The Piñata

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The Piñata

A Thesis

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

Master of Fine Arts in Film and Theatre Film Production

by

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iv
Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1
Development ............................................................................................................................. 4
Pre-Production ......................................................................................................................... 9
  A. Producing ......................................................................................................................... 9
  B. Casting ............................................................................................................................ 10
  C. Directing ......................................................................................................................... 11
  D. Cinematography ............................................................................................................. 12
  E. Production Design ........................................................................................................ 14
  F. Sound ............................................................................................................................. 14
  G. Budget .......................................................................................................................... 15
Production ............................................................................................................................... 16
  A. Weekend One .................................................................................................................. 16
  B. Weekend Two ................................................................................................................. 19
Post-production ....................................................................................................................... 24
  A. Editing ............................................................................................................................ 24
  B. Color Correction ........................................................................................................... 25
  C. Music ............................................................................................................................ 26
  D. Post-sound ..................................................................................................................... 28
  E. Screening Feedback .................................................................................................... 28
  F. Festivals ......................................................................................................................... 31
Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 32
Works Cited ............................................................................................................................ 34
Films Cited ............................................................................................................................... 34
Appendices ............................................................................................................................ 35
  Appendix A: Shooting Script .............................................................................................. 35
  Appendix B: Crew List ...................................................................................................... 55
  Appendix C: Cast List ....................................................................................................... 56
  Appendix D: Final Budget ................................................................................................. 57
  Appendix E: Call Sheets ................................................................................................... 58
  Appendix F: Actor Release Forms ................................................................................... 70
  Appendix G: Film Reference ............................................................................................ 89
Vita ........................................................................................................................................... 90
Abstract

In this paper I will discuss the making of the short film, *The Piñata*, from its inception to its path of being submitted to festivals. I will discuss the steps taken to complete the processes of development, pre-production, production, and post-production. In each section of this document I will relay the decisions I made during my experience being the producer, writer, director, editor, and casting director of *The Piñata*.

**Keywords**: The Piñata, middle school, pre-teens, family movie, kids, Spanish, Mexican-American
I. Introduction

If your life were made into a movie, what would it be about? I might have hoped for a rags-to-riches saga or a tragic yet beautiful romance, but alas, my life does not stir such exquisite plots. Although *The Piñata* is not directly autobiographical, it was born out of my twelve-year-old birthday party experience.

Searching for a story last spring, I stumbled upon a stack of my old, college-entrance essays. I gave my essay, “The Poignant Piñata”, a look, and the colors flashed before my eyes. I was transported to the day I didn’t hit my birthday piñata, and I remembered what it felt like--not knowing how to speak the words I was feeling.

However, my high-school-senior-self spoke eloquently of the experience. I wrote, “The first time I came in contact with the notion of ‘growing up’ was at my twelve-year-old birthday party. The reason I didn’t hit my own birthday piñata that year was because I let my schoolmates talk me into thinking it was not ‘cool’. Instead, the few of us sat inside mindlessly staring at the computer—a much more suitable activity for preteens, according to my girlfriends.

I could hear the excitement outside as the other party guests whacked the piñata. Everyone was yelling and laughing and fighting over Snicker bars, Smarties, and Sweet Tarts. It was difficult, but I resisted the urge to leave my sophisticated girlfriends and scramble for any remaining candy.

After a game of musical chairs (which my friends also refused to play on the terms that it was too babyish), my party ended. I was relieved when everyone left. My heart was aching, and I needed time to think. I reviewed everything my friends had told me. The biggest question
I asked myself was, ‘What does it mean to be grown up?’ Does the term ‘grown up’ refer to a
girl that wears makeup? Does it mean you rebel against your parents? Does it mean you watch
R-rated movies and go to ‘grown up’ parties that have alcohol instead of piñatas? Are those the
things that are considered ‘grown up’?

I didn’t come up with the answers to my questions right away, but instead I gradually
began to understand what the answers were. I realized growing up isn’t simply appearing to be
mature. In fact, it is the opposite. A girl that is truly mature doesn’t need her appearance to
verify she has grown up. Maturity is understanding who you are, what is really important in life,
and how to treat other people. Most of all, a sophisticated mind understands childhood
innocence is a treasure that should not be willingly tossed aside prematurely.

I always keep this lesson close to my heart and try to savor every last bit of childhood I
have left. As I am preparing to go off to college, my life is beginning a new phase—adulthood.
Now, more than ever, I need to hold dear the youthful spark many people lose along the way. If
hitting the piñata means staying young at heart, then hand me the bat!”

With these colors and emotions, I knew I had the foundation for a short film I could be
passionate about. From my first draft until my completed film, the heart of this story has been
one close to me. It reflects a monumental moment in my own life.

*The Piñata* also presented me with challenges I was excited to take on. Working with
child actors is one of my career goals, therefore, I felt this film would be an excellent piece to
add to my portfolio as a director. It would give me the opportunity to work with five child
actors.
Another element of the film that challenged me was the film’s realism. My background is largely in musical theater, therefore melodrama and heightened emotion come naturally. Understating emotion was unexplored territory for me.

Lastly, directing ensemble casts is something that intrigues me. I enjoy casting a net of intertwined characters, as well as learning the art of ensemble composition. *The Piñata* presented me with this opportunity, as well.
II. Development

Once I discovered my story, I knew it had the perfect scope for a short film. When looking for a story suited for a short film, I look for a single moment in time that holds a significant weight. In each of the short films I have written, I have focused on framing a story around a single moment shared between two people or a moment of enlightenment. For *The Piñata*, the defining moment is when the main character sees what she has missed out on. I knew she would watch as her sister hit the piñata in her stead.

When sifting through ideas for films I also pay attention for those ideas which flash before me with a fullness of presence and color. Many ideas will come, but few have such a clear, colorful presence in my mind. *The Piñata* was one of the few. Most of the color and presence came from the opening sequence of piñatas. In my essay, I had listed an assortment of piñatas—princesses, guitars, eyeballs, Dora the Explorer. There was my hook. In the first draft of my film I started by introducing my characters and their world through a montage of Mia hitting piñatas. From the montage we get a glimpse of Mia, Mia’s father, grandmother, and mother before we meet them in the present-day. We see Mia’s joy as she breaks the last piñata.

Then we jump to the present day—the morning of Mia’s twelfth birthday. The dining room is decorated with a colorful banner, and the table is covered in party supplies. Mia is finishing gluing tissue paper onto her birthday piñata with her grandmother. Her sister, Sofia, sits at the table watching old videos on their mother’s phone. Daniela and Erik, the girls’ parents, are preparing for the party.
When Mia’s school friends, Cassidy and Bevin, arrive, the idyllic peace surrounding Mia’s birthday begins to show cracks. Cassidy sneers at Mia when she learns Mia still likes to hit the piñata. Bevin agrees it would be better if they let the little kids hit it. They move onto giving Mia a makeover and questioning her feelings for her neighbor, Jon. Cassidy continues to mold Mia into her definition of being grown-up throughout the film. As Mia experiences this pressure, she acts out against her grandmother, sister, and mother.

Finally, her parents call her over to hit the piñata. A moment before, she is trying to kiss her crush, Jon, on the cheek but loses her nerve. After failing to live up to Cassidy and Bevin’s dare to kiss Jon, Mia resolves to gain their approval by not hitting the piñata. She insults her father and refuses to play along in the merriment.

When she returns to her friends, she finds they have been videoing her. They ask her why she didn’t hit her piñata, and she yells at them to stop filming her. The film ends with Mia sitting apart from them and watching regretfully as Sofia breaks the piñata open.

The great challenge of this script was its low conflict and its seemingly passive protagonist. The movie hinges on Mia not hitting the piñata. Having a protagonist without a tangible goal is an obstacle, and I wrote drafts where she goes back and hits the piñata in the end. I also tried focusing the story around specific relationships. At first, it was Sofia, her younger sister. I thought, “Perhaps this is their story.” However, the story began to feel lopsided. It began to veer from the truth of the natural growth Mia experiences.

Another revision centered on Mia and Bevin’s relationship. Maintaining her friendship with Bevin was the goal I assigned her, but the script ended up with two climaxes. The first paid
off the piñata, and the second restored her relationship with Bevin. Needless to say, it did not work.

In several of my drafts, they play musical chairs after the piñata. Even though Cassidy and Bevin aren’t up for it, Mia decides she wants to play with or without them. In those versions, musical chairs was a means of redemption. It provided a way for Mia to learn from the piñata and make the “right” decision. This ending came off forced; her arc was unearned.

Bringing Mia full circle in a short film did not seem feasible, therefore, I settled for allowing the moment of revelation to be the goal. My goal for Mia was to get her to a place where she recognizes she is at a fork-in-the-road. However, the goal that drives the story is her desire to fit in with her friends. This fuels her actions and propels her toward refusing to hit the piñata.

Determining the opposing force in the film was another major challenge. My first thought was Cassidy, but the idea made me cringe because it meant making her a cliché mean girl. It was much more appealing to round Cassidy’s character out and mold her into Mia’s mentor. Mia wants to fit in and grow up; Cassidy wants to help her with that, even if her methods are fairly twisted.

Mia’s family is the real antagonist of the piece. She has to hide what she really wants from each of her family members. She lies to her grandmother, escapes her mother, pushes her sister away, and confronts her father. Around every corner she has someone to hide from.

The character of Bevin was a tricky one for me. She always had the most mature voice throughout the revisions, but her purpose shifted. Early on, I used her as Mia’s ally against Cassidy. Then she became the prize Cassidy and Mia were both going after, but in the final draft
she became the voice of reason. She carries a more objective point of view, and she is clearly more secure in herself than Mia or Cassidy. She may go along with what Cassidy is doing, but she thinks for herself—unlike Mia. Bevin serves as a point of comparison.

The character of Jon was always a part of the story in some way, but it was only when I received feedback that I should heighten the stakes, that I added him to the cast. What is middle school without a crush? I knew I didn’t want to delve too deeply into his character because there were already so many characters to flesh out in the short. I was content to leave him as a plot device with his main quality being that he is oblivious to what these girls are up to.

