH. I didn’t say you could – I’m not certain you’re the right – Bryant, I’m not

certain I want you in the play.

DABBY. Yes you do, Lieutenant. **{To THREATEN}** Mary will read me the lines and I,

Lieutenant, will read your dreams. **{To REASSURE}**

(There’s a guffaw. It’s LIZ MORDEN.)

RALPH. Ah. Here's your cousin.

(There is a silence. MARY shrinks away. DABBY and LIZ stare at each other, each holding her ground, each ready to pounce.)

Melinda, Silvia's cousin.

DABBY. You can't have her in the play, Lieutenant. **{To REBUFF}**

RALPH. Why not?

DABBY. You don't have to be able to read the future to know that Liz Morden is going to be hanged. **{To TAUNT}**

(LIZ looks briefly at DABBY, as if to strike, then changes her mind.) **{To BACK DOWN}**

LIZ. I understand you want me in your play, Lieutenant. Is that it?

(She grabs the books from RALPH and strides off.)

I'll take a look at it and let you know.

Act I, scene vi.

**{THE OBJECTIVE OF LT. FADDY IS TO REJECT THE IDEA OF A PLAY
PRESENTED BY THE PRISONERS}**

The Authorities Discuss the Merits of the Theatre.

*GOVERNOR ARTHUR PHILLIP, MAJOR ROBBIE ROSS, JUDGE DAVID COLLINS,
CAPTAIN WATKIN TENCH, CAPTAIN JEMMY CAMPBELL, REVEREND JOHNSON,
LIEUTENANT GEORGE JOHNSTON, LIEUTENANT WILL DAWES, LIEUTENANT
RALPH CLARK, LIEUTENANT WILLIAM FADDY.*

*It is late at night , the men have been drinking, tempers are high. They interrupt each
other, overlap, make jokes under and over the conversation but all engage in it with the
passion for discourse and thought of eighteenth century men.*

ROSS. A play! A f –

REVD. JOHNSON. Mmhm.

ROSS. A frippery frittering play!

CAMPBELL. Aheeh, aeh, here?

RALPH. *(timidly.)* To celebrate the King's Birthday, on June the 4th.

ROSS. If a frigating ship doesn't appear soon, we'll all be struck with structuring
starvation – and you – you – a play!

COLLINS. Not putting on a play won't bring us a supply ship, Robbie.

ROSS. And you say you want those contumelious convicts to act in this play. The
convicts!

CAMPBELL. Eh, kev, weh, discipline's bad. Very bad.

RALPH. The play has several parts for women. We have no other women here.

COLLINS. Your wife excepted, Reverend.

REVD. JOHNSON. My wife abhors anything of that nature. After all, actresses , are not
famed for their morals.

COLLINS. Neither are our women convicts.

REVD. JOHNSON. How can they be when some of our officers set them up as
mistresses.

(He looks pointedly at LIEUTENANT GEORGE JOHNSTON.)

ROSS. Filthy, thieving, lying whores and now we have watch them flout their flitty wares
on the stage!

PHILLIP. No one will be forced to watch the play.

DAWES. I believe there is a partial lunar eclipse that night. I shall have to watch that.

The sky of this southern hemisphere is full of wonders. Have you looked at the
constellations?

(Short pause.)

ROSS. Constellations. Plays! This is a convict colony, the prisoners are here to be

punished and we're here to make sure they get punished. Constellations! Jemmy?
Constellations!

(He turns to JEMMY CAMPBELL for support.)

CAMPBELL. Tss, weh, marines, marines: war, phoo, discipline. Eh? Service – His Majesty.

PHILLIP. We are indeed here to supervise the convicts who are already being punished by their long exile. Surely they can also be reformed?

TENCH. We are talking about criminals, often hardened criminals. They have a habit of vice and crime. Habits are difficult to break. And it can be more than habit, an innate tendency. Many criminals seem to have been born that way. It is in their nature.

PHILLIP. Rousseau would say that we have made them that way, Watkin: 'Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains'.

REVD. JOHNSON. But Rousseau was a Frenchman.

ROSS. A Frenchman! What can you expect? We're going to listen to a foraging Frenchman now –

COLLINS. He was Swiss actually.

CAMPBELL. Eeh, eyeh, good soldiers, the Swiss.

PHILLIP. Surely you believe man can be redeemed, Reverend?

REVD. JOHNSON. By the grace of God and a belief in the true church, yes. But Christ never proposed putting on plays, to his disciples. However, he didn't forbid it either. It must depend on the play.

JOHNSTON. He did propose treating sinner, especially women who have sinned, with compassion. Most of the convict women have committed small crimes, a tiny theft –

COLLINS. We know about your compassion, not to say passion, for the women convicts, George.

TENCH. A crime is a crime. You commit a crime or you don't. If you commit a crime, you are a criminal. Surely that is logical? It's like the savages here. A savage is a savage because he behaves in a savage manner. To expect anything else is foolish. They can't even build a proper canoe.

PHILLIP. They can be educated.

COLLINS. Actually, they seem happy enough as they are. They do not want to build canoes or houses, nor do they suffer from greed and ambition.

FADDY. (*looking at RALPH.*) Unlike some. **{To ACCUSE}**

TENCH. Which can't be said of our convicts. But really, I don't see what this has to do with a play. It is at most a passable diversion, an entertainment to wile away the hours of the idle.

CAMPBELL. Ttts, weh, he, the convicts, bone idle.

DAWES. We're wiling away precious hours now. Put the play on, don't put it on, it won't change the shape of the universe.

RALPH. But it could change the nature of our little society.

FADDY. Second Lieutenant Clark change society! **{To CHORTLE}**

PHILLIP. William!

TENCH. My dear Ralph, a bunch of convicts making fools of themselves, mouthing words written by some London Ass, will hardly change society.

RALPH. George Farquhar was not an ass! And he was from Ireland.

ROSS. An Irishman! I have to sit there and listen to an Irishman!

CAMPBELL. Tss, tt. Irish. Wilde. Wilde.

REVD. JOHNSON. The play doesn't propagate Catholic doctrine, does it, Ralph?

RALPH. He was also an officer.

FADDY. Crawling for promotion. **{To INDICT}**

RALPH. Of the grenadiers.

ROSS. Never liked the Grenadiers myself.

CAMPBELL. Ouah, pheuee, grenades, pho. Throw and run. Eh. Backs.

RALPH. The play is called "The Recruiting Officer".

COLLINS. I saw it on London I believe. Yes. Very funny if I remember. Sergeant Kite.

The devious ways he used to serve his Captain...

FADDY. Your part, Ralph. **{To CHARGE}**

COLLINS. William, if you can't contribute anything useful to the discussion, keep quiet.

(Silence.)

REVD. JOHNSON. What is the plot, Ralph?

RALPH. It's about this recruiting officer and his friend, and they are in love with these

two young ladies from Shrewsbury and after some difficulties, they marry them.

REVD. JOHNSON. It sanctions Holy Matrimony then?

RALPH. Yes, yes, it does.

REVD. JOHNSON. That wouldn't do the convicts any harm. I'm having such trouble

getting them to marry instead of this sordid cohabitation they're so used to.

ROSS. Marriage, plays, why not a ball for the convicts!

CAMPBELL. Eeuh. Boxing.

PHILLIP. Some of these men will have finished their sentence in a few years. They will

become members of society again, and help create a new society in this colony. Should we not encourage them now to think in a free and responsible manner?

TENCH. I don't see how a comedy about two lovers will do that, Arthur.

PHILLIP. The theatre is an expression of civilization. We belong to a great country

which has spawned great playwrights: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and even in our own time, Sheridan. The convicts will be speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to. It will remind them that there is more to life than crime, punishment. And we, this colony of a few hundred will be watching this together, for a few hours we will no longer be despised prisoners and hated gaolers. We will laugh, we may be moved, we may even think a little. Can you suggest something else that will provide such an evening, Watkin?

DAWES. Mapping the stars gives me more enjoyment, personally.

TENCH. I'm not sure it's a good idea having the convicts laugh at officers, Arthur.

CAMPBELL. No. Pheeoh, insubordination, heh, ehh, no discipline.

ROSS. You want this vice-ridden vermin to enjoy themselves?

COLLINS. They would only laugh at Sergeant Kite.

RALPH. Captain Plume is a most attractive, noble fellow.

REVD. JOHNSON. He's not loose, is he Ralph? I hear many of these plays are about

rakes and encourage loose morals in women. They do get married? Before, that is, before.
And for the right reasons.

RALPH. They marry for love and to secure wealth.

REVD. JOHNSON. That's all right.

TENCH. I would simply say that if you want to build a civilization there are more important things than a play. If you want to teach the convicts something, teach them to farm, to build houses, teach them a sense of respect for property, teach them thrift so they don't eat a weeks rations in one night, but above all, teach them how to work, not to sit around laughing at a comedy.

PHILLIP. The Greeks believed it was a citizen's duty to watch a play. It was a kind of work in that it required attention, judgment, patience, all social virtues.

TENCH. And the Greeks were conquered by the more practical Romans, Arthur.

COLLINS. Indeed, the Romans built their bridges, but they also spent many centuries wishing they were Greeks. And they, after all, were conquered by barbarians, or by their own corrupt and small spirits.

TENCH. Are you saying Rome would not have fallen if the theatre had been better?

RALPH. *(very loud.)* Why not? *(Everyone looks at him and he continues, fast and nervously.)* In my own small way, in just a few hours, I have seen something change. I asked some of the convict women to read me some lines, these women who often behave no better than animals. And it seems to me, as one or two – I'm not saying all of them, not at all – but one or two, saying those well-balanced lines of Mr Farquhar, they seemed – they seemed to lose some of their corruption. There was one, Mary Brenham, she read

so well, perhaps this play will keep her from selling herself to the first marine who offers her bread –

FADDY. (*under his breath.*) She'll sell herself to him instead. **{To INCRIMINATE}**

ROSS. So that's the way the wind blows –

CAMPBELL. Hooh. A tempest. Hooh.

RALPH. (*over them.*) I speak about her, but in a small way, this could affect the convicts and even ourselves, we could forget our worries about the supplies, the hangings and the floggings, and think of ourselves at the theatre, in London with our wives and children, that is, we could, euh –

PHILLIP. Transcend –

RALPH. Transcend the darker, euh – transcend the –

JOHNSTON. Brutal –

RALPH. The brutality – remember our better nature and remember –

COLLINS. England.

RALPH. England.

(*A moment.*)

ROSS. Where did the wee Lieutenant learn to speak?

FADDY. He must have had one of his dreams. **{To HUMILIATE}**

TENCH. (*over them.*) You are making claims that cannot be substantiated, Ralph. It's two hours, possibly of amusement, possibly of boredom, and we will lose the labour of the convicts during the time they are learning the play. It's a waste, an unnecessary waste.

REVD. JOHNSON. I'm still concerned about the content.

ROSS. Even if it teaches insubordination, disobedience, revolution?

COLLINS. Since we have agreed it can do no harm, since it might, possibly, do some good, since the only person violently opposed to it is Major Ross for reasons he has not quite made clear, I suggest we allow Ralph to rehearse his play. Does anyone disagree?

ROSS. I – I –

COLLINS. We have taken your disagreement into account, Robbie.

CAMPBELL. Ah, eeh, I – I – *(He stops.)*

COLLINS. Thank you Captain Campbell. Dawes? Dawes, do come back to earth and honour us with your attention for a moment.

DAWES. What? No? Why not? As long as I don't have to watch it.

COLLINS. Johnston?

JOHNSTON. I'm for it.

COLLINS. Faddy?

FADDY. I'm against it. **{To OPPOSE}**

COLLINS. Could you tell us why?

FADDY. I don't trust the director. **{To DISMISS}**

COLLINS. Tench?

TENCH. Waste of time.