The last major thing I would like to discuss about writing The Piñata is its structure. Once I sorted out the proper goal and the proper ending, I wanted to give the script a proper structure. The montage is the hook, and the first few scenes, before her friends arrive, are expositional. I had many characters to introduce, so giving each one of them a moment was essential. These expositional scenes do introduce the main conflict in small doses, but it is not until Mia’s friends arrive that we experience the inciting incident/plot point one—Cassidy asking Mia if she still hits the piñata. This is the first breach in Mia’s world, and it defines the direction the story is headed.

Then comes the midpoint—Cassidy calling Mia a “bitch”. This scene marks the halfway point precisely. Mia transforms into a different girl for the second half of the film. In the second half, I gave Mia a mini-goal of kissing Jon to push things forward and raise the stakes. The missed kiss is meant to be a low-point spurring Mia on toward the climax. She fails at kissing him, and consequently, she is distraught with herself. Then when it comes to the piñata, Mia is all the more determined not to hit it, because she does not want to fail again. When she heads
back to her friends to confirm she obtained her goal, she realizes she is still not satisfied with herself. The climax is fulfilled, but Mia is not.
III. Pre-production

A. Producing

Once I had a solid idea, putting a team together was the next step in my process. I began this process by asking one other dependable producer, Emily Poulliard, to brainstorm and work alongside me during the early months of development. We met regularly during the summer to discuss the revisions and our plans for the fall. Although I am productive as a producer and filmmaker, my productivity hinges on collaboration and accountability to partners. Therefore, I knew it was essential to start the collaboration process as early as possible.

Other than creative development, The Piñata was relatively simple to produce. Its one location was my own home, funds were provided for by the Robert E. Nims Scholarship, and paperwork was minimal. The main function of our producing team was to piece together a creative team. Between Emily and me, we had many contacts to build a team with an excellent work ethic and working relationship.

Fabiola Andrade was my other producer whom I began meeting with once the fall semester began. She completed permits and coordinated with me to obtain the necessary equipment rentals. As she is from Honduras, her critiques on the story were incredibly valuable. I believe when crossing cultural borders, an artist should consult and include those who are nearer to their subjects than themselves. I also corresponded with my filmmaker friend, Diego Castellanos, who lives in Mexico, and we frequently discussed the development of my film.

Maintaining a clear and precise budget was something I had not previously had to do. This was solely my responsibility. I developed a budget early on, and I continued to revise it over the semester. I collected all receipts and organized them each weekend. I tracked totals
and then turned in the receipts to be reimbursed. I have not completed spending the remainder of the funds since I budgeted for post-production processes and film festival submissions.

B. Casting

From the very first draft of *The Piñata*, its greatest challenge was the cast age and size. I did not blind myself to the challenge it presented. Casting was the first thing we planned for during the fall. I put up posters at UNO, solicited on Actors Access, and contacted school theater programs. I also contacted several actors I have worked with previously.

I knew the process would be difficult, but I was excited and prepared to have fun. For the initial auditions I prepared by looking up advice on casting child actors, and I received some useful wisdom from Bo Burnam, director of *Eighth Grade*. In an interview, he related that during his casting process he walked out and brought each kid into the audition room. His goal was to ensure they were as comfortable and free to be themselves as possible (Prokopy).

Once I was in the audition room with these kids, I could see the challenge their lack of comfort posed. It was important for me to look past their nerves and search for any evidence of skill. My number one factor, however, was their natural presence.

Based on those two factors, I hosted callbacks. Improv was an important part of my callback process. I wasn’t looking for parrots, but rather for ingenious actors who were free to make bold choices. Having all the kids together and playing several warm-up games gave them confidence. Following warm-ups, I put them into groups and tested their chemistry with one another through improvisational scenes.

The entire casting process spanned a month long, but it was a worthwhile experience. I was rewarded with an excellent cast and good working relationships with each one of them.
C. Directing

My focus as a director is to ensure I develop a concrete understanding of the story being told, and then, along with my creative team, I seek to discover a vision for the film. Once a vision is determined, I then harbor it in my mind and continue to guide every aspect of the film toward that vision.

During the development phase I was able to do much of my preparation as a director. Once casting was completed and production was nearing, my job as a director truly awoke. Storyboarding, rehearsals, and production meetings were all a part of my preparation. I will discuss storyboarding in a few short pages under cinematography, but I will elaborate on rehearsals and production meetings now.

Rehearsals were absolutely essential in the making of The Piñata. Thankfully, the location being my home made the rehearsal process convenient and productive. Blocking could be executed during our three days of rehearsals, and this sped up our on-set process immensely.

The rehearsal period also allowed me to form relationships with each of my nine cast members. There were many different personalities to handle, and I was glad I got a foretaste before diving into production. One especially productive rehearsal I had was with the three girl leads. My actors, Gracie Silva, Burgan Luther, and Zaila Matthews, needed to play believable friends. So, I spent one evening with them playing get-to-know-you games, theater games, and analyzing what each of their characters think about the other. This warmed them up to one another and gave me vital information about how each of them thinks.
In the same way rehearsals helped me communicate my vision to the actors and develop relationships with them, production meetings helped me communicate with my crew. I set up weekly meetings with my art team and production team in order to assess our progress. These meetings imprinted the vision of the film into their minds and empowered them to provide ideas. I would bring a list of my ideas, as well as a list of problems that needed solving. Before every meeting I had to fight anxiety about not having answers to certain questions. I reminded myself my job is to communicate and find answers; I do not need to have all the answers.

D. Cinematography

My intent for the look of this film was to emulate the cinema verité style by using a handheld camera for nearly the entire film. The use of iPhone footage grounded this as a choice for me. I wanted there to be a certain feeling develop in the audience: the sensation of being a fly on the wall.

With the iPhone footage, in particular, my goal was to call the audience to “think of [their] lives through the lens of a camera”, as I stated in my thesis prospectus. It brings a new perspective to a familiar video format. Do the stories people capture in their everyday lives add up to tell a singular, meaningful story? The portions of the film captured on iPhone are strategically placed to capture essential points in Mia’s journey.

I wanted the iPhone footage to be distinct from other shots and familiar to my audience, so I chose to shoot vertically. I also planned to allow the footage to shift in exposure values and composition. The goal was to let it be realistically messy.
My cinematographer, Ryne Anderson, and I spent a few days storyboarding. We did photo storyboards as well as video storyboards. He suggested coverage, and I provided the overall purpose and function of each scene. I determined blocking during this process, which then aided me during rehearsals. We finalized our plans by sketching out overhead diagrams during these sessions.

*The Piñata* is the first film I have made where I explored options outside of what UNO has to offer for equipment. Once I determined I wanted to shoot handheld, I knew we would need a shoulder rig and wireless follow focus. I also determined I wanted to shoot with Zeiss lenses from Panavision. Lastly, I decided I would prefer to shoot in 6K to maintain flexibility in the frame in post-production. Shooting with kid actors has its challenges, and getting good coverage is one of them.

*Eighth Grade,* *Sing Street,* and *Princess Cyd* were three films I gathered visual inspiration from. In *Eighth Grade* I noticed how they stayed with Kayla as much as possible, even when her dad was talking to her. It was an excellent way to illustrate how her world is focused solely on herself at her age. It also helps us to get to know her very well.

*Sing Street* offered excellent examples of framing large ensemble shots. My film has many characters and being sure to capture and track everyone’s necessary reactions was important. Lastly, *Princess Cyd* had a warm, romanticized look for a very realistic drama which I found intriguing. The soft light and natural beauty of the suburban environment shone through. All of these were concepts I had going into production.
E. Production Design

The process of developing the production design for this film was much like throwing a party—cake, decorations, piñatas! We had to decide on the theme of the party, and I chose to make it a Mexican fiesta-themed party, as to not distract from the rest of the story. I had considered the idea of making the piñata a specific type of piñata, but I found adding other characteristics to it muddled its symbolic meaning. The original star-shaped piñata was the least distracting from the narrative.

The piñatas were my greatest concern for production design. Having homemade-looking piñatas was essential. I personally looked for the first piñata on screen, the giant princess. I went to Latin markets and looked through their selections of piñatas to find it, and my production designer, Laura Duval, doctored it up. She doctored the others as well to make store-bought piñatas look homemade.

My philosophy for the design of the film was to focus on the details of the home. I wanted to be able to see the life of the family in house. Details, such as having toothpaste smears on the bathroom mirror, having a door decoration with the first letter of their last name, and changing the color of the rope during the piñata sequence, were essential. Luckily, much of the house was already set with useful objects. Mia and Sofia’s room already contained the majority of the production design needed. Touch-ups were the only thing needed.

F. Sound

Jonah Carmena, my sound mixer, was a great resource on this film. He works professionally now as a sound mixer, and along with having his own eight-track mixer, boom,
and a set of wireless mics, he also works at Sound Hard, a local sound rental shop. He was able to get us quotes and deals on wireless mics and walkies.

I spoke with Jonah and my post-sound designer, Aidan Dykes, about the element of sound design in pre-production so we could get any necessary elements for it on set. We planned ahead to record several “walla” tracks of party-goers and children speaking.

G. Budget

$8,800 is the total budget of The Piñata. The budget was determined by the Robert E. Nims scholarship I received over the summer. I felt no other funds would be necessary to produce a film of excellent quality with the resources I had available. The scope of the story is simple and centralized to a single location that my parents own. I also had access to excellent talent, both on and off screen, who did not need to receive compensation.

The main departments that received funding were post-production, camera, craft services, hair and make-up, and production design. This is the first film in which I spent a significant amount on post-production. $2,255 went to hard drives and post-production sound design. I allocated $1,385 to equipment rentals, and I paid my director of photography $500. $1,380 went to catering and crafty, $520 went to production design. Hair and make-up tend to be departments that I must extend beyond my range of personal connections, and I did pay hair and make-up artists $100 per day.
IV. Production

Production was the most enjoyable part of *The Piñata* experience for me. It had its challenges, but the process of collaborating and trouble-shooting with one another helped to overcome any problem we faced. Because my first assistant director, Nick Manning, and I had prepared the schedule well ahead of time, there were minimal issues. We were limited on time due to fewer working hours with the child actors and cast conflicts, but thankfully the pieces fell together.

All of the pre-production preparations came together as we neared the shoot. However, there were a few last-minute issues to take care of the night before. I had a change of heart about some of the costume pieces we had previously chosen, and I sent my costume designer out to find other options and take them to my actress’s house to try them on. Ryne and I also spent time fixing the camera settings on the RED camera the night before.

A. Weekend One

The amazing thing about shooting at your house is all you must do at the start of the day is wake up and walk downstairs to be on set. My neighbor added to this convenience by opening her home for us to use as base camp. The ample space we had to set-up was a key factor in the production running smoothly. Crew and cast reported to base camp each morning where there was a spread of hot breakfast items arranged by my mother and my neighbor. Starting each day with a well-fed crew was incredibly beneficial, and my mother did an impeccable job managing craft services. She not only cooked food but coordinated with my neighbor and other family friends for food and meal donations.
Call time on Day One was 9:00 AM for crew. I scheduled the small bathroom scenes first so we could ease into production, which proved wise. I called Gracie Silva, who plays Mia, as well as Anna Watt, who plays Daniela, for 10:00 AM. We decided to always call the crew an hour before talent because it was important we were ready to shoot as soon as talent was done with hair and make-up. Our time with our child actors was precious, especially due to Gracie’s tight schedule the first weekend.

While we were shooting the simple bathroom set-ups, my art team used the hours to decorate the front yard. My other actors arrived for a 1:00 PM call and were ready for shooting before we completed the bathroom scenes. We broke for lunch at 2:00 PM.

The final scene of the day was Jon’s arrival, which included several of my actors as well as extras. After having completed the two simple bathroom scenes, I was warmed up to direct a major dialogue scene. I had slightly re-written Jon’s arrival scene to include some fun birthday-candle sunglasses I found at Goodwill the day before. I felt these props would introduce Jon as a genuine, thoughtful, and quirky kid, adding character to their encounter.

One of the great challenges I came across with my young talent was helping them change up their line delivery. Often, they fixated on a single way of saying a line, and they would lose touch with their character in doing so. Peter Basden, the actor portraying Jon, tended to fall into this. After giving many variations of notes, I gave up on toning his portrayal down, and instead, realized his goofy presence is actually something that works for the character of Jon.

I experienced this dilemma with all my child actors at some point. I would try to intellectualize their characters, but what I found was, more often than not, I was thinking about it from the perspective of an adult. Once I recognized my need to let them be experts on their
characters, I began paying attention to how their natural presences shaped the characters. My main objective then was to make sure they were uninhibited and that the beats in each scene were actualized.

I also realized giving the kids multiple takes would help me to edit in the end. Therefore, on average I got about four takes of every set-up. I found this helped the kids to warm up to the scene and feel confident. It also helped in creating variations, because in between takes, I would give them one or two notes. I could build on it each take so they had time to process. These takes were also helpful in giving me time to process the scene, decide on what I wanted, and figure out how I wanted to communicate it.

Day Two of production began with a 7:00 AM call time for crew with an 8:00 AM call for the three female leads. Call time on days we were shooting outside was determined by the placement of the sun in the sky. Ryne and I had taken note of the shadowed areas around my house at different times of day the final week of pre-production in order to plan our shooting schedule accurately.

Our day started off a bit chaotically because we lost our make-up artist that morning to the flu. It was also the weekend before Halloween, and nearly every make-up artist was booked. My production was simple with these elements, though, and I opted to shoot the girls without make-up, rather than waste precious time with them.

We shot Cassidy and Bevin’s introduction scene first. When the girls arrived, I had a newly scripted scene for them. Burgan broke her ankle a week before shooting, which required me to change the script and blocking. My plan was to ensure Burgan would never have to walk in the film. This plan ended up working out, and it led to consolidated blocking in the scenes shot on
Day Two. Thankfully, all my actors were quick and accurate with their memorization and only needed a few minutes with the new scenes before committing it to memory.

On Day Three we had limited time with Gracie, so we began at 7:00 AM, and we were ready to go at 8:30 AM with our cast. We shot all of Gracie’s coverage first, and when she had to leave, we finished off the coverage of the parents.

The adult actors I had the pleasure of working with were just as professional as the children. They came prepared and were excited to be a part of the film. They were needier, however, and wanted more direction. I was grateful they communicated discomfort when they felt it, though. It reduced my task of having to discern it.

Turner Crumbley, who portrayed Erik, had to leave unexpectedly on Sunday, which forced me to revise the scene when Sofia tattle-tales. Again, the adversity proved a blessing, and it helped make things more straightforward. For this scene I also needed extras, and during lunch I knocked on several of my neighbors’ doors, asking if they would allow their children to participate.

At the end of the first weekend we were on time with everything. We then had a week in between to prep for the following weekend, which consisted of our most challenging scenes which involved child extras and more difficult content.

**B. Weekend Two**

I decided to start the second weekend with a simple scene, as well. We started with Mia’s solo scene in the bedroom when she puts her toys away. Although I thought it would be easy initially, it proved otherwise, due to lack of preparation. Scene four was the one scene we had not storyboarded or blocked ahead of time. I also had not mapped out in my own mind
how we would capture the actions in order to make successful jump cuts. We completed all of the coverage for it, but what was meant to be a simple scene ate up a significant amount of the day.

The one other scene we shot on the fourth day was scene eight, the make-over scene in the bedroom with the girls. I also underestimated the amount of content we had to cover in this scene. We divided it into three small scenes. The shooting for this scene went smoothly, but toward the end, we ran low on time. I was intending on getting coverage on the RED of Mia and Sofia fighting. However, we only managed to finish by the eight-hour deadline because we shot the last part as single takes on the iPhone.

This was the first emotionally intense scene we shot, and I did find it difficult to help my actors reach the intensity I wanted to see. In the moments before Cassidy calls Mia “bitch”, I wanted to see greater emotional depth in Mia’s character. I wanted to witness something, such as her disliking what she is seeing or, better yet, envisioning who she could be if she listens to Cassidy. What I got from the performance is an indecisive girl who is trying to escape pressure but is unable to do so. Although in the end I think it works, I believe I could have varied the notes I gave Gracie as she looked in the mirror. I also should have gotten better coverage of the mirror scene.

Day Five was our most elaborate shoot day. We shot the final climactic scene on this day beginning with a crew call of 7:00 AM. Thankfully, we had excellent weather for executing this scene. It was also very useful that we had timed out where the sun would be at different times of day, so we could plan the best shooting order for this scene.
This scene was also divided into three separate scenes, and we began with the section when Mia smears cake on Jon’s face. This was the most difficult part of the entire shoot for me. Looking back on it, I would do a few things differently. I would have clearly established Mia’s motivation for rubbing the cake on Jon. It’s possible we needed to see the idea enter her mind sooner. Because I could not capture the intensity of the moment in performance, better coverage was needed. It would have been good to go in tighter on her face, her eyes, and his cheek. Getting an insert of her cake on the plate would have been useful, as well. Unfortunately, time was tight due to the ever-moving sun and the need to cover the rest of the scene, and I was forced to move on.

We moved on to shooting the final part of the scene—Mia’s return to her friends. This part was rather simple, and we covered it quickly. Next, we captured all shots looking across the yard, from Mia and her friends to the piñata. For these shots we needed all the extras we called in.

My production team and I managed to gather a motley crew of children from neighbors, family members, and church friends. Their call time was set for noon, and while we finished shooting the first scene, my production team kept the children occupied at base camp where there was a backyard playground set. Once we called them to set, I felt the pressure of the ticking bomb. I managed to get all the takes needed from across the yard. Before we started the final set-up involving the child extras, Ryne had to leave.

Early on in pre-production, Ryne let me know he would only be able to stay for a half-day on Saturday, due to a wedding he was scheduled to shoot. In preparation for this, he arranged for another director of photography, Hunter Thomas, to fill in. He also created
detailed overhead diagrams of the camera and lighting set-ups. Because of this preparation, Hunter was able to jump in quickly and grab the final set-up before the child extras became too wild.

We filmed Mia’s refusal last. All the child extras went home, and we shot everything we needed in mediums and close-ups. For this section, I let my actors rehearse it a few times with the freedom to improvise. I wanted to make sure they felt open to new ideas and feelings. Gracie tended to hit the same note of anger every time, and Turner tended to use humor too quickly, without leaving a moment to let the weight of her words sink in. In the end, I was pleased with the performances they gave for this pivotal scene.

Finally, the last day of shooting arrived, beginning at 7:00 AM. The iPhone montage was the first order of the day. This sequence had pros and cons. We were shooting on an iPhone, so shooting was very organic. It was no different than participating in a real piñata party. I even allowed Anna Watt, who played Daniela, to operate the iPhone because I wanted it to look like a mother’s video of her child.

One time-consuming con was that in between set-ups we had to change out decorations, props, ropes, costumes, and piñatas. Another was that the Filmic Pro app on my phone began to go out about halfway through the shoot. It took us some time to solve the issue and to ensure we managed to get the coverage we needed.

Once we finished with the piñata montage sequence, we moved on to finish the final two scenes, as well as B-roll. These included the dare scene, as well as the “Happy Birthday” scene. Soon after we moved indoors, it began to rain. Thankfully, it hardly inhibited the production. It did get darker earlier, though, and the final few shots of B-roll were hard to get.
We framed the B-roll away from windows, and the grip and electric team shot lights through the hidden windows. The final martini shot was of me listening to my father playing the guitar.

Then it was a wrap on the production. I noticed on this production, every department took care of thoroughly wrapping their equipment. In the past, I micromanaged wrap because the students did not have enough experience to be dependable. It was good to know, that each day, everything was being inventoried and organized by my crew. Simple things like that helped me to free up mental energy and focus on my job.
V. Post-production

A. Editing

My goal for the post-production of *The Piñata* was to successfully work alongside a post-production team. I planned on editing my film, but I wanted to get away from the isolation of doing everything on my own. Filmmaking is a collaborative art, and throughout my years at UNO I have missed out on that process during post-production.