COLLINS. The reverend, our moral guide, has no objections.

REVD. JOHNSON. Of course I haven't read it.

TENCH. Davey, this is not an objective summing up, this is typical of your high-handed manner –

COLLINS. I don't think you're the one to be accusing others of a high-handed manner,
Watkin.

PHILLIP. Gentlemen, please.

COLLINS. Your Excellency, I believe, is for the play and I myself am convinced it will
be a most interesting experiment. So let us conclude with our good wishes to Ralph for a
successful production.

ROSS. I will not accept this. You willy-wally wobbily words, Greeks, Romans,
experiment to get your own way. You don't take anything seriously, but I know this play
– this play – order will become disorder. The theatre leads to threatening theory and you,
Governor, you have His Majesty's commission to build castles, cities, raise armies,
administer a military colony, not fangangle about with a lewdy play! I am going to write
the admiralty about this. *(He goes.)*

PHILLIP. You are out of turn, Robbie.

CAMPBELL. Aah – eeh – a, confusion. *(He goes.)*

JOHNSTON. Major Ross will never forgive you, Ralph.

COLLINS. I have summed up the feelings of the assembled company, Arthur, but the last
word must be yours.

PHILLIP. The last word will be the play, gentlemen.

Act I, scene viii.

{DABBY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO KEEP UP THE APPEARANCE OF BEING A PART OF THE PLAY SO SHE CAN TRY TO PLAN HER ESCAPE}

The Women Learn Their Lines.

DABBY BRYANT is sitting on the ground muttering to herself with concentration. She could be counting. MARY BRENHAM comes on.

MARY. Are you remembering your lines, Dabby?

DABBY. What lines? No. I was remembering Devon. I was on my way back to Bigbury Bay. **{To DREAM}**

MARY. You promise Lieutenant Clark you'd learn your lines.

DABBY. I want to go back. I want to see a wall of stone. I was to hear the Atlantic breaking into the estuary. I can bring a boat into any harbour, in any weather. I can do it as well as the Governor.

MARY. Dabby, what about your lines?

DABBY. I'm not spending the rest of my life in this flat, brittle burnt-out country. **{To INSIST}** Oh, give me some English rain. **{To YEARN}**

MARY. It rains here.

DABBY. It's not the same. I could recognise English rain anywhere. And Devon rain,

Mary, Devon rain is the softest in England. As soft as your breasts, as soft as Lieutenant Clark's dimpled cheeks. **{To SEDUCE}**

MARY. Dabby, don't!

DABBY. You're wasting time girl, he's ripe for the plucking. You can always tell with men, they begin to walk sideways. And if you don't – **{To THRUST}**

MARY. Don't start. I listened to you once before.

DABBY. What would you have done without that lanky sailor drooling all over you? **{To JOG HER MEMORY}**

MARY. I would have been less of a whore.

DABBY. Listen my darling, you're only a virgin once. You can't go to a man and say, I'm a virgin except for this one lover I had. After that, it doesn't matter how many men go through you. **{To ASSUAGE}**

MARY. I'll never wash the sin away.

DABBY. If God didn't want women to be whores, he wouldn't have created men who pay for their bodies. **{To RIB}** While you were with your little sailor there were women in that stinking pit of a hold who had three men on them at once, men with the pox, men with the flux, men biting like dogs. **{To RELIVE}**

MARY. But if you don't agree to it, then you're not a whore, you're a martyr.

DABBY. You have to be a virgin to be a martyr, Mary, and you didn't come on that ship a virgin. 'A.H. I love thee to the heart', tattooed way up there – **{To PUT IN HER PLACE}**

(DABBY begins to lift MARY's skirt to reveal a tattoo high up on the inner thigh. MARY leaps away.)

MARY. That was different. That was love.

DABBY. The second difficulty with being a martyr is that you have to be dead to qualify.

Well, you didn't die, thanks to me, you had three pounds of beef a week instead of two, two extra ounces of cheese. **{To RECAP}**

MARY. Which you were happy to eat!

DABBY. We women have to look after each other. **{To RATIONALIZE}** Let's learn the lines. **{To CHANGE THE SUBJECT}**

MARY. You sold me that first day so you and your husband could eat!

DABBY. Do you want me to learn these lines or not?

MARY. How can I play Silvia? She's brave and strong. She couldn't have done what I've done.

DABBY. She didn't spend eight months and one week on a convict ship. Anyway, you can pretend you're her. **{To ENCOURAGE}**

MARY. No, I have to be her.

DABBY. Why? **{To QUESTION}**

MARY. Because that's acting.

DABBY. No way I'm being Rose, she's an idiot. **{To DISMISS}**

MARY. It's not such a big part, it doesn't matter so much.

DABBY. You didn't tell me that before. **{To GASP}**

MARY. I hadn't read it carefully. Come on, let's do the scene between Silvia and Rose.

(She reads.) ‘I have rested but indifferently, and I believe my bedfellow was as little pleased; poor Rose! Here she comes’ –

DABBY. I could have done something for Rose. Ha! I should play Silvia. **{To WISH FOR}**

MARY. ‘Good morrow, my dear, how d’ye this morning?’ Now you say: ‘Just as I was last night, neither better nor worse for you.’

(LIZ MORDEN comes on.)

LIZ. You can’t do the play without me. I’m in it! Where’s the Lieutenant?

DABBY. She’s teaching me some lines. **{To SHOW OFF}**

LIZ. Why aren’t you teaching me the lines?

MARY. We’re not doing you scenes.

LIZ. Well do them.

DABBY. You can read. You can learn your own lines. **{To TRY TO MAKE GO AWAY}**

LIZ. I don’t want to learn them on my own.

(LIZ thrusts DABBY away and sits by MARY.)

I’m waiting.

DABBY. What are you waiting for, Liz Morden, a blind man to buy your wares? **{To MOCK}**

MARY. (*quickly.*) We'll do the first scene between Melinda and Silvia, all right?

LIZ. Yea. The first scene.

(*MARY gives LIZ the book.*)

MARY. You start.

(*LIZ looks at the book.*)

You start. 'Welcome to town, cousin Silvia' –

LIZ. 'Welcome to town, cousin Silvia' –

MARY. Go on – 'I envied you' –

LIZ. 'I envied you' – You read it first.

MARY. Why?

LIZ. I want to hear how you do it.

MARY. Why?

LIZ. Cause then I can do it different.

MARY. 'I envied you your retreat in the country; for Shrewsbury, methinks, and to all
your heads of shires –

LIZ. You're saying it too fast.

MARY. Well, you can say it slower.

LIZ. No. You do it slower. Then I'll do it fast.

DABBY. Why don't you read it? You can't read! **{To HAVE A REVELATION}**

LIZ. What?

(She lunges at DABBY.)

MARY. I'll teach you the lines.

DABBY. Are you her friend now, is that it? Mary the holy innocent and thieving bitch –

{To CHARGE AT}

(LIZ and DABBY seize each other. KETCH FREEMAN appears.)

KETCH. *(with nervous affability.)* Good morning ladies. And why aren't you at work instead of at each other's throats.

(LIZ and DABBY turn on him.)

LIZ. I wouldn't talk throats if I was you, Mr Hangman Ketch Freeman.

DABBY. Crap merchant. **{To ABUSE}**

LIZ. Crapping cull. Switcher.

MARY. Roper.

KETCH. I was only asking what you were doing, you know, friendly like.

LIZ. Stick to your ropes, my little galler, don't bother the actresses.

KETCH. Actresses?

(Pause.)

You're doing a play.

LIZ. Better than dancing the Paddington frisk in your arms – noser!

KETCH. I'll nose on you, Liz, if you're not careful.

LIZ. I'd take a leap in the dark sooner than turn off my own kind. Now take your whirligigs out of our sight, we have lines to learn.

(KETCH slinks away as LIZ and DABBY spit him off.)

DABBY. *(after him.)* Don't hang too many people, Ketch, we need an audience! **{To**

REPRIMAND}

MARY. 'Welcome to town, cousin Silvia.' It says you salute.

LIZ. *(giving a military salute.)* 'Welcome to town, cousin – Silvia.'

Act I, scene xi.

{DABBY’S OBJECTIVE IN THIS SCENE IS TO MAKE SURE SHE IS A SOLID PART OF THE PRODUCTION SO SHE CAN CONTINUE WITH HER PLAN}

The First Rehearsal

RALPH CLARK, ROBERT SIDEWAY, JOHN WISEHAMMER, MAR BRENHAM, LIZ MORDEN, DABBY BRYANT, DUCKLING SMITH, KETCH FREEMAN.

RALPH. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen –

DABBY. We’re ladies now. Wait till I tell my husband I’ve become a lady. **{To RAG}**

MARY. Sshht.

RALPH. It is with pleasure that I welcome you –

SIDEWAY. Our pleasure, Mr Clark, our pleasure.

RALPH. We have many days of hard work ahead of us.

LIZ. Work! I’m not working. I thought we was acting.

RALPH. Now let me introduce the company –

DABBY. We’ve all met before, Lieutenant, you could say we know each other, you

could say we’d know each other in the dark. **{To TAUNT}**

SIDEWAY. It’s a theatrical custom, the company is formally introduced to each other,

Mrs Bryant.

DABBY. Mrs Bryant? Who’s Mrs Bryant? **{To MAKE FUN OF}**

SIDEWAY. It's a theatrical form of address, madam. You may call me Mr Sideway.

RALPH. If I may proceed –

KETCH. Shhh! You're interrupting the director.

DABBY. So we are Mr Hangman. **{To IGNORE}**

(The women all hiss at KETCH.)

RALPH. The ladies first: Mary Brenham who is to play Silvia. Liz Morden who is to play

Melinda. Duckling Smith who is to play Lucy, Melinda's maid.

DUCKLING. I'm not playing Liz Morden's maid.

RALPH. Why not?

DUCKLING. I live with an officer. He wouldn't like it.

DABBY. Just because she live chained up in that old toss pot's garden. **{To SLUR}**

DUCKLING. Don't you dare talk of my Harry –

RALPH. You're not playing Morden's maid, Smith, you're playing Melinda's. And

Dabby Bryant, who is to play Rose, a country girl.

DABBY. From Devon. **{To BRAG}**

DUCKLING. *(to DABBY.)* Screw jaws!

DABBY. *(to DUCKLING.)* Salt bitch! **{To INFLICT}**

RALPH. That's the ladies. Now, Captain Plume will be played by Henry Kable.

(He looks around.)

Who seems to be late. That's odd. I saw him an hour ago and he said he was going to your hut to learn some lines, Wisehammer?

(WISEHAMMER is silent.)

Sergeant Kite is to be played by John Arscott, who did send a message to say he would be kept at work an extra hour.

DABBY. An hour! You won't see him in an hour! **{To REVEAL}**

LIZ. *(under her breath.)* You're not the only one with new wrinkles in your arse Dabby Bryant.

RALPH. Mr Worthy will be played by Mr Sideway.

(SIDEWAY takes a vast bow.)

SIDEWAY. I'm here.

RALPH. Justice Balance by James Freeman.

DUCKLING. No way I'm doing a play with a hangman. The words would stick in my throat.

(More hisses and spitting. KETCH shrinks.)

RALPH. You don't have any scenes with him, Smith. Now if I could finish the introductions. Captain Brazen is to be played by John Wisehammer.

The small parts are still to be cast. Now. We can't do the first scene until John Arscott appears.

DABBY. There won't be a first scene. **{To EXPOSE}**

RALPH. Bryant, will you be quiet please! The second scene. Wisehammer, you could read Plume.

(WISEHAMMER comes forward eagerly.)

No, I'll read Plume myself. So, Act One, scene two, Captain Plume and Mr Worthy.

SIDEWAY. That's me. I'm at your command.

RALPH. The rest of you can watch and wait for your scenes. Perhaps we should begin by reading it.