I started post-production by talking to Grant Lambert, who was one of my DITs on set, about coming on as a co-editor. I would not have time to work on the project over winter break, so I asked him if he would like to take on the responsibility of making a trial string out and a rough cut. He seemed eager to do it for the experience of editing someone else’s project.

I was willing to give Grant a chance as an editor, but I was not able to fully surrender my project over to his editing. Initially, I let him take the reins with the rough cut. I was not certain if this is a normal thing to do, or if the director usually has long discussions about the film with the editor beforehand. I felt it was important to give him a chance to show me what his ideas were first, before I began to direct them. However, I don’t think I factored in that he may not have the skill set that allows him to see a unique vision for the film. Grant appeared most focused on the basic essentials of piecing together the shots. He wanted clear direction and specific instructions. Communicating vision and critique to such a great depth with my editor was not something I considered originally.

After the rough cut, I began my role as an editor. I was falling behind the timeline I had set for myself, and the only way to make it up was to speed through the second and third cut. Every single day, one of us had the drive and was scheduled to work on it. I found it very helpful
having a co-editor in this regard. I gave him simple things to get done when I was not available to be making bigger changes.

The greatest challenge in editing *The Piñata* was the number of characters I needed to cover in each scene. I found it difficult to find a rhythm that was not too slow, nor too quick. I also needed to consolidate the reactions of each character. I had a plethora of good performances, so it was often deciding what to keep and what to leave out that elongated the process. Once I had completed my second cut, I could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Initially, I only received feedback from my major professor, James Roe. I included his notes and then showed the film to a few non-filmmaker friends. I gauged their response through probing questions. I wanted to understand what was communicated to them through the film and discover where any confusion may lie. After this round of feedback, I felt assured my overall story was working. I continued onto my third cut, which I then showed to my other committee members, Professor Laszlo Fulop and Erik Hansen. They gave me feedback, and I reached picture lock after including their suggestions.

**B. Color Correction and Grading**

My colorist for this film was Carl Johnson. I worked with him last year on my film, *The Art of Love*, and I greatly appreciated his skill and passion for color correction. Last year, I only had ten hours to work with him on color correction and grade combined. For this project I wanted to give myself ample time for him to work on it. I knew so much more could be possible if I gave him the necessary time.

Carl worked approximately five full work days on the project. Because we had more time, it allowed him to go into greater detail with the project. We were able to make creative decisions
about the film’s color and look. We were also able to invite Ryne Anderson to the conversation and get his opinions as the director of photography. I imagine the way this part of the process has gone is akin to how the editing process should go when a director collaborates with a skilled editor.

C. Music

After working on the music for The Art of Love last year, I knew I wanted to experience working with a composer again, rather than trying to source music. I find it very rewarding to work closely with composers. For this project my composer was Samuel Gonzales. I chose him because I knew he has a knowledge of musical theory, he performs as a musician on guitar, piano, and trumpet, and he composes electronic music, as well. Although he has never scored a film before, I felt with his resourcefulness we would be able to craft something suited to the film.

It was incredibly helpful having a composer who has a deep understanding of music theory. We would talk about the scene, and he could immediately play a variety of options. His main weakness was that he could not assist me with any understanding of what works and doesn’t work in a movie score. It is a great experience to work with novice film composers, but I would like to learn more about what a professional composer has to offer. It would be good to better understand how the process should work. In my case, we may be spending a lot of extra time reinventing the wheel.

It took me most of this semester to determine the style of music I wanted in the film. The first song I felt certain about was a pre-written song Sam had that he thought fit the feel of the film. We played it against the film, and it clicked at the part when Jon arrives. This discovery
opened my eyes to the idea of using more electronic music. At first, I thought the first half could be mainly on acoustic guitar and that the second half could branch into being more electronic. This would mirror Mia’s character arc as she transforms into a product of the digital age.

I tested our ideas for the music by putting some temporary recordings into the export files I showed to my professors, Laszlo and Erik. Both gave me helpful feedback. Laszlo suggested I reserve the use of music to spots where there is no conflict. Adding tense music can take away from the intensity of moment, instead of adding to it. This described why I felt the music in the makeover scene wasn’t working for me. I had it layered over Mia and Cassidy’s moment together, but when I shifted it to the back end of the scene when Bevin returns, the layer added a comment on Mia’s inner transformation.

The advice Erik gave was that the music in this film should not be too sweet. The imagery already takes that approach, and if you put sugar on sugar you are in danger of missing the rockiness of what Mia is going through. I took this nugget of advice, which I agreed with, and did my best to translate what that could look like for *The Piñata*. At first, I contemplated the genres of pop rock or rock. Most coming-of-age films utilize these styles. However, I did not see it as being the best choice for this unique story. When I came across the reggaeton genre in my research, I immediately felt more connected. It seemed to tie an undertone of darkness and longing with a fun, upbeat rhythm. Once I introduced this idea to my composer, it inspired him and the ideas that started coming out felt fresh. When I laid the temporary guitar track of the song against my cut, my test audience agreed with me that they could sense the wheels in her head spinning. Her mind is recognizing something, rather than resolving something.
The final thing we must work on is the song at the top of the film. Right now, I have a piece of music I sourced from a royalty-free website in its place. However, I would like the film to have a completely original score. Therefore, I will be continuing to collaborate with Sam in order to create a song in the style of mariachi.

D. Post-Sound

Post-sound design is something I had in mind early on. I wanted to give it proper attention because I feel it can greatly enhance the quality of the film. I spoke with a post-sound designer in November, but I was not able to lock him down for the deadline for my thesis. Therefore, Grant and I did the sound mixing.

We began by leveling the audio and taking out any tracks that were noisy or had excessive amounts of reverb. We then utilized the UNO sound library to add in background ambiences and sound effects. We also had walla recorded on-set to use for the party scenes.

Even though I think this is a good audio mix, I still look forward to going through it for a second pass with a professional sound designer. I plan on working with Aidan Dykes on it in late April. I want to see the difference it makes in quality and expand my knowledge of what the process of sound design can look like.

E. Screening Feedback

I completed two class screenings for The Piñata by showing it to Erik Hansen and Thomas Baumgardner’s introductory classes for screenwriting. It was a good experience, and even though the film was nearly complete, I was still able to receive some helpful feedback. It continues to astound me how much work goes into creating a short film and how the process can continue on until the filmmaker decides to call it finished.
Other than the helpful feedback, which included notes about the grandmother’s interaction with Mia, subtitles, the lack of music, and a confusing audio element, the screenings were helpful in checking in with an audience. I wanted to see how a group of people responded to the film as a whole.

I sat in on the first screening of the film for Erik’s class, and I was excited by the response. Overall, everyone understood what was going on in the film and what the main theme was about. Depending on the person, they may or may not have identified with my protagonist, but I found more audience members identified than not. Several people also commented that they felt the interactions and events were very realistic.

I did not sit in on the screening in Thomas’s class, but it appears the film had a different affect on his class. Based off the written feedback sheets, they all understood what was going on and grasped the main point of the story. However, they had conflicting opinions about the realistic aspect of the film. Many considered the content cliché and pointless. Several felt the characters were flat and performances stiff. Quite a few of them were preoccupied, wondering why Jon’s character was not more present in the film. For this audience, the ending was unsatisfying, and they considered the film poorly written.

After the screening, I did make changes based on the notes I received from the first screening. The second screening came too late for me to make any changes to this cut. Their feedback was also not as constructive as the feedback from the first showing. It’s helpful knowing the film’s weak points for future reference, but most of what they critiqued is set in stone already.
From this experience, I recognized the goals I outlined for *The Piñata* at the start have been accomplished. I wanted to direct an ensemble cast consisting of multiple child actors and based on the reactions from the screenings and other viewings, most have enjoyed their performances and felt they were well-cast. Some audience members have expressed their desire to see Mia stand up to her friends and hit the piñata. The disliked how it ended on such a bittersweet note. For me, these statements reinforce that I chose the right ending. Many of those who said they didn’t like it followed up by saying they understood Mia was simply coming to a moment of realization at the end. This was exactly the reaction and understanding I was hoping for from my audience. I set out to tell a realistic story that made the audience think and feel.

One thing I did not expect, that I noticed during the first screening, was laughter. Even though my film is not a comedy, I was glad some of the moments in the film naturally produce laughter. Middle school is a trying time for most, and the ridiculous antics of pre-teens are amusing when viewed from an outside perspective.

**F. Festivals**

I plan to submit *The Piñata* to film festivals once it is complete. I believe it has a lot of potential as a piece for festivals with its short length and unique content. I think it could fit into many niche categories. It is a female-driven story about children, and it contains a multicultural element. I think this may open doors to festivals that prefer to focus on specific things.

As with my film, *The Art of Love*, I feel my primary concern is being able to attend the festivals I get accepted to, in order to network. Therefore, I will be prioritizing film festivals in
the southern United States. I will target cities where I have family or friends I could stay with to save money.

However, because I have the funds available to me from the Robert E. Nims scholarship, I would like to try my hand at a few top-tier festivals. A few I have on my radar are Sundance, Cannes, Tribeca Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, the Palm Springs International ShortFest, and Slamdance.

I want to narrow down my many options based on proximity, festival focus, filmmaker perks, and prizes that can be won. If there is a possibility of getting a cash prize, then it may be a more worthwhile investment. Some festivals, such as the Aspen ShortsFest, even include transportation and lodging for their filmmakers. I want to ensure I am able to make the most of the festival experience.
VI. Conclusion

*The Piñata* has been the climax of my work here at UNO. All of my films from the start of my college career until now have built on one another. I have come to realize a distinct voice I have as a storyteller. Telling stories that explore the bittersweet moments of familial, suburban life has been a major through-line in my work. *The Piñata* fits into the same slice-of-life genre as my other films, but it is more personal and digs deeper than my previous work.

I can see my growth as a director in several areas throughout my work on this film. Working with an ensemble cast has been a goal for me, and I feel that I accomplished it in this film. I doubled the size of my cast from last year’s film, and I still felt connected to each of my actors. It was double the work but working with them excited me.

I feel my casting and directing choices were successful because when test audiences watch the film, they understand the characters. Interestingly, I find different people identify more with different characters, based on their own experiences and stage in life. We all view growing up from different perspectives. However, the main theme I want the audience to take with them is that growing up means deciding to be true to yourself.

I also feel I have grown in directing a crew. For the first few films I made, I had a hard time understanding what my job was as a director. This was mainly because I was wearing many hats and was overwhelmed. On each film I have learned how to delegate more of the work to others and entrust them with the vision of the film. With *The Piñata* I was finally able to delegate more of the post-production process, which I previously did entirely on my own. I believe the quality of my projects have gone up because I have begun to collaborate more effectively.
I have grown and experimented in all the ways I wanted to over the course of making *The Piñata*. It was an excellent project for me to take on as my thesis, and I am satisfied with the outcome. Just as my prior films led me to making *The Piñata*, I’m certain this project is a stepping stone to my next film.
Works Cited


Films Cited

Eighth Grade. Directed by Bo Burnham. 2018
Princess Cyd. Directed by Stephen Cone. 2017
Sing Street. Directed by John Carney. 2016
THE PIÑATA

Written by

Stevie Cavalier

Draft 8.4
EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

IPHONE FOOTAGE presents a HOMEMADE PRINCESS PIÑATA dangling serenely from the branch of an oak tree.

A YOUNG Sofia, 5, is whacking the piñata with all her strength as the crowd cheers for her.

ABUELA
Watch that bat, child!

ERIK
(laughing)
Okay, honey! Let’s let Mia have a chance at it.

Mia inches towards the piñata in her floor-length princess gown, and takes the bat. She takes a swing, and misses. She takes another and the piñata hits her.

DANIELA (O.S.)
Come on, birthday girl! Hit that piñata! Start this party!

ERIK, Mia’s father, late 30s, a white man whose good looks are being threatened by a growing belly, eases the piñata into a lower position, and--

SMACK!

Mia continues to whack the princess, squealing with joy as CANDY spews from its guts. CHILDREN escape from the grip of their PARENTS to mine for their treasures.

DANIELA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Mia! Look over here at mommy!

As Mia pulls the BLINDFOLD off and smiles at the camera the video cuts.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

IPHONE MONTAGE

An assortment of piñatas---
-a CAT,
-a RAINBOW
-a FLOWER
--a dog-- are pounded by Mia and Sofia with increasing confidence and skill. The last piñata lowered is a BUTTERFLY.

YOUNG BEVIN, 10, a short, scrappy girl cheers for Mia as she swings. Mia breaks the flower open with a single blow.

IPHONE MONTAGE ENDS

INT. DINING ROOM -- DAY

A mostly-finished HOMEMADE STAR-SHAPED PIÑATA rests on the dining room table beneath a canopy of colorful decorations. A “Happy 12th Birthday Mia” BANNER is hung up on the window beside bundles of BALLOONS.

MIA, a new 12 year-old on the threshold of adolescence, is sitting beside Abuela passing her the delicate pieces of TISSUE PAPER to attach to the piñata.

SOFTA, her 9 year-old sister, is sitting beside them watching the videos of the piñatas on the IPHONE and giggling. They are both wearing new, flowery sundresses.

ABUELA

Almost done.

Mia smiles.

Erik is organizing the PARTY FAVORS on a side table.

DANIELA (O.S.)
(from the kitchen)

Erik, can you set up musical chairs when you put the dog out?

ERIK

Yeah, I can, but where do you want me to put these? And why is there one blue and the rest pink?

DANIELA, late 30s, peeks her head into the room with an ICING TOOL in her icing-covered hands. Her hair is in disarray from keeping everything else in order for the day.

DANIELA

The blue one is for Jon. You can just keep it to the right side--

ERIK

(giving Mia a squeeze)

Jon? So, mama let you invite him after all?
Mia accepts her dad’s hug.

MIA
She said it’s okay since he’s our neighbor.

ERIK
Mhmm. I see.
(for Daniela)
Glad you made that decision without me!

Erik exits.

SOFIA
(scrolling through the phone)
I can’t find the monkey one.

MIA
Here, let me see it. It’s further back.

Mia reaches for the phone, and a text message ALERT goes off. Mia pulls it to herself.

SOFIA
Hey. Give it back.

MIA
No, it's my friends.

SOFIA
I don’t care, I had it first. It’s mom’s phone.

MIA
Well, it’s my birthday.

SOFIA
You can’t just take the phone every time your friends say, “Hi!”

The text message says: “From Bevin: On the way! We’ll be there soon!”

Mia gets up and starts to leave the room.

DANIELA (O.S.)
Mia, let your sister finish using my phone.
Mia begrudgingly hands Sofia the phone, and Sofia smiles. Abuela looks at Mia and places her finger over her mouth. She passes Mia her own personal PHONE. Mia mouths “Thank you”.

**ABUELA**
Me vas a dejar sola pa’ terminar
esto con esta mirruña?

**MIA**
Por favor? Ya regreso (alt. Ahorita
regreso?)

**ABUELA**
Esta bien, ve. No te preocupes mi
mariposita.

Mia smiles and runs off.

4. **INT. MIA AND SOFIA’S BEDROOM – DAY**

A single TEDDY BEAR lies under the bed looking out with sad eyes. It is joined by a herd of other STUFFED ANIMALS as Mia stuffs them under the bed.

She then proceeds to flip her PRINCESS-PRINTED COMFORTER to its plain side.

She jumps off and runs to the mirror and takes the bow out of her hair.

Mia runs over to her sister’s DOLLS, and starts putting them in containers when--

The DOORBELL RINGS.

5. **EXT. FRONT WALKWAY – DAY**

Mia opens the front door, revealing BEVIN, a tomboy of 12, hair straightened, and wearing a graphic tee and skater shoes. She has a bright smile on her face and a GIFTF BAG in her hand.

**MIA**
Bevin!

**BEVIN**
Hey birthday girl!

They give each other a big hug.

**MIA**
Your shirt is great!
BEVIN
Got it from Banana Republic, you know. You're dress is cool, too. I see you got the Fanta out.

Cassidy, 13, is standing outside an SUV talking to her MOTHER through the driver's window. She is wearing the latest tween fashion which is complemented by her pin-straight hair.

CASSIDY
Okay, I'll do them when I get home!
Just let me go.

MOTHER
Okay, I love you.

CASSIDY
Yeah, love you, too.

MIA
Cassidy!

The SUV pulls out, and Mia wraps Cassidy in a hug. Bevin jumps in for a group hug and squeezes, making them all laugh.

CASSIDY
Happy birthday, Mia!

After a moment, they break apart and look at each other. Cassidy raises up the GIFT BAG she brought.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Where should I put this?

MIA
Oh, we can just go inside.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Abuela is walking around the table placing DECORATIONS, while Mia, Cassidy, and Bevin are looking around.

CASSIDY
Wow! Your family takes birthdays seriously.

MIA
Ha, yeah. We kind’ve do. I’ve had a birthday party ever since I can remember.

Sofia enters with bags of candy and sees the newcomers.
SOFIA
Hi, Bevin!

BEVIN
Hey!

SOFIA
(To Cassidy)
And who are you?

MIA
Please stop being weird.

CASSIDY
I’m Cassidy.

SOFIA
Oh, do y’all want to help stuff the piñata?

CASSIDY
Oh, it’s so cute. Are you good at hitting it?

SOFIA
Oh, well, yeah. But’s Mia’s really good at it!

CASSIDY
Oh, you still hit it?

MIA
Um, yeah. Sometimes.

Cassidy puts her hand over her mouth to cover her smirk. Bevin catches it. Abuela listens as they talk about the piñata.

BEVIN
Yeah, maybe we could just skip that part this year? Let the little kids hit it.

Sofia takes a handful of candy and stuffs it into her pockets and mouth. Mia moves the bag of candy away from her.

MIA
Yeah, that’s what I was thinking, too.
Sofia steals the candy back. Abuela takes a few pieces of candy and hands them to Bevin.

BEVIN
Gracias.

Cassidy flips her hair and looks around.

CASSIDY
I’m so glad I got to come today! I could probably help you with your make-up, if you want. My aunt’s been teaching me.

MIA
Oh, yeah?

BEVIN
I thought you don’t wear make-up?

MIA
I actually just got some.

CASSIDY
Great! I hope you have the good stuff. My aunt gives me her samples all the time. Where do you want to go?

MIA
We can go upstairs.

Bevin leads the way, and Cassidy follows. Abuela catches Mia before she walks away, too.

ABUELA
Your friends like the piñata?

MIA
They love it, Granny.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - DAY

Mia opens the mirror cabinet in her bathroom and takes out a MAKE-UP BAG. She hides it behind her back, and stealthily exits the bathroom.

INT. MIA AND SOFIA’S BEDROOM - DAY
IPHONE FOOTAGE

Mia is sitting in a chair while Cassidy applies the MAKE-UP to her face. Bevin is filming herself, as well as Cassidy and Mia on her PHONE.

MIA
You’re not putting too much, are you?

CASSIDY
Relax. Stop blinking.

BEVIN
(like a talk show host)
And we have once again turned a peasant into princess, a drab into a fab, a girl into a wo-man! Thank you for watching, and hit subscribe if you would like to see more of EXTREME MAKE-OVERS, birthday edition.

IPHONE FOOTAGE ENDS

CASSIDY
Bevin, you crack me up.

BEVIN
That’s what I’m here for.

A text message dings on Abuela’s phone, and Bevin checks it.

BEVIN (CONT’D)
Jon’s on his way.

CASSIDY
(to Mia)
Oh, is he your boyfriend now?

MIA
No. He’s just a neighbor.

CASSIDY
Mhmm. I think you like him.

Mia holds her poker face.

MIA
I really don’t.
CASSIDY
I don’t know. What do you think Bevin?

BEVIN
Yeah, she does.

MIA
Okay, maybe a little.

CASSIDY
I knew it! Good thing I did your make-up. We should probably change your outfit.

MIA
I don’t know. My mom bought me this dress, and she’s gonna freak out if I don’t wear it.