SIDEWAY. No need, Mr Clark. I know it.

RALPH. Ah, I'm afraid I shall have to read Captain Plume.

SIDEWAY. I know that part too. Would you like for me to do both?

RALPH. I think it's better if I do it. Shall we begin? Kite, that's John Arscott, has just left –

DABBY. Running. **{To RIDICULE}**

RALPH. Bryant! I'll read the line before Worthy's entrance: 'None at present. 'Tis indeed the picture of Worthy, but the life's departed.' Sideway? Where's he gone?

(SIDEWAY has scuttled off. He shouts from the wings.)

SIDEWAY. I'm preparing my entrance, Mr Clark, I won't be a minute. Could you read the line again, slowly?

RALPH. 'Tis indeed the picture of Worthy, but the life's departed. What, arms—a—cross, Worthy!'

(SIDEWAY comes on, walking sideways, arms held up in a grandiose eighteenth-century theatrical pose. He suddenly stops.)

SIDEWAY. Ah, yes, I forgot. Arms-a-cross. I shall have to start again.

(He goes off and shouts.)

Could you read the line again louder please?

RALPH. 'What, arms-a-cross, Worthy!'

(SIDEWAY rushes on.)

SIDEWAY. My wiper! Someone's buzzed my wiper! There's a wipe drawer in this crew, Mr Clark.

RALPH. What's the matter?

SIDEWAY. There's a pickpocket in the company.

DABBY. Talk of the pot calling the kettle black. **{To JAB}**

(SIDEWAY stalks around the company threateningly.)

SIDEWAY. My handkerchief. Who priggged my handkerchief?

RALPH. I'm sure it will turn up, Sideway, let's go on.

SIDEWAY. I can't do my entrance without my handkerchief. *(Furious.)* I've been practicing it all night. If I get my mittens on the rum diver I'll –

(He lunges at LIZ, who fights back viciously. They jump apart, each taking threatening poses and RALPH intervenes.)

RALPH. Let's assume Worthy has already entered, Sideway. Now, I say: 'What arms-a-cross, Worthy! Methinks you should hold 'em open when a friend's so near. I must expel this melancholy spirit.'

(SIDEWAY has dropped to his knees and is sobbing in a pose of total sorrow.)

What are you doing down there, Sideway?

SIDEWAY. I'm being melancholy. I saw Mr Garrick being melancholy once. That is what he did. Hamlet it was.

(He stretches his arms to the ground and begins to repeat.)

‘Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt. Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt. Oh that this too too –‘

RALPH. This is a comedy. It is perhaps a little lighter. Try to simply stand normally and look melancholy. I’ll say the line again. (*SIDEWAY is still sobbing.*) The audience won’t hear Captain Plume’s lines if your sobs are so loud, Sideway.

SIDEWAY. I’m still establishing my melancholy.

RALPH. A comedy need to move quite fast. In fact, I think we’ll cut the line and the two verses that follow and go straight to Worthy greeting Plume.

WISEHAMMER. I like the word melancholy.

SIDEWAY. A greeting. Yes. A greeting looks like this.

(He extends his arms high and wide.)

‘Plume!’ Now I’ll change to say the next words. ‘My dear Captain’, that’s affection isn’t it? If I put my hand over my heart, like this. Now, ‘Welcome’. I’m not quite sure how to do ‘Welcome’.

RALPH. I think if you just say the line.

SIDEWAY. Quite. Now.

(He feels RALPH.)

RAPLH. Sideway! What are you doing?

SIDEWAY. I'm checking that you are safe and sound returned. That's what the line says:

'Safe and sound returned.'

RALPH. You don't need to touch him. You can see that!

SIDEWAY. Yes, yes. I'll check his different parts with my eyes. Now I'll put it all together, 'Plume! My dear Captain, welcome. Safe and sound returned!'

(He does this with appropriate gestures.)

RALPH. Sideway – it's very good attempt. It's very theatrical. But you could try to be a little more – euh – natural.

SIDEWAY. Natural! On the stage! But Mr Clark!

RALPH. People must – euh – believe you. Garrick after all is admired for his naturalness.

SIDEWAY. Of course. I thought I was being like Garrick – but never mind. Natural.

Quite. You're the director, Mr Clark.

RALPH. Perhaps you could look at me while you're saying the lines.

SIDEWAY. But the audience won't see my face.

RALPH. The lines are said to Captain Plume. Let's move on. Plume says: 'I 'scaped safe

from Germany', shall we say – America? It will make it more cotemporary –

WISEHAMMER. You can't change the words of the playwright.

RALPH. Mm, well, 'and sound, I hope, from London: you see I have – '

(BLACK CAESAR rushes on.)

RALPH. Caesar, we're rehearsing – would you –

CAESAR. I see that well, Monsieur Lieutenant. I see it is a piece of theatre, I have many pieces of theatre in my beautiful island of Madagascar so I have decided to play in your piece of theatre.

RALPH. There's no part for you.

CAESAR. There is always a part for Caesar.

SIDEWAY. All the parts have been taken.

CAESAR. I will play his servant.

(He stands next to SIDEWAY.)

RALPH. Farquhar hasn't written a servant for Worthy.

DUCKLING. He can have my part. I want to play something else.

CAESAR. There is always a black servant in a play, Monsieur Lieutenant. And Caesar is that servant. So, now I stand here just behind him and I will be his servant.

RALPH. There are no lines for it, Caesar.

CAESAR. I speak in French. That makes him more high up gentleman if he has a French servant, and that is good. Now he gets the lady with the black servant. Very chic.

RALPH. I'll think about it. Actually, I would like to rehearse the ladies now. They have been waiting patiently and we don't have much time left. Freeman, would you go and see what's happened to Arscott. Sideway, we'll come back to this scene another time, but that was very good, very good. A little, a little euh, but very good.

(SIDEWAY bows out, followed by CAESAR.)

Now we will rehearse the first scene between Melinda and Silvia. Morden and Brenham, if you would come and stand here. Now the scene is set in Melinda's apartment. Silvia is already there. So, if you stand here, Morden. Brenham, you stand facing her.

LIZ. (*very, very fast.*) 'Welcome to town cousin Silvia I envied your retreat in the country for Shrewsbury methinks and all your heads of shires are the most irregular places for living' –

RALPH. Euh, Morden –

LIZ. Wait, I haven't finished yet. 'Here we have smoke noise scandal affectation and pretension in short everything to give the spleen and nothing to divert it then the air is intolerable' –

RALPH. You know your lines very well.

LIZ. Thank you, Lieutenant Clark.

RALPH. But you might want to try and act them.

(*Pause.*)

Let's look at the scene.

(*LIZ looks.*)

You're a rich lady. You're at home. Now a rich lady would stand in a certain way. Try to stand like a rich lady. Try to look at Silvia with a certain assurance.

LIZ. Assurance.

WISEHAMMER. Confidence.

RALPH. Like this. You've seen rich ladies, haven't you?

LIZ. I robbed a few.

RALPH. How did they behave?

LIZ. They screamed.

RALPH. I mean before you – euh – robbed them.

LIZ. I don't know. I was watching their purses.

RALPH. Have you ever seen a lady in her own house?

LIZ. I used to climb into the big houses when I was a girl, and just stand there, looking. I
didn't take anything. I just stood. Like this.

RALPH. But if it was your own house, you would think it was normal to live like that.

WISEHAMMER. It's not normal. It's not normal when others have nothing.

RALPH. When acting, you have to imagine things. You have to imagine you're someone
different. So, now, think of a rich lady and imagine you're her.

(LIZ begins to masticate.)

What are you doing?

LIZ. If I was rich I'd eat myself sick.

DABBY. Me too, potatoes. **{To INDULGE}**

(The convicts speak quickly and over each other.)

SIDEWAY. Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

CAESAR. Hearts of palm.

WISEHAMMER. Four fried eggs, six fried eggs, eight fried eggs.

LIZ. Eels, oysters –

RALPH. Could we get on with the scene, please? Brenham, it's your turn to speak.

MARY. 'Oh, madam, I have heard the town commended for its air.'

LIZ 'But you don't consider Silvia how long I have lived in't!'

RALPH. (*to LIZ.*) I believe you would look at her.

LIZ. She didn't look at me.

RALPH. Didn't she? She will now.

LIZ. 'For I can assure you that to a lady the least nice in her constitution no air can be

good above half a year change of air I take to be the most agreeable of any variety in life.'

MARY. 'But prithee, my dear Melinda, don't put on such an air to me.'

RALPH. Excellent, Brenham. You could be a little more sharp on the 'don't'.

MARY. 'Don't.' (*MARY now tries a few gestures.*) 'Your education and mine were just

the same, and I remember the time when we never troubled our heads about air, but when the sharp air from the Welsh mountains made our noses drop in a cold morning at the boarding-school.'

RALPH. Good! Good! Morden?

LIZ. 'Our education cousin was the same but our temperaments had nothing alike.'

RALPH. That's a little better Morden, but you needn't be quite so angry with her. Now go on Brenham.

LIZ. I haven't finished my speech!

RALPH. You're right, Morden, please excuse me.

LIZ. No, no, there's no need for that, Lieutenant. I only meant – I don't have to.

RALPH. Please do.

LIZ. 'You have the constitution of a horse.'

RALPH. Much better, Morden. But you must always remember you're a lady. What can we do to help you? Lucy.

DABBY. That's you Duckling. **{To ORDER}**

RALPH. See that little piece of wood over there? Take it to Melinda. That will be your fan.

DUCKLING. I'm not fetching nothing for Liz.

RALPH. She's not Morden, she's Melinda, your mistress. You're her servant, Lucy. In fact, you should be in this scene. Now take her that fan.

DUCKLING. (*gives the wood to LIZ.*) Here.

LIZ. Thank you, Lucy, I do much appreciate your effort.

RALPH. No, you would nod your head.

WISEHAMMER. Don't add any words to the play.

RALPH. Now, Lucy, stand behind Morden.

DUCKLING. What do I say?

RALPH. Nothing.

DUCKLING. How will they know I'm here? Why does she get all the lines? Why can't I have some of hers?

RALPH. Brenham, it's your speech.

MARY. 'So far as to be troubled with neither spleen, colic, nor vapors' -

(The convicts slink away and sink down, trying to make themselves invisible as MAJOR ROSS, followed by CAPTAIN CAMPBELL, come on.)

'I need no salt for my stomach,' no -

(She sees the officers herself and folds in with the rest of the convicts.)

RALPH. Major Ross, Captain Campbell, I'm rehearsing.

ROSS. Rehearsing! Rehearsing!

CAMPBELL. Tssaach. Rehearsing.

ROSS. Lieutenant Clark is rehearsing. Lieutenant Clark asked us to give the prisoners two hours so he could rehearse, but what has he done with them? What?

CAMPBELL. Eeeh. Other things, eh.

ROSS. Where are the prisoners Kable and Arscott, Lieutenant?

CAMPBELL. Eh?

RALPH. They seem to be late.

ROSS. While you were rehearsing, Arscott and Kable slipped into the woods with three others, so five men have run away and it's all because of your damned play and your so-called thespists. And not only have your thespists run away, they've stolen food from the stores for their renegade escapade, that's what your play has done.

RALPH. I don't see what the play -

ROSS. I said this from the beginning. The play will bring down calamity on this colony.

RALPH. I don't see –

ROSS. The devil, Lieutenant, always comes through the mind, here, worms its way,
idleness and words.

RALPH. Major Ross, I can't agree –

ROSS. Listen to me, my lad, you're a second lieutenant and you don't agree or disagree with
Major Ross.

CAMPBELL. No discipline, tcchhha.

(ROSS looks over the convicts.)

ROSS. Caesar! He started going with them and came back.

RALPH. That's all right, he's not in the play.

CAESAR. Yes I am, please, Lieutenant, I am a servant.