CASSIDY
(to Bevin)
Can you go get my bag from downstairs?
(to Mia)
I have the cutest outfit in my bag. Jon’ll love it.

Bevin runs out, leaving Cassidy and Mia. Mia inspects herself in the mirror.

MIA
I’m really not too sure about this.

CASSIDY
Don’t worry so much. You’ve got to grow up some time. You know, be your own person.

Mia sighs and takes a look again.

MIA
I know.

Cassidy leans back against the wall and scrolls through her phone.

CASSIDY
You’re just too nice.

MIA
I am not.
CASSIDY
Lol. Come on, bitch.

Mia freezes. Bevin’s heard running up the stairs.

CASSIDY (CONT’D)
You can’t even say it back.

Bevin enters with the BAG interrupting them.

BEVIN
Here you go. We ready for make-over part two?

Cassidy opens the bag and pulls out a HALTERED JUMPSUIT handing it to Mia.

Bevin starts up her video. Sofia’s footsteps are heard coming up the stairs.

BEVIN (CONT’D)
And we’re back! For a second edition of Extreme Make-over, birthday edition. My good friend, Mia here, is gonna put on a new outfit, and we are gonna give...

Sofia walks in and spots the make-up.

IPHONE FOOTAGE

SOFIA
MAKE-UP!

Mia tries to cover it up.

MIA
NO! Get out of here, Sofia!

SOFIA
It’s my room, too. You can’t tell me to get out.

Sofia moves past her and starts playing with the make-up. Mia rips it out of Sofia’s hands.

MIA
You’re such a stupid and annoying baby. Just get out!

Sofia stares coldly at her sister.
SOFIA
Fine.

Sofia storms out, and Mia looks at Bevin.

MIA
Can you stop videoing me?

Mia walks into the bathroom, and Bevin turns the phone around to herself.

BEVIN
Ooo, fiesty.

IPHONE FOOTAGE ENDS

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

AUNT NADIA, early 30’s, is holding a PARTY DISH while Daniela takes a CASSEROLE dish out of the oven. FAMILY FRIENDS and their CHILDREN mill about enjoying food and conversation.

AUNT NADIA
Where’s the birthday girl?!

DANIELA
Upstairs with her friends, I think.

Sofia runs down the stairs and past people until she reaches her mom.

Erik walks past and signals to Nadia to go help him hang the piñata.

SOFIA
Mom! Mia took your make-up and was being mean to me.

DANIELA
What, baby?

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Mia quickly buttons the last button on the jumpsuit that is too big on her. Her face is hidden in make-up, and Mia contemplates it in the mirror. There’s a knock on the bathroom door. Mia jumps.

MIA
Someone’s in here.
DANIELA (O.S.)
Mia, it's mom. Open this door.

MIA
(clearly not)
I'm on the toilet. I can't.

DANIELA (O.S.)
Well, your party is downstairs. So, you need to come downstairs.

MIA
(sassy)
Yeah, I know. I'm coming.

INT. MIA AND SOFIA'S BEDROOM - DAY
Bevin and Cassidy are sitting on Mia's bed. Cassidy is playing with a male and female BARBIE DOLL while Bevin is going through the clips in her phone. They hear Daniela off-screen, and look at each other.

CASSIDY
I really think you should dare her to do it. She's your best friend.

BEVIN
Mm, I don't know about that. She's always looking up to you.

CASSIDY
Really?

Bevin gives her the "look".

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Well, then we should dare her.

Bevin sighs and looks out the window.

BEVIN
What if she doesn't even like Jon that much?

CASSIDY
I mean she can do it on the cheek if she wants to. We won't specify. God, I can't believe she still keeps these dolls.

Bevin sees Jon through the blinds.
12

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Bevin and Cassidy run out of the bedroom past the bathroom.

CASSIDY (O.S.)
Come on, Mia! Jon’s here!

Mia flushes the toilet for effect and bolts out of the bathroom, past her mom.

DANIELA
What are you wearing?!

13

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

FAMILY FRIENDS are scattered about as a BICYCLE brakes on the sidewalk outside of Mia’s house.

JON, 12, a pre-pubescent boy, wearing cargo shorts, a worn-out t-shirt, and a fake SHARK-TOOTH NECKLACE, drops his bike to the ground. Heading to the front door, he waves to Erik and Nadia who are stringing up the piñata on a nearby tree.

JON
Hi, Mr. Erik! Nice piñata.

He approaches the doorstep, but the door swings open and out comes Mia with Cassidy and Bevin right behind her.

MIA
Hi, Jon!

Cassidy signals to Mia, prompting her to flirt. Mia is confused at first, but then catches on.

JON
Happy Birthday, Mia!

MIA
(flirting)
I’m so glad you came. It means a lot to me.

JON
No problem. This is for you.

Jon places the CARD he brought in her open hand, and Mia moves to let him in.
MIA
Oh, that’s so nice of you.

Jon shuffles towards the door, and Mia checks her outfit for a split second when he’s not looking.

Daniela swings open the door and announces:

DANIELA
Cake time!

JON
Perfect timing!

Mia turns to face her mom, and Daniela sees her face is made-up. Mia is frozen in the headlights.

Her friends head inside.

DANIELA
(to Mia)
What do you think you’re doing?

MIA
It’s my birthday. I just wanted to get dressed up.

Daniela’s expression softens a bit, and she goes in for a hug.

DANIELA
You don’t have to do all this, mija.

Mia pulls away from the hug.

AUNT NADIA interrupts when she sees Mia.

AUNT NADIA
There you are. We’ve missed you.
Oh, you’re getting so grown up!

Aunt Nadia gives Mia a squeeze, forcing Daniela to release Mia from the conversation. They move inside leaving Daniela to follow.

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Mia enters the room full of friends and family swarming about. She connects with Cassidy and Bevin and they pull her off to the side.
CASSIDY
(whispering)
We came up with a birthday dare for you! Tell her, Bevin.

Cassidy nudges Bevin.

BEVIN
(signaling for Mia to come closer)
We dare you to kiss Jon.

Mia’s eyes grow wide and she pulls back.

Cassidy and Bevin run ahead of Mia, towards the cake table.

EVERYONE (PRE-LAP)
(sung)
Happy birthday, to you. Happy birthday...

15

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The lights are off and everyone is standing around Mia singing. Her face is lit up by the candles. Beside her is Sofia and Jon. Cassidy is giggling next to Bevin as she eyes Mia and Jon.

Mia blows out the candles.

16

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

The star piñata is yanked upwards by the ROPE.

Excitement is in the air as Daniela passes out BAGS for the kids. A LITTLE KID is at bat.

DANIELA
Line up! Shortest to tallest!

Mia, Bevin, Cassidy, and Jon are sitting in the grass, eating their SLICES of cake. Bevin and Jon are dominating the conversation, while Mia listens. Cassidy sighs and scrolls through her phone.

BEVIN
That time I snapped you was crazy though.
JON
Yeah, I couldn’t believe I got killed off by you. I thought you were on my team.

Cassidy pulls up the camera on her phone and holds it up to frame Jon and Mia.

BEVIN
I’m a mastermind. What can I say?

JON
Well, you can only say that when you’ve actually been undefeated.

CASSIDY
(to Jon and Mia)
Would you two move closer? I’m trying to take a picture.

JON
Oh, sure.

Jon scoots closer to Mia and smiles at the camera. Mia leans in close.

CASSIDY
Come on. Closer than that.

Jon scoots closer. Mia side-glances at him. She inches a bit closer. Could this be it?

ERIK (O.S.)
Mia!

But then Mia’s knee-jerk reaction is to swipe her finger through the cake icing on her plate and wipe it on his cheek.

Jon turns to Mia surprised.

Cassidy palms her forehead. She looks at Bevin who laughs.

Then to Mia’s surprise Jon takes three fingers of icing and smears it on her cheek. Jon laughs while Mia stays quiet.

ERIK (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Mia!

Mia shoots a look at her dad. Erik motions for her to come over.
ERIK (CONT’D)
It’s the birthday girl’s turn! Come on, you guys. Y’all can go right after her!

Jon jumps up ready to go. He looks to Mia before leaving though. Mia looks to Cassidy.

Cassidy smirks, and shakes her head. She doesn’t budge.

CASSIDY
You can go if you want. Just keep hitting it every year.

Mia looks at Bevin.

BEVIN
I’m staying here.

Mia looks to Jon, but he inches to sit back down.

ERIK (O.S.)
Come on, Mia!

Mia gives in and walks towards the piñata.

Erik hands Mia the BAT and ushers her under the tree. He prepares the BLINDFOLD. Abuela and Daniela are watching on the side. Abuela’s smile is as bright as the moon.

ERIK (CONT’D)
You’re friends don’t want to hit it?

Mia stops the blindfold before it goes on.

MIA
No. I don’t want to hit the piñata.

She hands her dad the bat back. Erik stoops down to her level to look at her face to face.

ERIK
But my little girl is the best at whacking the piñata.

MIA
Can you please not play the whole daddy’s girl card? I don’t want to hit the stupid piñata, and that’s it.

Erik’s breath is cut short, and he stands up.
Daniela tries to go in for the kill, but Erik signals her to let it go.

Mia looks at Abuela. Her smile has faded, but her eyes speak understanding.

As she looks around, Mia finds herself surrounded by people looking at her. They’ve grown silent.

Sofia is standing beside her COUSIN, and her voice is heard above the murmur.

SOFIA
(to cousin)
She’s being a big baby today about everything.

ERIK
Okay, who’s next?

SOFIA
Me! Ooo, me!

Erik walks past Mia, and hands the bat to Sofia. The party proceeds.

Mia walks back to Cassidy, Bevin and Jon. Bevin is filming Mia as she walks up.

MIA
God, my dad can be so annoying. So, what’d I miss?

BEVIN
And here she is! The birthday girl that didn’t want to hit her piñata.

Mia looks to Cassidy who answers her with a dismissing shrug.

CASSIDY
Why didn’t you hit it?

Mia shrinks down until she’s sitting.

BEVIN
What would you like to say to your audience, Mia?

IPHONE FOOTAGE

Mia looks at the camera.
MIA
Can you stop filming me?