ROSS. John Wisehammer!

WISEHAMMER. I had nothing to do with it!

ROSS. You're Jewish aren't you? You're guilty. Kable was last seen near Wisehammer's
hut. Liz Morden! She was observed next to the colony stores late last night in the
company of Kable who was supposed to be repairing the door. *(To LIZ.)* Liz Morden, you
will be tried for stealing from the stores. You know the punishment? Death by hanging.
And now you may continue to rehearse, Lieutenant.

(ROSS goes. CAMPBELL lingers, looking at the book.)

CAMPBELL. Ouusstta. 'The Recruiting Officer'. Good title. Arara. But a play, tss, a play.

(He goes. RALPH and the convicts are left in the shambles of their rehearsal. A silence.)

Act II, scene v.

{DABBY'S OBJECTIVE IN THIS SCENE IS TO PROTECT HERSELF}

The Second Rehearsal.

RAPH CLARK, MARY BRENHAM and ROBERT SIDEWAY are waiting. MAJOR ROSS and CAPTAIN CAMPELL bring the three prisoners CAESAR, WISEHAMMER and LIZ MORDEN. They are still in chains. ROSS shoves them forward.

ROSS. Here is some of your caterwauling cast, Lieutenant.

CAMPBELL. The Governor, chhht, said, release, tsst. Prisoners.

ROSS. Unchain Wisehammer and the savage, Captain Campbell. *(Points to LIZ.)* She stays in chains. She's being tried tomorrow, we don't want her slopping off.

RALPH. I can't rehearse with one of my players in chains, Major.

CAMPBELL. Eeh. Difficult. Mmmm.

ROSS. We'll tell the Governor you didn't need her and take her back to prison.

RALPH. No. We shall manage. Sideway, go over the scene you rehearsed in prison with Melinda, please.

CAESAR. I'm in that scene too, Lieutenant.

RALPH. No you're not.

LIZ and SIDEWAY. Yes he is, Lieutenant.

SIDEWAY. He's my servant.

(RALPH nods and LIZ, SIDEWAY and CAESAR move to the side and stand together, ready to rehearse, but waiting.)

RALPH. The rest of us will go from Silvia's entrance as Wilful. Where's Arscott?

ROSS. We haven't finished with Arscott yet, Lieutenant.

CAMPBELL. Punishment, eeheh, for escape. Fainted. 53 lashes left. Heehee.

ROSS. *(pointing to CAESAR.)* Caesar's next. After Morden's trial.

(CAESAR cringes.)

RALPH. Brenham, are you ready? Wisehammer? I'll play Captain Plume.

ROSS. The wee Lieutenant wants to be in the play too. He wants to be promoted to convict. We'll have you in the chain gang soon, Mr Clark, haha. *(A pause. ROSS and CAMPBELL stand, watching. The CONVICTS are frozen.)*

RALPH. Major, we wish to rehearse now.

(Pause. No one moves.)

We wish to rehearse.

ROSS. No one's stopping you, Lieutenant.

(Silence.)

RALPH. Major, rehearsals need to take place in the utmost euh – privacy, secrecy you might say. The actors are not yet ready to be seen by the public.

ROSS. Not ready to be seen?

RALPH. Major, there is a modesty attached to the process of creation which must be respected.

ROSS. Modesty? Modesty! Sideway, come here.

RALPH. Major. Sideway – stay –

ROSS. Lieutenant, I would not try to countermand the orders of a superior officer.

CAMPBELL. Obedience. Eeh. First euh, rule.

ROSS. Sideway.

(SIDEWAY comes up to ROSS.)

Take your shirt off.

(SIDEWAY obeys. ROSS turns him and shows his scarred back to the company.)

One hundred lashes on the Sirius for answering an officer. Remember, Sideway?

Three hundred lashes for trying to strike the same officer.

I have seen the white of this animal's bones, his wretched blood and reeky convict urine have spilled on my boots and he's feeling modest? Are you feeling modest Sideway?

(He shoves SIDEWAY aside.)

Modesty.

Bryant. Here.

(DABBY comes forward.) **{To OBEY RELUCTANTLY}**

On all fours.

(DABBY goes down on all fours.) **{To SELF-PRESERVE}**

Now wag your tail and bark, and I'll throw you a biscuit. What? You've forgotten? Isn't that how you begged for food on the ship? Wag your tail, Bryant, bark! We'll wait.

{To FOLLOW ORDERS FOR SURVIVAL}

Brenham.

(MARY comes forward.)

Where your tattoo, Brenham? Show us. I can't see it. Show us.

(MARY tries to obey, lifting her skirt a little.)

If you can't manage, I'll help you. *(MARY lifts her skirt a little higher.)* I can't see it.

(But SIDEWAY turns to LIZ and starts acting, boldly, across the room, across everyone.)

SIDEWAY. 'What pleasures I may receive abroad are indeed uncertain: but this I am sure of, I shall meet with less cruelty among the most barbarous nations than I have found at home.'

LIZ. 'Come, Sir, you and I have been jangling a great while; I fancy if we made up our accounts, we should the sooner come to an agreement.'

SIDEWAY. 'Sure, Madam, you won't dispute being in my debt – my fears, sighs, vows, promises, assiduities, anxieties, jealousies, have run on for a whole year, without any payment.'

CAMPBELL. Mmhem, good, that. Sighs, vows, promises, hehem, mmm. Anxieties.

ROSS. Captain Campbell, start Arscott's punishment.

(CAMPBELL goes.)

LIZ. 'A year! Oh Mr Worthy, what you owe to me is not to be paid under a seven years'

servitude. How did you use me the year before –‘

(The shouts of ARSCOTT are heard.)

‘How did you use me the year before’ –

(She loses her lines. SIDEWAY tries to prompt her.)

SIDEWAY. ‘When taking advantage’ –

LIZ. ‘When taking advantage of my innocence and necessity’ –

(But she stops and drops down, defeated. Silence, except for the beating and ARSCOTT’s cries.)

Act II, scene vii.

{DABBY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO PROTECT MARY FROM WISEHAMMER AND TRY TO CONNECT HER WITH LT. CLARK AS A MEANS OF PROTECTING HERSELF}

The Meaning of Plays.

THE ABORIGINE. Ghosts in a multitude have spilled from the dream. Who are they? A swarm of ancestors comes through unmended cracks in the sky. But why? What do they need? If we can satisfy them, they will go back. How can we satisfy them?

MARY, RALPH, DABBY, WISEHAMER, ARSCOTT. MARY and RALPH are rehearsing. The others are watching.

RALPH. 'For I swear, madam, by the honour of my profession, that whatever dangers you went upon, it was with the hope of making myself more worthy of your esteem, and if I ever had thoughts of preserving my life, 'twas for the pleasure of dying at your feet.'

MARY. 'Well, well, you shall die at my feet, or where you will; but you know, sir, there is a certain will and testament to be made beforehand.'

I don't understand why Silvia has asked Plume to make a will.

DABBY. It's a proof of his love, he wants to provide for her. **{To TEACH}**

MARY. A will is proof of his love?

WISEHAMMER. No. She's using will in another sense. He must show her his

willingness to marry her. Dying is used in another sense, too.

RALPH. He gives her his will to indicate that he intends to take care of her.

DABBY. That's right, Lieutenant, marriage is nothing, but will you look after her? **{To**

THREATEN}

WISEHAMMER. Plume is too ambitious to marry Silvia.

MARY. If I had been Silvia, I would have trusted Plume.

DABBY. When dealing with men, always have a contract. **{To GUARD}**

MARY. Love is a contract.

DABBY. Love is the barter of perishable goods. A man's word for a woman's body. **{To**

JOKE ABOUT THE REALITY}

WISEHAMMER. Dabby is right. If a man loves a woman, he should marry her.

RALPH. Sometimes he can't.

WISEHAMMER. Then she should look for someone who can.

DABBY. A woman should look after her own interests, that's all. **{To SHIELD MARY}**

MARY. Her interest is to love.

DABBY. A girl will love the first man who knows how to open her legs. She's called a

whore and ends up here. **{To ENLIGHTEN}** I could write scenes, Lieutenant, women

with real lives, not these Shrewsbury prudes. **{To REALIZE MY OWN POTENTIAL}**

WISEHAMMER. I've written something. The prologue of this play won't make any

sense to the convicts: 'In ancient time, when Helen's fatal charms and so on' I've written

another one. Will you look at it, Lieutenant?

(RALPH does so and WISEHAMMER takes MARY aside.)

You mustn't trust the wrong people, Mary. We could make a new life together, here. I would marry you, Mary, think about it, you would love with me, in a house. He'll have to put you in a hut at the bottom of his garden and call you his servant in public, that is, his whore. Don't do it, Mary.

DABBY. Lieutenant, are we rehearsing or not? Arscott and I have been waiting for
hours. **{To GET MARY OUT OF HARM'S WAY}**

RALPH. It seems interesting. I'll read it more carefully later.

WISEHAMMER. You don't like it?

RALPH. I do like it. Perhaps it needs a little more work. It's not Farquhar.

WISEHAMMER. It would mean more to the convicts.

RALPH. We'll talk about it another time.

WISEHAMMER. Do you think it should be longer?

RALPH. I'll think about it.

WISEHAMMER. Shorter? Do you like the last two lines? Mary helped me with them.

RALPH. Ah.

WISEHAMMER. The first lines took us days, didn't they, Mary?

RALPH. We'll rehearse Silvia's entrance as Jack Wilful. You're in the scene,

Wisehammer. We'll come to your scenes in a minute, Bryant. Now, Brenham, remember what I showed you yesterday about walking like a gentleman? I've ordered breeches for you, you can practice in them tomorrow.

MARY. I'll tuck my skirt in. *(She does so and takes a masculine pose.)* 'Save ye, save ye, gentlemen.'

WISEHAMMER. 'My dear, I'm yours.'

(He kisses her.)

RALPH. *(angrily.)* It doesn't say Silvia is kissed in the stage directions!

WISEHAMMER. Plume kisses her later and there's the line about men kissing in the army. I thought Brazen would kiss her immediately.

RALPH. It's completely wrong.

WISEHAMMER. It's right for the character of Brazen.

RALPH. No it isn't. I'm the director, Wisehammer.

WISEHAMMER. Yes, but I have to play the part. They're equal in this scene. They're both captains and in the end fight for her. Who's playing Plume in our performance?

RALPH. I will have to, as Kable hasn't come back. It's your line.

WISEHAMMER. Will I be given a sword?

RALPH. I doubt it. Let's move on to Kite's entrance, Arscott has been waiting too long.

ARSCOTT. *(delighted, launches right in.)* 'Sir, if you please' –

RALPH. Excellent, Arscott, but we should just give you our last lines so you'll know when to come in. Wisehammer.

WISEHAMMER. 'The fellow dare not fight.'

RALPH. That's when you come in.

ARSCOTT. 'Sir, if you please' –

DABBY. What about me? I haven't done anything either. You always rehearse the scene
with Silvia. **{To GET INTO THE ACTION}**

RALPH. Let's rehearse the scene where Rose comes on with her brother Bullock. It's a
better scene for you Arscott. Do you know it?

ARSCOTT. Yes.

RALPH. Good. Wisehammer, you'll have to play the part of Bullock.

WISEHAMMER. What? Play two parts?

RALPH. Major Ross won't let any more prisoners off work. Some of you will have to
play several parts.

WISEHAMMER. It'll confuse the audience. They'll think Brazen is Bullock and Bullock
Brazen.

RALPH. Nonsense, if the audience is paying attention, they'll know that Bullock is a
country boy and Brazen a captain.

WISEHAMMER. What if they aren't paying attention?

RALPH. People who can't pay attention shouldn't go to the theatre.

MARY. If you act well, they'll have to pay attention.

WISEHAMMER. It will ruin my entrance as Captain Brazen.

RALPH. We have no choice and we must turn this necessity into an advantage. You will
play two very different characters and display the full range of your abilities.

WISEHAMMER. Our audience won't be that discerning.

RALPH. Their imagination will be challenged and trained. Let's start the scene. Bryant?

DABBY. I think 'The Recruiting Officer' is a silly play. I want to be in a play that has
more interesting people in it. **{To AFFRONT}**

MARY. I like playing Silvia. She's bold, she breaks rules out of love for her Captain and she's not ashamed.

DABBY. She hasn't been born poor, she hasn't had to survive, and her father's a Justice of the Peace. I want to play myself. **{To DEMAND}**

ARSCOTT. I don't want to play myself. When I say Kite's lines I forget everything else.

I forget the judge said I'm going to have to spend the rest of my natural life in this place getting beaten and working like a slave. I can forget that out there it's trees and burnt grass, spiders that kill you in four hours and snakes. I don't have to think about what happened to Kable, I don't have to remember the things I've done, when I speak Kite's lines I don't hate anymore. I'm Kite. I'm in Shrewsbury. Can we get on with scene, Lieutenant, and stop talking?

DABBY. I want to see a play about life as we know it. **{To SOLICIT}**

WISEHAMMER. A play should make you understand something new. If it tells you something you already know, you leave as ignorant as you went in.

DABBY. Why can't we do a play about now? **{To REQUIRE EXPLANATION}**

WISEHAMMER. It doesn't matter when a play is set. It's better if it's in the past, it's clearer. It's easier to understand Plume and Brazen than some of the officers we know here.

RALPH. Arscott, would you start the scene?

ARSCOTT. 'Captain, Sir, look yonder, a-coming this way, 'tis the prettiest, cleanest, little tit.'

RALPH. Now Worthy – He's in this scene. Where's Sideway?

MARY. He's so upset about Liz he won't rehearse.

RALPH. I am going to talk to the Governor, but he has to rehearse. We must do the play whatever happens. We've been rehearsing for five months! Let's go on. 'Here she comes, and what is that little {great} country fellow with her?'

ARSCOTT. 'I can't tell, Sir.'

WISEHAMMER. I am not a little {great} country fellow.

RALPH. Act it Wishammer.

DABBY. 'Buy chickens, young and tender, young and tender chickens.' This is a very stupid line and I'm not saying it. **{To REJECT}**

RALPH. It's written by the playwright and you have to say it. 'Here, you chickens!'

DABBY. 'Who calls?' **{To ACQUIESCE}**

RALPH. Bryant, you're playing a pretty country wench who wants to entice the Captain.

You have to say these lines with charm and euh – blushes.

DABBY. I don't blush. **{To REFUTE}**

RALPH. I can't do this scene without Sideway. Let's do another scene.

(Pause.)

Arscott, let's work on your big speeches. I haven't heard them yet. I still need Sideway. This is irresponsible, he wanted the part. Somebody go and get Sideway.

(No one moves.)

ARSCOTT. I'll do the first speech anyway, Sir. 'Yes, Sir, I understand my business, I

will say it; you must know, Sir, I was born a gypsy, and bred among that crew till was ten year old, there I learned canting and lying;’

DABBY. That’s about me! **{To WAKE UP TO THE WORDS OF THE PLAY}**

ARSCOTT. ‘I was bought from my mother Cleopatra by a certain nobleman, for three guineas, who liking my beauty made me his page’ –

DABBY. That’s my story. Why do I have to play a silly milkmaid? Why can’t I play Kite?

MARY. You can’t play a man, Dabby.

DABBY. You’re playing a man: Jack Wilful. **{To DEFEND MYSELF}**

MARY. Yes, but in the play, I know I’m a woman, whereas if you played Kite, you would have to think you were a man.

DABBY. If Wisehammer can think he’s a little {big} country lad, I can think I’m a man.

People will use their imagination and people with no imagination shouldn’t go to the theatre. **{To REMIND OF THE FACTS}**

RALPH. Bryant, you’re muddling everything.

DABBY. No. I see things very clearly and I’m making you see clearly, Lieutenant. I want to play Kite. **{To DEMAND}**

ARSCOTT. You can’t play Kite! I’m playing Kite! You can’t steal my part!

RALPH. You may have to play Melinda.

DABBY. All she does is marry Sideway, that’s not interesting. **{To REFUSE}**

(DABBY stomps off. KETCH comes on.)

KETCH. I'm sorry I'm late, Lieutenant, but I know all my lines.

RALPH. We'll rehearse the first scene between Justice Balance and Silvia. Brenham.

(ARSCOTT stomps off.)

MARY. 'Whilst there is life there is hope, sir; perhaps my brother may recover.'

KETCH 'We have little reason to expect it –'

MARY. I can't. Not with him. Not with Liz – I can't.

(She runs off.)

RALPH. One has to transcend personal feelings in the theatre.

(WISEHAMMER runs after MARY.) (To KETCH.)

We're not making much progress today, let's end this rehearsal.

(He goes. KETCH is left alone, bewildered.)

Act II, scene xi.

{DABBY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO PUT HER PLAN OF ESCAPE INTO MOTION}

Backstage.

Night. THE ABORIGINE.

THE ABORIGINE. Look: oozing pustules in my skin, heat on my forehead. Perhaps we have been wrong all this time and this is not a dream at all.

(The ACTORS come on. They begin to change and make up. THE ABORIGINE drifts off.)

MARY. Are the savages coming to see the play as well?

KETCH. They come around the camp because they're dying: small pox.

MARY. Oh.

SIDEWAY. I hope they won't upset the audience.

MARY. Everyone is here. All the officers too.

LIZ. *(To DUCKLING.)* Dabby could do your part.

DUCKLING. No. I will do it. I will remember the lines.

MARY. I've brought you an orange from Lieutenant Clark's island. They've thrown her out of Harry Brewer's tent.

WISEHAMMER. Why? He wouldn't have wanted that.

DUCKLING. Major Ross said a whore was a whore and I was to go into the women's camp. They've taken all of Harry's things.

(She bursts into tears.)

MARY. I'll talk to the Lieutenant.

LIZ. Let's go over your lines. And if you forget them, touch my foot and I'll whisper them to you.

SIDEWAY. *(who has been practicing on his own.)* We haven't rehearsed the bow.

Garrick used to take his this way: you look up to the circle, to the sides, down, make sure everyone thinks you're looking at them. Get in a line.

(They do so.)

ARSCOTT. I'll be in the middle. I'm the tallest.

MARY. No, Arscott. *(MARY places herself in the middle.)*

SIDEWAY. Dabby, you should be next to Mary.

DABBY. I won't take the bow. **{To DENY}**

SIDEWAY. It's not the biggest part, Dabby, but you'll noticed.

DABBY. I don't want to be noticed.

SIDEWAY. Let's get it right. If we don't all do the same thing, it will look a mess.

(They try. DABBY is suddenly transfixed.)

DABBY. Hurray, hurray, hurray. **{To ENVISION THE SUCCESS OF MY PLAN}**

SIDEWAY. No, they will be shouting bravo, but we're not in a line yet.

DABBY. I wasn't looking at the bow, I saw the whole play, and we all knew our lines,
and Mary, you looked so beautiful, and after that I saw Devon and they were shouting
bravo, bravo Dabby, hurray, you've escaped, you've sailed thousands and thousands of
miles on the open sea and you've come back to your Devon, bravo Dabby, bravo.

MARY. When are you doing this, Dabby?

DABBY. Tonight.

MARY. You can't.

DABBY. I'll be in the play till the end, then in the confusion, when it's over we can
slip away. The tide is up, the night will be dark, everything's ready. **{To ALLAY
THE FEARS OF THE OTHERS}**

MARY. The Lieutenant will be blamed, I won't let you.

DABBY. If you say anything to the Lieutenant, I'll refuse to act in the play. **{To STAND
FAST}**

ARSCOTT. When I say my lines, I think of nothing else. Why can't you do the same?

DABBY. Because it's only for one night. . I want to grow old in Devon. **{To PLEAD
FOR UNDERSTANDING}**

MARY. They'll never let us do another play. I'm telling the Lieutenant.

ALL. No, you're not. **{To THREATEN}**

DABBY. Please, I want to go back to Devon. **{To BESEECH}**

WISEHAMMER. I don't want to go back to England now. It's too small and they don't like Jews. Here no one has more of a right than anyone else to call you a foreigner. I want to be a famous writer.

MARY. You can't become a famous writer until you're dead.

WISEHAMMER. You can if you're the only one.

SIDEWAY. I'm going to start a theatre company. Who wants to be in it?

WISEHAMMER. I will write you a play about justice.

SIDEWAY. Only comedies, my boy, only comedies.

WISEHAMMER. What about a comedy about unrequited love?

LIZ. I'll be in your company, Mr Sideway.

KETCH. And so will I. I'll play all the parts that have dignity and gravity.

SIDEWAY. I'll hold auditions tomorrow.

DABBY. Tomorrow. **{To HOPE}**

DUCKLING. Tomorrow.

MARY. Tomorrow.

LIZ. Tomorrow.

(A long silence. [Un ange passé].)

MARY. Where are my shoes?

(RALPH comes in.)

RALPH. Arscott, remember to address the soldiers when you talk of recruiting. Look at them: you are speaking to them. And don't forget to leave a pause for people to laugh.

ARSCOTT. I'll kill anyone who laughs at me.

RALPH. They're not laughing at you, they're laughing at Farquhar's lines. You must expect them to laugh.

ARSCOTT. That's all right, but if I see Major Ross or any other officer laughing at me, I'll kill them.

MARY. No more violence. By the way, Arscott, when you carry me off the stage as Jack Wilful, could you be a little more gentle. I don't think he'd be so rough with a young gentleman.

RALPH. Where's Caesar?

KETCH. I saw him walking on the beach earlier. I thought he was practicing his lines.

ARSCOTT. Caesar!

(He goes out.)

WISEHAMMER. *(to LIZ.)* When I say 'Do you love fishing, madam?', do you say something then? –

RALPH. *(goes over to DUCKLING.)* I am so sorry, Duckling. Harry was my friend.

DUCKLING. I loved him. But now he'll never know that. I thought of he knew he would become cruel.

RALPH. Are you sure you don't want Dabby to take your part?

DUCKLING. No! I will do it. I want to do it.

(Pause.)

He liked to hear me say my lines.

RALPH. He will be watching from somewhere. *(He goes to Mary.)* How beautiful you look.

MARY. I dreamt I had a necklace of pearls and three children.

RALPH. If we have a boy we will call him Harry.

MARY. And if we have a girl?

RALPH. She will be called Betsey Alicia.

(ARSCOTT comes in with CAESAR drunk and disheveled.)

ARSCOTT. Lying on the beach, dead drunk.

CAESAR. *(to RALPH, pleading.)* I can't. All those people. My ancestors are angry, they do not want me to be laughed at by all those people.

RALPH. You wanted to be in this play and you will be in this play –

KETCH. I'm nervous too, but I have overcome it. You have to be brave to be an actor.

CAESAR. My ancestors will kill me.

(He swoons. Arscott hits him.)

ARSCOTT. You're going to ruin my first scene.

CAESAR. Please, Lieutenant, save me.

RALPH. Caesar, if I were back home, I wouldn't be in this play either. My ancestors
wouldn't be very pleased to see me here – But our ancestors are thousands of miles away.

CAESAR. I cannot be a disgrace to Madagascar.

ARSCOTT. You will be more of a disgrace if you don't come out with me on that stage.

NOW.

MARY. Think of us as your family.

SIDEWAY. *(to RALPH.)* What do you think of this bow?

RALPH. Caesar, I am your Lieutenant and I command you to go on that stage. If you
don't, you will be tried and hanged for treason.