Her hand pushes the phone down.

IPHONE FOOTAGE ENDS

The piñata CRACKS.

The crowd CHEERS for Sofia as she finishes her swing.

In the grass, Cassidy, Bevin, and Jon are looking at a video on Cassidy’s phone.

Mia is beside them, but her gaze is fixed on Sofia, standing victoriously, across the yard, as the children gather their spoils.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END
Appendix B: Crew List

**Writer/Director:** Stevie Cavalier  
**Producers:** Stevie Cavalier, Fabiola Andrade, Emily Pouliard

**1st AD:** Nick Manning  
**2nd AD:** Emily Mouton  
**PA:** Ian Glotfelty

**Cinematographer:** Ryne Anderson  
**1st AC:** Amy Laws  
**2nd AC:** Dustin Foret  
**Still Photographer:** Ian DeBautte  
**Behind-the-scenes:** Clint Sharp

**Gaffer:** Duane Prefume  
**Key Grip:** Andrew Madden  
**Grip:** William Inderkummen  
**Grip:** Joshua Joseph  
**Grip:** Griffith Goransson

**Sound Mixer:** Jonah Carmena  
**Boom Operator:** Johnny Clement  
**Sound Utility:** Scarlett Scalise

**Script Supervisor:** Anastasia Bennett

**Production Designer:** Laura Duval  
**Costume Designer:** Emelie Morrison  
**Art Director:** Catalina Correa  
**Property Master:** Madeline Chenevert  
**Art Assistant:** Reed Parker

**Hair & Makeup:** Adrienne Lopez, Rose Salvaggio, Jeanette Renee

**Craft Services:** Wanda Cavalier, Braxton Cavalier, and Norine Villarrubia

**Editors:** Stevie Cavalier, Grant Lambert  
**Colorist:** Carl Johnson  
**Composer:** Samuel Gonzales  
**Recording Artist:** Francisco Rios
Appendix C: Cast List

Mia: Gracie Silva
Cassidy: Burgan Luther
Bevin: Zaila Matthews
Sofia: Maddison Harrington
Jon: Peter Basden
Erik: Turner Crumbley
Daniela: Anna Watt
Abuela: Estela Colocho
Aunt Nadia: Lizeth Hutchings
Cassidy’s Mom: Wanda Cavalier
Young Mia: Kyra Kulcher
Sofia’s Friend: Adalin Brown
Appendix D: Final Budget

UNO FTA STUDENT FILM BUDGET

Project Title: The Pinata
Director: Stevie Cavalier
Script Date: 10/11/18
Course/Semester: Fall 2018

Budget Prepared by: Stevie Cavalier
Budget Date: 10/11/2018
Shoot Dates:

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UNO FTCA, MM Budgeting
Appendix E: Call Sheets

**The Piñata**

**Director:** Steven Carolan  
**Producer:** Emily Paulizzi  
**ASD:** Nicka Manning  
**AD:** Emily Neumann

**CREW CALL**  
**SHOOTING CALL**

**LOCATIONS:**
- LUNCH: 9:00 AM  
- CRAFT SERVICES: 10:00 AM  
- SUNRISE: 6:00 AM  
- SUNSET: 8:00 PM  
- WEATHER: 70% Rain  
- EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL: 8:00 AM  
- EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL: 8:00 PM  
- EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL: 10:00 PM  
- EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL: 10:30 PM  
- EAST JEFFERSON GENERAL HOSPITAL: 11:00 PM

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**# NAME | CHARACTER | STATUS | CALL | SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

| 1 | Gracie Healy | Miss | SW | 10:00 AM  
| 2 | Madison Harrington | Sofia | HOLD  
| 3 | Zula Mahone | Bevin | 10:00 AM  
| 4 | Bogdan Luft | Cassidy | 10:00 AM  
| 5 | Peter Beales | Jim | 10:00 AM  
| 6 | Turner Cundley | Erik | 10:00 AM  
| 7 | Anna White | Daniels | 10:00 AM  
| 8 | Katee Collette | Abuela | HOLD  
| 9 | Lineth Harkings | Aunt Naria | 10:00 AM  
| 10 | Kyrn Koffer | Young Man | HOLD  
| 11 | Scarlett | Young Sofia | HOLD  
| 12 | Wendy Carolan | Cassidy's Mother | HOLD  

**ADVANCED SCHEDULE - 10/20/18**

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**NOTES:**
- Call times may vary.  
- Questions? Call Nicka Manning (985) 732-9600  
- For Emily Neumann (985) 718-6472

**TOTAL PAGES:** 2/3
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FUEL/PS/ TRAVEL
**The Piñata**

**CREW CALL**
- 7:00 AM
- 8:30 AM

**DIRECTOR**
- Stevie Cavalier

**PRODUCER**
- Emily Mouton
- Fabiola Andrade

**1ST AD**
- Nick Manning

**2ND AD**
- Emily Mouton

**LUNCH**
- 12:00 PM

**CRAFT SERVICES**
- Wanda Cavalier

**WEATHER**
- SUNRISE: 7:18 AM
- SUNSET: 6:18 PM
- TEMPERATURE: 79°F
- HUMIDITY: 50.5%
- PRECIP.: 0%

*Note 1: Individual call times may vary.*
*Note 2: Questions? Call Nick Manning (985) 773-8609 or Emily Mouton (985) 776-6472*

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**LOCATION**
- Report to Basecamp: 4608 Schoeest St, Metairie, LA 70003
- Shooting Location: 4615 Schoeest St, Metairie, LA 70003

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<td>Mia</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>8:05 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Madison Harrington</td>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>10:05 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Bevin</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>8:05 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jurgan Luthier</td>
<td>Cassidy</td>
<td>W</td>
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<td>8:05 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Cassidy's Mother</td>
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**TOTAL PAGES:** 3 5/8

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### ADVANCED SCHEDULE - 10/28/18

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<td>2</td>
<td>1 2, 6, 7, 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sofia talks to Mia</td>
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**LOCATION**
- 4615 Schoeest St, Metairie, LA 70003

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**TOTAL PAGES:** 3 5/8
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<td>Boom Operator</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Art Director</td>
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<td>Script Supervisor</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>Prop Master</td>
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<td>Costume Designer</td>
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<td>Costume Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIT</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>Sharna Newsom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Grip</td>
<td>HOLD</td>
<td>Crafty</td>
<td>HOLD</td>
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<td>Grip</td>
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<td>Pick-Up/Return</td>
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**The Piñata**

**Director:** Stevie Cavalier  
**Producer:** Emily Poulisard  
**IAT:** Nick Manning  
**2nd AD:** Emily Monzon

---

**CREW CALL**  
**7:00 AM SHOOTING CALL**  
**8:30 AM**

---

**WEATHER**  
**SUNRISE:** 6:31 AM  
**SUNSET:** 7:25 PM  
**Temp:** 86°  
**Humidity:** 65%  
**Precip:** 20%

---

**Nouest Hospital**  
East Jefferson General Hospital  
4000 Ho sınav Blvd, Metairie, LA 70006

---

**Note:** Individual call times may vary.  
**Note:** Questions? Call Nick Manning: (985) 773-8609  
or Emily Monzon: (985) 778-6472

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENES</th>
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<td>2, 7, 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mix缮s on Sofia</td>
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<td>6/8</td>
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**CHARACTER**  
**STATUS**  
**CALL**  
**MU/WED**  
**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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<td>8:05 AM</td>
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<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>8:05 AM</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Zulia Mathews</td>
<td>Bevin</td>
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<td>12:05 PM</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Jurgen Lutter</td>
<td>Cassidy</td>
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<td>Jon</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Turner Crumbley</td>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>W</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Amelia West</td>
<td>Dastila</td>
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<td>7:05 AM</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td>7:35 AM</td>
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<td>Scarlett</td>
<td>Young Sofia</td>
<td>HOLD</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Wanda Cavalier</td>
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**ADDITIONAL SCHEDULE**  
**11/02/08**

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<td>3/3/8</td>
<td>1, 3, 3, 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mix gets ready for her friends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cassidy does Mia's makeup</td>
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62
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<th><strong>CALL</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Emily Poulard</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>Boom Operator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Kholo Anandra</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>Utility</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st AD</td>
<td>Nick Manning</td>
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<td>ART</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd AD</td>
<td>Emily Shugan</td>
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<td>Production Designer</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Ian Glatchey</td>
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<td>Script Supervisor</td>
<td>Karanita Bennett</td>
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<td>Prop Master</td>
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<td><strong>CINEMATOGRAPHER</strong></td>
<td>Kyrn Anderson</td>
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<td>Art Assistant</td>
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<td>1st AC</td>
<td>Amy Loves</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
<td>WARDROBE</td>
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<td>2nd AC</td>
<td>Dustin Forest</td>
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<td>Clapper</td>
<td>Jerome Fauchez</td>
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<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
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PICKUP/TRAFFIC
### Production Information

**Director:** Stevie Cavalier  
**Producer:** Emily Poulis/I  
**AD:** Nick Manning  
**2nd AD:** Emily Mouton  

**Crew Call:** 7:00 AM  
**Shooting Call:** 8:30 AM

**LUNCH** 1:00 PM  
**CRAFT SERVICES** Wanda Cavalier  
**WEATHER:** 66° 1/2/18  
**Humidity:** 60%  

### Notes
- Individual call times may vary.  
- Questions? Call Nick Manning (985) 773-8609  
- or Emily Mouton (985) 798-6472

### Scenarios

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<th>Pages</th>
<th>Cast</th>
<th>Location</th>
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| 4     | INT. MIA AND SOFIA’S BEDROOM  
Mia gets ready for her interview  
Custody does Mia’s makeup | D | 2/8 | 1 | Report to Basecamp: 6603 Schoeust St, Metairie, LA 70003 |
| 5     | INT. MIA AND SOFIA’S BEDROOM  
Custody does Mia’s makeup  
Custody does Mia’s makeup  
Custody does Mia’s makeup | D | 4/8 | 1, 2, 3, 4 | Shooting Location: 6603 Schoeust St, Metairie, LA 70003 |