KETCH. And I'll tie the rope in such a way you'll dangle there for hours full of piss and
shit.

RALPH. What will your ancestors think of that, Caesar?

(CAESAR cries but pulls himself together.)

KETCH. *(to LIZ.)* I couldn't have hanged you.

LIZ. No?

RALPH. Dabby, have you got your chickens?

DABBY. My chickens? Yes. Here. **{To AWAKEN TO THE REALITY}**

RALPH. Are you all right?

DABBY. Yes. *(Pause.)* I was dreaming. **{To REALIZE THE FUTURE IS COMING
TRUE}**

RALPH. Of your future success?

DABBY. Yes. Of my future success.

RALPH. And so is everyone here, I hope. Now, Arscott.

ARSCOTT. Yes, Sir!

RALPH. Calm.

ARSCOTT. I have been used to danger, Sir.

SIDEWAY. Here.

LIZ. What's that?

SIDEWAY. Salt. For good luck.

RALPH. Where did you get that from?

SIDEWAY. I have been saving it from my rations. I have saved enough for each of us to
have some.

(They all take a little.)

WISEHAMMER. Lieutenant?

RALPH. Yes, Wishammer.

WISEHAMMER. There's – there's –

MARY. There's his prologue.

RALPH. The prologue. I forgot.

(Pause.)

Let me hear it again.

WISEHAMMER.

From distant climes o'er wide-spread seas we come,
Though not with much éclat or beat of drum,
True patriots all; for be it understood,
We left our country for our country's good;
No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
What urged our travels was our country's weal,
And none will doubt but that our emigration
Has proved most useful to the British nation.

(Silence.)

RALPH. When Major Ross hears that, he'll have an apoplectic fit.

MARY. I think it's very good.

DABBY. So do I. And true. **{To APOLOGIZE}**

SIDEWAY. But not theatrical.

RALPH. It is very good Wisehammer, it's very well written, but it's too – too political. It
will be considered provocative.

WISEHAMMER. You don't want me to say it?

RALPH. Not tonight. We have many people against us.

WISEHAMMER. I could tone it down. I could omit 'We left our country for our
country's good.'

DABBY. That's the best line. **{To CONVINCHE HIM HE IS TALENTED}**

RALPH. It would be wrong to cut it.

WISEHAMMER. I worked so hard on it.

LIZ. It rhymes.

SIDEWAY. We'll use it in the Sideway Theatre.

RALPH. You will get much praise as Brazen, Wisehammer.

WISEHAMMER. It isn't the same as writing.

RALPH. The theatre is like a small republic, it requires private sacrifices for the good of the whole. That is something you should agree with, Wisehammer.

(Pause.)

And now, my actor, I want to say what a pleasure it has been to work with you. You are on your own tonight and you must do you utmost to provide the large audience out there with a pleasurable, intelligible and memorable evening.

LIZ. We will do our best, Mr Clark.

MARY. I love this!

RALPH. Arscott.

ARSCOTT. *(to CAESAR.)* You walk three steps ahead of me. If you stumble once, you know what will happen to you later? Move.

RALPH. You're on.

(ARSCOTT is about to go on, then remembers.)

ARSCOTT. Halberd! Halberd!

(He is handed his halberd and goes on, preceded by CAESAR beating the drum.)

‘If any gentlemen soldiers, or others, have a mind to serve Her Majesty, and pull down the French King; if any prentices have severe masters, any children have undutiful parents; if any servants have too little wages or any husband too much wife; let them repair to the noble Sergeant Kite, at the Sign of the Raven, in this good town of Shrewsbury, and they shall receive present relief and entertainment’...

(And to the triumphant music of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and the sound of applause and laughter from the First Fleet audience, the first Australian performance of The Recruiting Officer begins.)

JOURNAL

AUDITION – 1/20/2005

Audition piece from SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

I felt like my audition was good. I don't think I did as well as I did when I was rehearsing, but I was also very nervous. I want to be cast as Liz Morden, but I think David has other plans for me. He asked me to look at the part of Dabby Bryant when I was looking at the script. It is a good role, but I really like Liz. But if it really comes down to it, I don't care what part I get, as long as I get cast! As far as my audition though, I think I could have made stronger choices in my actions. My objective felt pretty clear, but I don't think my actions were strong enough. But I still think I did a fairly good job in my audition.

FIRST READ-THROUGH – 1/29/2005

I have been cast as Dabby Bryant. I really wanted the part of Liz Morden, but after this read-through, I think Mr. David Hoover might know what he's doing! I really like Dabby. She's a strong character and after hearing the words aloud with the rest of the cast, it is a better part for me, and a lot more fun. As for the rest of the cast, it is going to be incredible. I can already tell how wonderful this show will be. I have also been cast as Lt. William Faddy, so it is going to be a lot of fun to play an opposite character from Dabby. Faddy is Standard British as opposed to Dabby's Cockney. There is also the idea of the third character. In the concept for this play, we are all actors in a theatre company in London during the late 1700's. So even when we were not in a scene, there will be an area of the stage which represents the backstage area for the "actors" of the theatre company. The entire cast will be on stage at all times during the performance of the

play. We will have to move from one character to another while making scene changes and it will all be seen by the audience. It gives the audience a great example of how a play works, but it is also a very interesting concept for us as actors to use the challenges set before us and is a good challenge. I know we have a lot of work ahead of us, but it's not going to be so much fun. I have a great cast to work with There are already a lot of personal connections I have with the other cast members. We have a good rapport so it will be easy to work with them. I don't think I could have a better thesis project.

REHEARSAL – 2/15/2005

Block/Work Act I, scene vii.

Lisa (Mary) was gone. We worked blocking with Kat (Liz). For now, I need to not worry so much about lines. I still need to focus on actions and objectives, but for blocking rehearsals, I let them get in the way. I need to readjust my process a bit so that I can get the blocking. It is also an integral part of how I memorize my lines. It's not very organic, but after I get the blocking, I can remember my lines more and then I can let the blocking become a bit more organic and let my objectives and actions inform when and where I move. This will be a good bit of information for the rest of the rehearsals. I think it will make it easier as I am going through the rest of the rehearsal process.

REHEARSAL – 2/17/2005

Block/Work Act II, scene v.

This is going to be a very difficult scene. I am strictly doing blocking for now. I will have to work on my actions for this one. It is a difficult scene. The barking on my knees thing is a

very vulnerable position for me as Tiffany. It will be a challenge to overcome my personal boundaries. But the physical action and what it implies is very difficult for me as a strong independent woman. I am going to have to carefully choose my actions for this and basically just get over my personal feelings. I know also, more rehearsal will help. The more I do this scene, the easier it will get. So I just have to be patient. Although, I do think the fact that it is uncomfortable will make it so much easier to perform. It's a bit of a paradox for me as an actor and as me. I need to find the balance so I can be clear with my action and objective. It is a bit confusing for me right now.

REHEARSAL – 2/20/2005

Dialect rehearsal with Robin and Tim.

Standard British is more in the lips and more lilt. They gave us lots of phonetic help in handouts. Look for brackets, in phonetics and will give the sound needed for words. Pitch glides should go up more. Work on for Lt. Faddy.

Cockney is slightly back in the cavity and up. It uses more glottal stops and more choppy. They gave us great handouts for this as well. Make sure to use them!

The personal work is very helpful in addition to the tapes we have. It let's me know I am on the right track.

REHEARSAL – 3/1/2005

Block/Work Act II, scene vii; Work Act II, scene v.

Act II, scene vii – This scene is going to be a lot of fun. I love working with Mike and Michael. Sometimes I feel like it's going to be a real challenge to play off of Jason Cutler. I feel

like most of his actions as far as my character, or maybe me, are to avoid me or get away from me or ignore me. It's hard when it feels like I'm not getting what I need from the person in the scene. I'm sure it is part of the process for the blocking as well. There are moments when I think there is a connection, but then it's lost as soon as it's there.

Act II, scene v – I am getting more comfortable with this as we do it. I also can feel a bit of a connection with Jason in this scene. When Lt. Clark tries to keep Dabby from following Major Ross's orders, it seems to be a moment where the two characters have a good connection. Lt. Clark wants to try to protect Dabby. Even though there are conflicts between the two characters it shows how Lt. Clark cares about the actors in his play. It's small, but it's there. I hope there gets to be more.

As I do the reading in the book THE PLAYMAKER – from which the play itself is adapted, there is a connection between Dabby and Ralph. She saves him. He is grateful. And there is a mutual respect. And in the context of the play, it seems there is a mutual respect in the relationship they both have with Mary. I am not sure I feel that with Jason yet. I know that Dabby has ulterior motives for everything she does, but I really feel like there is a friendship between her and Mary. Dabby tries to protect her. And she wants the best for Mary. Although Dabby sees Mary as her meal ticket in the beginning, it becomes clear by the end that she truly values Mary and her friendship. This is an important scene to establish Dabby's ulterior motives so that her character arc is clear to the audience.

But between Dabby and Ralph, I'm not sure how to pursue the relationship with what I am being given from Jason. I will have to try to make my actions stronger and see what comes from that.

REHEARSAL – 3/3/2005

Work Act II, scenes i, iii, iv, v; Work Act II, scenes vii, viii, ix.

I was only in two scenes tonight. Act II, scene v is becoming much easier for me to do. I am starting really to like it. I think changing my action to protecting Ralph helps. I think Dabby does it because she knows she has to do whatever Major Ross tells her to do, but there is also a sense of protecting those she has come to care for. The play has become so important to her because it is going to be her escape – literally – from the prison land she is in. If she follows some of the rules she normally wouldn't, she might have the chance to make it back home. Again, she is using the people and the opportunity because that is who Dabby Bryant is. She looks for what she can use to her advantage. But it doesn't mean that she doesn't truly care for others. I think she does want to protect Mary and Ralph and even Wisehammer, at least from Ross.

Act II, scene vii – This is one of my favorite scenes in the whole play. I don't even feel like I have to work for the right actions or objectives. Dabby's objective is very clear that she wants to show off what she has learned and practiced. But there are moments in this scene where Dabby becomes more of the protector to Mary. It shows a more rounded character. Almost every line Dabby says is a different moment or beat. It's a great scene to keep me on my feet with my actions. It's an excellent exercise in making sure I've chosen the strongest actions to clearly portray my objective.

I also love the others in this scene. It just feels way too easy. I have such a good friendship with Lisa (Mary) that it doesn't feel like work at all. We can make choices and take risks with each other and know immediately if it is working or not. We don't have to ask permission from one another. It is so much fun. I love rehearsing this scene. I don't have any

other real comments for this one. I think there are some opportunities to explore with the lines about the chickens that could be a lot of fun. I also like the chance to show how Dabby protects Mary from Wisehammer. It goes along with the objective of using the play to escape. It is just a really great scene that gives me so many things to use for all of my other scenes even.

REHEARSAL – 3/6/2005

Work transitions and scenes.

This rehearsal was basically a blocking rehearsal to try to find out how to switch scenes from one to the next. I like that in between the scenes we become the actors of the company. It makes even more of a challenge because each actor is playing their characters in the play, but also the characters of the actors from the late 1700's that are in the theatre company. It is a great challenge.

REHEARSAL – 3/10/2005

Act II, scene xi.

The last scene of the play! It is another of my favorites. It is so touching and poignant. I love the way each character comes together and goes above their differences. They truly are brought together because of this play they are all in. It shows the healing power of the theatre through each of these people and how they overcome their differences. It also shows how each person can overcome their class differences as well. Again, this is another scene I find really easy to play. The actions and objectives come easily from the script and the other cast members. This is such a great group of actors to play off of. I find myself making new discoveries each rehearsal. I love this play!!!!

REHEARSAL – 3/13/2005

Act II, scene xi.

I am still using the same actions. I think they are still working. The only trouble I am having right now is finding things to do when I am not “in” the scene. This scene has so many times the focus changes and there are so many sub-scenes going on in the meantime – getting ready for the play, resolutions between individual characters – and there is a lot of Dabby just sitting there. I am using the fact that she is trying to make sure she knows her lines, but there are moments when I think she is involved in the other characters, such as the conversation between Mary and Ralph. There also is another great moment between Dabby and Ralph that helps with the idea that they are not enemies. When Lt. Clark asks Dabby if she is dreaming of her success it is as if he is also saying to her that she is going to do a great job in the play even though the success is also about her escape. I feel like it is working and I haven’t gotten any notes, so I will keep using it until I am told otherwise.

REHEARSAL – 3/16/2005

Work Act I, scene v–viii.

Scene v is a bit difficult for me. It’s not working with what Jason is giving me. I have to try too hard with him. Even though lines are still trouble, there should still be some connection between the characters. I don’t know if he is still concentrating too much on getting his lines or if he really doesn’t have a connection with me as a person. I don’t think it’s the latter since there are the two moments in the play that we already have. I don’t feel like I know him well enough to have a chat with him about it. I wouldn’t want to offend him. But, I don’t think we are finding anything. I really like the scene, but I find this one to be one of the hardest because of Jason. I

don't know what to do. I have tried different actions and I don't know if I should find new objectives or not. I think this is a weak scene. But I'm sure it will get better.

Scene vi with the officers is the weakest in the play so far – at least of the ones I'm in. Scene v has a lot of energy – regardless of the fact that Jason and I don't seem to be connecting, it still has great moments and is fun. But this scene just seems to go completely flat. It loses everything. I know it's hard when we don't have all of the cast members here, but it just feels like it is time for the audience to nap, but it is such an important scene because it is the decision that will change the characters lives. If this scene doesn't happen, there is no reason for the play. It seems to me to be a turning point, but it doesn't feel at all like one as we are rehearsing it. I think this is the scene that needs a lot of rehearsal. I am sure it will come together in time, but it doesn't feel like we have a lot of time left. I don't think my character has enough impact on the scene to make much of a difference in pace so it's very hard for me to sit through. But no one in the scene is listening to each other. Each person is saying their line because it is their turn. No one has any motivation – except maybe Kat playing Lt. Johnson.

As for Faddy, I thought it would be more difficult to play such an opposite character from Dabby, but it seems the difficulty in the scene has come from the way the scene just falls flat and drags. I hope it comes together soon.

Scene viii is one of my favorites. I feel like it is really coming together well. I love the way Lisa gives me so much to play off. I think she is a great actor to work with. And I feel more open with Dabby every time we work this scene. I love how I can just get down and dirty with her. We have such a rapport that we can use our personal connection to create the character connection. I am so glad I got this role instead of Liz. I feel almost like I am channeling Dabby. She was an amazing “character” of a person. I would have liked to have known her. I think she is

changing because of the play – not just because she has a chance at freedom, but I think it is showing Dabby that there is more to life than finding a way to use people to get what she wants. I know that Dabby does actually care about other people, but she uses them to her advantage. Now, she is learning to let herself get more involved with other human beings. This scene also shows how she really does care about Mary. It is such an insight into her soul.

REHEARSAL – 3/17/2005

Work Act I, scenes ix–xi; Run Act I.

Scene xi is another one of my favorite scenes. This is so much fun, again because of the people in the scene and they are all so giving. I love it. It has so much energy and then it goes right to a place where there seems like it may be hopeless. It is a great way to end the act. Still feel like there is more of “Jason” spouting at “Tiffany” because he doesn’t like me rather than Ralph dealing with Dabby. In the book, Ralph has more of a respect for Dabby because she saves him from his nightmares. In the context of the play, it is only suggested that this happens, and it is such a minute suggestion, but there still feels like there should be some connection between the two characters. I just don’t know how to play off of Jason sometimes. I think it might also be inexperience. And I also feel like he is playing emotions and qualities rather than true actions. I don’t feel like there is an objective with him and it becomes a real challenge that I am very appreciative of. I’m sure throughout my career I will be faced with even more of these specific obstacles and it is a great opportunity to get this experience now to learn how to deal with it. I know that I will have to make sure that I choose the strongest actions I can to give him as much as I can for him to play off and maybe in turn it will help me work through my obstacles.

First run of Act I was Tough to get through and needs lots of work. Don't really have much to say other than that. I have much work to do – need to get lines perfect. I feel a little like a huge step has been taken backwards. I will be working on this homework a lot.

REHEARSAL – 3/29/2005

Work Act II, scenes v, vii, xi; Run Act II.

The barking scene. It has come such a long way – for me – since the first time. I don't feel uncomfortable at all with it now. It just took some work for me to get over myself. I have come to really like this scene. It's not one of my most favorite, but I do like it. It's such a strong scene and it just makes everyone root for the underdogs so much more. I do however feel like Jason is not working with me so well. He isn't even following direction for the blocking in the scene. He keeps trying to stop me from going to Jared and I know that's not what he is supposed to do and I feel like it's such a strong move that Dabby might not necessarily defy him right away. I don't know. I'm having some conflict with it. I will fix it.

Scene vii. One of my favorites. This scene seems to go better than some of the others. I think we all have very clear objectives and actions. It makes it so much easier to rehearse. I feel like it is one of the scenes that is going well.

Scene xi. Another favorite. It seems like this whole play is my favorite scenes, and it is. I love it. I love working with this cast. I think this last scene culminates in something so beautiful and such an amazing message of how theatre can change lives, I find it very hard to try and change too much because it feels like all of my choices work. It almost feels like instinct. Again, I think I must channel Dabby Bryant from beyond the grave! I don't feel like there are a lot of problems with it. I am even finding things to “occupy” my character with during the moments

when I am not in the focus. That is probably the biggest challenge in this scene for me and it is becoming so easy. Even the moment when Dabby sees the escape has never really been a total problem for me. I just used my instincts and went with my gut on how she would see it. It is her dream that she has had for the whole of the process, but now she can see the reality – part of her “visions”, and it is how this play has rescued her from the living hell she is in. Again, it’s such a joy of a scene that it is easy for me to find the right actions.

Run Act II. It is still very rough, but it is starting to come together. It shows me the scenes I really need to focus on. We only have a few more rehearsals so it is important that we all focus on our problem spots and help the others with theirs. I know it will all come together in the end because the cast is so strong and we work together so well. It’s a great piece of ensemble work.

REHEARSAL – 3/30/2005

Work through Act I; Run Act I.

It has been a good rehearsal process, but it is a lot of work. I think my weakest parts at this point are Act I, scene v, because I am having some problems connecting with Jason. Act I, scene vi, is also another sore point. It just feels like we can’t find our rhythm in the scene. It just feels like it drags so much. I don’t know what to do to help. Other than that, I feel pretty confident that I am working in the right direction.

REHEARSAL – 3/31/2005

Work through Act II (transitions)

Again, I feel pretty confident in my choices. I think I am on the right track so far. I just need to polish everything and make sure it's all clear. I actually feel a bit more confident in Act II than Act I. I just need to make sure that I stay consistent with my choices at this point.

REHEARSAL – 4/1/2005

Work Act I, scene v; Act II, scene xi; Run Act II.

Works of the scenes are ok. Still feeling rough on I, v with Jason, but I think it is just his choice of actions and now I need to figure out how to meld my choices with the ones he has because he is not going to change his. It's fine. I just wanted there to be a better connection.

Act II, scene xi, is still feeling good. I think I am still on the right track. I don't feel like I have too many problems here. Just need to remain consistent and clear.

Run of Act II, getting better. It still feels like we have a long way to go, but it is getting better. I think I am doing well with clarity and consistency. I feel very confident.

REHEARSAL – 4/2/2005

Run-through.

This is the first real run-through. It is getting better. But it's still rough. I am glad we still have a few more rehearsals. Although we don't have that many. I think we are much better off than some other productions I've been in! But I think I have made good choices and I don't have anything I really feel like I can't work with at this point. I am even finding my groove with Jason. It's starting to come together. I am just amazed at the talent in this cast and the joy I am

having working with everyone. We all just seem to meld. I hope this isn't the last experience I ever have like this! Everyone has worked so hard and this is going to be a beautiful show. We all just need to be consistent and clear, my two goals at this point.

Specific notes from David – Pace Sideway out instead of running him out; More objecting about Liz to Ralph when Liz enters; “A.H...” more to audience; “Future success...” some idea that maybe Dabby will stay – try.

REHEARSAL – 4/3/2005

Run-through.

Just keeps getting better. I feel like I am doing well at consistency and clarity and I still feel like my choices are working very well. I just need to keep my focus and keep polishing the work I have done.

Specific notes from David – Come downstage after chasing off Sideway; “England...” raise tankard; grab script on “you didn't tell me...”; “I should play Silvia...” stress “I” more; get lines out before attacking Duckling.

REHEARSAL – 4/4/2005

Run-through.

Still feels like it's going in the right direction.

Specific notes from David- Back down from Liz more in I, v; I, vii – Stronger beat turn on “Let's learn our lines...”; I, vii – finish moment after laugh. Let Liz win.

REHEARSAL – 4/6/2005

Run-through.

This is our last run-through before crew view and I think it is about time to get some observers. I feel like I am doing well and have made the right choices, but I will have a better opinion when I get the energy from the observers. It will be good to have them.

Specific notes from David – “Learn our lines...” Better. Do it that way.

REHEARSAL – 4/7/2005

Run-through (crew view).

Feels good to have an audience. I think I am definitely on the right track. Comments from some of the crew after rehearsal were positive and let me know I am doing my job in the choices I have made. I feel pretty good. I think it will only get better from here.

Specific notes from David – No big pause on “Rose. What’s she do?”; “Success...” change back to way from before. Didn’t like it.

REHEARSAL – 4/9/2005

Wet Tech.

Was not as long as a rehearsal as I thought it would be. It was long, but good. I feel like it’s going to be an amazing show. We have a wonderful crew to go along with the fabulous cast. It was actually one of the best techs I’ve experienced. So I feel good about the show.

Specific notes from David (notes also from Thursday rehearsal) – “Crawling for promotion...” faster on cue; Hard break on “The Recruiting Officer is a silly play...”; Move drunken officer scene along faster.

REHEARSAL – 4/10/2005

First Dress.

It was a good rehearsal. I felt good in the costumes. I think there will be a bit of a challenge getting into the Lt. Faddy costume, but we will get it worked out. Everyone seems to have been very helpful with all of the problems and we just fixed them as they happened instead of stopping and trying to spend an hour fixing it. We all worked together to keep it going and make it work.

Specific notes from David – Cheat out in I, iv; Keep vocal lower and smoother in I, vi; at end of I, vi, move small crate on SR side of SL big crate.

REHEARSAL – 4/11/2005

Final Dress.

Good. Some technical problems have happened every rehearsal, but we all seem to keep going without letting them get to us. But the acting part of it seems to be going well. I think they'll get all of the tech kinks out by tomorrow – they have too!!! But we're going to be fine. I just know it. I can't wait for the people to see this play. It is truly an amazing show.

Specific notes from David – React to Ralph's "Why not!" in drunken officer scene; Don't lose "tattooed"; Cheer more after group at end.

OPENING NIGHT – 4/12/2005 (TUESDAY)

It was amazing. Everything we worked for came about in such a beautiful way. It was such a great show and I feel so proud to have been a part of it. I feel like I made the right choices for both of my characters. I even feel like the Officer scene (I, vi) went better than it has before. I feel like it didn't drag as much. We still need to make sure we keep moving forward with the

progress of that scene – I still feel like it’s the weakest scene I’m in and probably of the whole play, but it was more of a success than it has been. It was a good opening night.

SECOND PERFORMANCE – 4/ 13/2005 (WEDNESDAY)

I think I am still doing the job I need to do. I think it was good even though it was the “second night” when it traditionally is a slower or quieter audience. I feel like it was still a good performance and we all did a good job. I don’t have anything I feel like I need to fix. I am staying consistent and clear in my actions and objectives. It was a good night.

THIRD PERFORMANCE – 4/14/2005 (THURSDAY)

It just keeps getting better. I love this play and everyone in it. I think I am still doing the same performance from rehearsal, consistent, good choices, clear choices. I don’t feel like I did anything but improve on my performance. I feel good about it.

FOURTH PERFORMANCE – 4/15/2005 (FRIDAY)

It just keeps getting better. I think every night we improve and the audience loves it even more. I have heard only positive comments. I think we are doing exactly what we rehearsed. I feel like I am doing my work the way I was directed and the way I rehearsed it. I feel like my performance has been the same as every other night and I am giving the audience as close to the same performance from the previous night. I think it is exactly what I have worked toward.

FIFTH PERFORMANCE – 4/16/2005 (SATURDAY)

I think I am still doing what I am supposed to. I am giving the same performance I have been rehearsing and performing every night. I know that every night there is a new technical obstacle, but I don't think it's that obvious to the audience and it doesn't seem to be affecting all of us as actors. I think we are all doing the same show we rehearsed regardless of what happens technically. I feel good about all of this.

SIXTH PERFORMANCE – 4/17/2005 (SUNDAY MATINEE)

Matinees always seem to be a different show than all of the others. I am not sure why. We lost the projector last night and we didn't have it for this performance, but I think we were still able to deliver the same performances as we gave the whole run of the show. I feel like I did what I rehearsed. I think overall, I was consistent with my choices and gave the same performance for each night – or day. I am very sad that this is all now over. It was, by far, the best experience I have ever had with a cast, rehearsal and performance run. I wish it could last a little longer. But all good things must come to an end. It was a joy and a pleasure to work with this cast and crew and especially director. I am honored to have been a part of this show, and I am so lucky that it is my thesis project.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

I think my performances were very consistent throughout the run of the play. I kept the same actions and objectives throughout. I feel as though I gave the same performance every night. Each audience saw the same character whether they came to the Tuesday night performance or the Sunday matinee. I think my choices were strong enough to portray Dabby Bryant in the manner the author intended, but also keeping in the truth with who the real woman was.

I found throughout the rehearsal process many contradictions between Wertebaker's play and the novel by Tomas Keneally, *The Playmaker*, from which the play was taken. It was a struggle at first to try and choose the right actions to play in order to create the character arc of Dabby Bryant. There were so many conflicting aspects of each author's character it became hard for me to understand why Wertebaker would choose to change the character created by Keneally.

I also found a lot of frustration in the conflict of character relationships portrayed in each work. Part of me wanted to bring out more of the character of the novel and fight what Wertebaker had chosen of Dabby Bryant to expose to the audience. I had a struggle with the choices of other actors and their characters because it was such a contradiction between the two pieces of literature.

After struggling through the process for a couple of weeks, I realized that I could not achieve my goal of melding the two characters the way I wanted because of the choices Wertebaker made when selecting the traits of the character of Dabby Bryant to be included in the play. I found myself much more at ease once I relinquished the ties I had to the novel intellectually and emotionally. I had a hard time letting go of Keneally's character because she

was so much more than just a plodding, overbearing bombastic woman after her own goals. Once I gave up the fight, I found more places in Wertebaker's script where there were the nuances created first by Keneally. I found that once I surrendered to the words of the play itself I was able to combine more of the character I first tried to force on the script. The Dabby Bryant of Keneally's novel is in Wertebaker's play, she is just more compressed and the qualities I found so endearing in her in the novel had to be portrayed through my choice of action.

I found it much easier to create the character from the beginning with the sense of using whomever she could to get to her objective of escaping the colony to making her much more human in the end through her choices to protect her friend Mary. It would have been very easy to fall into a trap of making Dabby a very conniving person who was only after her own interests, but I knew she was much more than that from the research I found on Mary Bryant the real person. I knew it was important to portray that to the audience so that they could cheer for her in the end and hope that she was able to escape.

I also thought it was important to show the audience that the reason for Dabby's change of heart was the play itself. If she had not been a member of the theatrical company of players chosen to act in the production of *The Recruiting Officer*, she would have had a much harder time planning her escape. She may not have gone through with her plan and never escaped. But because Dabby forced herself into the play by using Mary Brenham, she was able to become a part of the company and subsequently find that there was hope for her plan of escape.

Dabby Bryant learned much more though. She learned that all people were essentially the same. Even though she believed that Lt. Clark was there as her captor and was to make sure that she and the other convicts were following their orders and properly punished when they didn't follow orders, she found that she was wrong. There were indeed officers that were only there to

make sure that the prisoners completed their punishments, but Lt. Clark was not one of them. During the process of rehearsing the play, Act I, scene xi, Lt. Clark shows a great amount of respect for the convict Liz Morden when he admits to his mistake of not letting her finish her line. This is greatly impressed upon the prisoners that are going to be treated with respect. It is a great turning point for not only Dabby, but all of the characters of the play.

Before this particular scene though, there is a great opportunity for Dabby's character to show her maternal side. When she speaks of the conditions she believes she saved Mary Brenham from on board the ship by selling her to a sailor in Act I, scene viii, Dabby is able to show more of a side of caring rather than plotting or scheming her means to her goal. She truly cares about the well-being of Brenham and considers Brenham to be her friend, which justifies the jealousy we see that comes out later in the same scene between Dabby and Liz Morden.

It is quite clear, even though it wasn't in the beginning of my process, to see that Wertenbaker is portraying a very similar character to Keneally's. It is just a matter of the actor being able to find the moments in the script where it happens and choose the right actions to portray to the audience the real character of Dabby Bryant.

It also makes it much easier to understand the process of Bryant's character arc. She has an idea in the beginning that she will use Lt. Clark's play as a vehicle for her escape. In the process she finds out much more about her ability to trust and respect others.

Even the relationship between Bryant and Liz Morden grows. In the beginning we see the two characters fighting each other for control in every situation. By the end of Wertenbaker's script it is clear they have at least come to an understanding of each other and a mutual respect for one another.

Our Country's Good also shows how the theatre itself brings people together and has a healing power. The convicts chosen to be in the play by Lt. Clark were not friends. In fact, Ketch Freeman was despised as he was the hangman for the colony. Since, because these people were brought together as a group and made to work together toward a common goal, that of the production of the play it made them able to connect with one another in a way that would have never happened. It also made them see one another as human beings and not as thieves and murderers and common criminals. It showed them that even though there were people of higher rank because of military involvement that they were essentially all equal. In the end most of the characters of Wertebaker's script were able to reconcile their differences and come together as one.

As for my part in the production of *Our Country's Good* at the University of New Orleans Theatre, I believe I was able to combine all of these elements to create the character of Dabby Bryant and bring her back to life. I believe I made strong enough choices in the end of the rehearsal process to make my performance believable. I was able to see what didn't work through trying to make Wertebaker's character into the character of the novel, and make choices that fit her script. I don't know that I had any moments during the performance run where any of my choices didn't work. Even though I didn't solve the problem of my connection between myself and Jason Cutler, I feel like my work was solid and my choices were strong and clear. I created a believable character on stage showing a clear journey from the character of the beginning who is brash and bold and is only out for herself to the character we see at the end, a Dabby Bryant who is more caring of others and wiser in the relationships she can have with people. All of these choices lead up to the final moment when Dabby decides that she will indeed escape for England. If she had not made this journey through the course of Lt. Clark's play, she

may not have had the strength and courage to face her fears and set out on the open sea. In the end, she has the hope she needs. The performance of the play is an end to Wertebaker's script, but a beginning for the characters.

It is also very clear how through this process, each real life person could have made their individual journey. It is clear how Dabby would have been revered by her contemporaries for succeeding in such a dangerous voyage.

There was also the challenge of playing a second character. I was also cast as Lt. Faddy. I was afraid it would be a challenge at first since Faddy is a man and the dialect is Standard British, a bit different from the Cockney of Dabby Bryant. While it was different from the Cockney of Dabby's, it became helpful in creating the Cockney dialect.

However, I didn't have as many problems in the switch from one character to the other. It was just important to remain focused on the particular scene I was in. In fact, I was also a third character. In the concept of the play, all of the cast members had to portray actors of the late 1700 England. As each scene was finished, we changed to the "actors" of this period to switch scenery and move to our next position for the subsequent scene. It made the change from one character to another much easier since it was a concept carried through the entire play.

I also had the challenge of the dialect work itself. I thought it would be much more of a challenge than it was, but in the sessions with the dialect coaches, I found I had a natural ability to mimic the sounds. I also felt I was the most consistent with my dialect work throughout the process of rehearsal and performance. The biggest problem was remembering to change my dialect when I became Lt. Faddy. There were several times during the rehearsal process when I would say the first line of Lt. Faddy with a muddled dialect. I was able to make a note of the

problem and just remembered to focus on the change when the scene came. It was simply a matter of me remembering.

Another problem I faced was one with Jason Cutler who played the character of Lt. Clark. Many times in my scenes with him I didn't feel like he was truly listening. There were a lot of times I thought his actions were weak and he played emotional qualities. It was also as if it were Jason himself yelling at Tiffany, rather than Lt. Clark having conversations with Dabby Bryant. I don't know if there was a problem that Jason Cutler had with me as a person or if it was lack of experience. But through the research, I found that Lt. Clark and Dabby Bryant had a special relationship. There was a mutual respect. I also found moments in the script where it would have been appropriate to play on that aspect of their relationship. But I never found the connection with Cutler. I also never found a solution to the problem. I did not feel comfortable with him personally to sit with him one on one and discuss the problem. I did not want him to feel I was attacking his ability. It could have been my own insecurities. If I had taken the opportunity to discuss it with him I may have found that he did not realize I was having a problem. It is a weakness that I will have to work on for the future. And although I think he did a wonderful job in his performance, I would have liked to have had the opportunity to make more of a connection between the two characters. It would have made for an even richer performance.

The production concept itself also became an integral part of the creation of the character. As the rehearsal process progresses, we as actor are given more things to work with such as the set itself, costumes, props. Sometimes they can become a hindrance. For instance, when I received my costume for Dabby, the skirt was far too long and I kept tripping over it. I simply pulled it up farther on my body so that it was higher than my waistline. It worked for the

character and what might have been a problem actually became something about the character of Dabby that was quite humorous.

The set was also very helpful in the overall success of the play. Since there was no reality to the set, it was easier to portray the concept of this being theatre and not reality. It made it easier in the change from Dabby Bryant to Lt. Faddy and back to Dabby Bryant and then to one of the 18th century actors.

In the course of the play, the audience sees Dabby as the humorous individual who pulls the skirt up too high. While this was not an aspect of the character in Keneally's novel, Wertebaker takes this woman who was much more serious and had a really bad life and makes her loveable to the audience by using the comedy. Part of the struggle I had with the portrayal of the character dealt with the differences between Wertebaker's Bryant and Keneally's Bryant. Wertebaker left the mysticism out of the character and opted for a more comic woman. It also made a great contrast with the moments in the play that were so very dark as in Harry Brewer's death scene. Without the comedy added by Bryant's character it could have been too heavy for the message of the play to be seen by the audience – that theatre can bring light into even the darkest of places.

Dabby Bryant was clearly a strong woman. In this production, I truly feel I did her justice by portraying her as close to reality within the limitations of Timberlake Wertebaker's play, *Our Country's Good*. I had very good comments from the audience. Even weeks after the run of the play, I had people coming up to me to tell me they enjoyed my performance. And while I did have trouble in the beginning of the rehearsal process, I was able to find my way through it and make the right choices for a strong performance.

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VITA

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