### Cast List

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<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Call</th>
<th>MU/WD</th>
<th>Special Instructions</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gracie Silva</td>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>8:05 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Madison Harrington</td>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>8:35 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Jurgen Luther</td>
<td>Cassidy</td>
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<td>8:35 AM</td>
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<td>Lizetch Hutchings</td>
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### Advance Schedule

**Scenes:** 11/22/08  
**Set and Description:**  
- EXT. FRONT YARD  
- Mia resists hitting the piñata  

**Location:** 6603 Schoeust St, Metairie, LA 70003
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<td>Jordan Carmona</td>
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<td>Emily Poulard</td>
<td>HOLD</td>
<td>Boom Operator</td>
<td>Ashley Clement</td>
<td>7:00 AM</td>
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<td>DIT</td>
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<td>Wendell Cavalier</td>
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**TRANSPORTATION NOTES**

**POC/SWAP TRAVEL**
**The Piñata**

**Crew Call:** 7:00 AM  
**Shooting Call:** 8:30 AM

| Location | Nearest Hospital  
|----------|------------------|
|         | East Jefferson General Hospital  
|         | 4000 Hoorna Blvd, Metairie, LA 70006 |

**Weather:**  
SUNRISE: 7:06 AM  
SUNSET: 6:12 PM  
WEATHER: 75°  
Humidity: 56%, Precip: 20%

**Lunch:** 1:30 PM  
**Craft Services:** Wanda Cavalier

---

**Scenes**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>D/N</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
<th>CAST</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<td>D</td>
<td>3, 5/8</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>Report to Basecamp: 6608 Schouest St, Metairie, LA 70003</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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**Advanced Schedule - 11/20/20**

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<th>PAGES</th>
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<th>LOCATION</th>
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<td>7/8</td>
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<td>4/8</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
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**Notes:**  
1. Individual call times may vary.  
2. Questions? Call Nick Manning (985) 773-8600  
   or Emily Mouton (985) 788-6472

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<td>Jon</td>
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<td>Kyle</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>9:05 AM</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Scarlet</td>
<td>Young Sofia</td>
<td>HOLD</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Wanda Cavalier</td>
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TRANSPORTATION NOTES: PICKUP/TRAVEL
**The Pinata**

**CREW CALL**
7:00 AM

**SHOOTING CALL**
8:30 AM

**LUNCH**
1:00 PM

**CRAFT SERVICES**
Wanda Cavalier

**WEATHER**

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<td>73%</td>
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**Note 1:** Individual call times may vary.
**Note 2:** Questions? Call Nick Manning (985) 773-8609 or Emily Mouton (985) 786-6472

---

### SCENES (Set and Description) | D/N | PAGES | CAST | LOCATION
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
1. EXT. FRONT YARD | D | 7/8 | 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11 | Phone footage of Young Mia hitting a piñata
2. EXT. FRONT YARD | D | 3/8 | 1, 2, 3, 10, 11 | Phone piñata montage
3. INT. DINING ROOM | D | 4/8 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 | Mia gets her birthday cake
4. INT. DINING ROOM | D | 1/8 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 | Mia blows out the candles on her cake
5. INT. DINING ROOM | D | 6/8 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 | [Blank]

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<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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### SCENES (Set and Description) | D/N | PAGES | CAST | LOCATION
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6033 Schoenest St, Metairie, LA 70003
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<td>Room Operator</td>
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<td>Madele Chervene 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>CAMERA</td>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
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<td>Kenneth Parker 10:00 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Crafty</td>
<td>Wanda Caster 10:00 AM</td>
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TRANSPORTATION NOTES:
Appendix F: Actor Release Forms

MINOR ACTOR RELEASE AND INFORMATION

Minors (anyone under eighteen years of age) may be used in student productions only under the following conditions:

- Approval of the Course Instructor or Thesis Supervisor
- Signed permission from a parent or legal guardian.
- Parent or legal guardian must have read, approved of, and initialed the production script.
- Parent, legal guardian or person approved by parent / legal guardian agrees to be present during filming.

I/We, the undersigned, am/are the parent/parents or guardian of the below named minor child. I/We, the undersigned, being of legal age, do hereby consent and grant to the Student Filmmaker named above, (hereinafter sometimes referred to as “you”), permission to photograph the below named minor child in connection with the student project tentatively entitled The Piñata (the “Picture”).

I hereby grant to the Student Filmmaker, the University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre, and their successors, assigns and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and records which you may make of his/her voice, including the right to substitute his/her voice for the voice of another person or persons, and the right to use his/her name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the Picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by him/her, in connection with the production and/or post production of the Picture.

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I/We, further agree and warrant that the below named minor child will not disaffirm or disavow said consent and permission on the grounds that he/she was a minor on the date of execution thereof or any similar grounds whatsoever, or endeavor to recover from you personally or through any guardian, any sums for participating in the Picture.

I hereby certify and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the below named minor child, and I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Grace Silva</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td>SON ☑ DAUGHTER ☑ STEP-SON ☐ STEP-DAUGHTER ☐</td>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Mia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER ☐ SISTER ☐ NEPHEW ☐ NIECE ☐ OTHER ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Silva</td>
<td>(Redacted)</td>
<td>(Redacted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1234 Main St, Anytown, USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardian on Location:</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey Johnson</td>
<td>(Redacted)</td>
<td>(Redacted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** MINORS ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO BE ON SET FOR A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS AS STATED IN THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD RULES OR BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, WHICHEVER IS MORE RESTRICTIVE.

**NOTE:** IF MINOR WILL MISS SCHOOL, STUDENT FILMMAKER MUST COMPLETE "MINOR ACTOR RELEASE FROM SCHOOL" FORM.

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: [Signature]

Date: 10/26/2018

Student Signature: [Signature]

Date: 10/26/2018
MINOR ACTOR RELEASE AND INFORMATION

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The Piñata

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I hereby certify and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the below named minor child, and I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Zelia Leigh Sope Matthews</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Bevin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONS</td>
<td>DAUGHTER ☑</td>
<td>STEP-SON ☐</td>
<td>STEP-DAUGHTER ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER ☐</td>
<td>SISTER ☐</td>
<td>NEPHEW ☐</td>
<td>NIECE ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
<th>Erin Leigh Tuminello</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>[Redacted]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardian on Location:</th>
<th>Erin Leigh Tuminello</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>[Redacted]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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[Signatures and dates]
MINOR ACTOR RELEASE AND INFORMATION

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**The Piñata**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Peter Basden</th>
<th>Age: 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON ☐ DAUGHTER ☐ STEP-SON ☐ STEP-DAUGHTER ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER ☐ SISTER ☐ NEPHEW ☐ NIECE ☐ OTHER ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Jon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
<th>Alice Basden</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>555-567-8901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardian on Location:</th>
<th>SAME</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: [Signature]

Date: 10/26/18

Student Signature: [Signature]

Date: 11/4/18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: Stevie Cavalier</th>
<th>Email:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course#: 0912</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title: The Piñata</td>
<td>Professor: James Roe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Burgan Luther</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON ☐ DAUGHTER ☒ STEP-SON ☐ STEP-DAUGHTER ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER ☐ SISTER ☐ NEPHEW ☐ NIECE ☐ OTHER ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Cassidy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Name of Parent or Legal Guardian: | Jodie | Email: | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|------|
| Address: | | Phone: | |
| Guardian on Location: | | Email: | |
| | | Phone: | |

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**PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNATURE**

**STUDENT SIGNATURE**

11/4/18

11/4/18
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I hereby certify and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the below named minor child, and I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Scarlet Kuchler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td>Grand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON □ DAUGHTER □ STEP-SON □ STEP-DAUGHTER □</td>
<td>YOUNG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER □ SISTER □ NEPHEW □ NIECE □ OTHER □</td>
<td>SOPHIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
<th>Brandi Kuchler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian on Location:</td>
<td>Brandi Kuchler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Brandi Kuchler  11/4/18
PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNATURE  DATE

Steve Caselier  11/4/18
STUDENT SIGNATURE  DATE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor:</th>
<th>Age: 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyra Kuchler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SON □ DAUGHTER ✓ STEP-SON □ STEP-DAUGHTER □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER □ SISTER □ NEPHEW □ NIECE □ OTHER □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Mia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandi Kuchler</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guardian on Location:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandi Kuchler</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone:</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Email:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Phone:</th>
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</table>

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Parent or Legal Guardian Signature: Brandi Kuchler
Date: 11/4/18

Student Signature: [Signature]
Date: 11/4/18
CAST RELEASE

I, the undersigned, hereby grant to UNO Student **Steve Cavalier** ("the Filmmaker") the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, silhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student project tentatively entitled **The Piñata** (the "Picture").

I hereby grant to the Filmmaker, the University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre, and their successors, assigns, and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and sound track recording and records which the Filmmaker may make of me or of my voice, and the right to use my name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by me, in connection with the production and/or postproduction of the Picture.

I agree that I will not assert or maintain against the Filmmaker, University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre or their successors, assigns and licensees, any claim, action, suit or demand of any kind or nature whatsoever, including but not limited to, those grounded upon invasion of privacy, rights of publicity or other civil rights, or for any reason in connection with your authorized use of my physical likeness and sound in the Picture as herein provided.

By my signature here I understand that I will, to the best of my ability, adhere to the schedule agreed to prior to the beginning of my engagement. Additionally, I agree, to the best of my ability, to make myself available should it be necessary, to rerecord my voice and/or record voice-overs and otherwise perform any necessary sound work required after the end of filming. Should I not be able to perform such sound work, I understand that the Filmmaker may enter into agreement with another person to rerecord my dialogue and/or record voice-overs and use this sound work over my picture or however they deem appropriate.

I further acknowledge that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named Student and not the UNO Department of Film & Theatre.

I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor Name: Anna Watt</th>
<th>Email:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character: Daniela</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTOR SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

11/3/2018
| Student: | Stevie Caufiel | Email: |
| Course#: | 6912 | Phone: |
| Project Title: | The Pinata | Professor: James Roe |
| Date: | |

**CAST RELEASE**

I, the undersigned, hereby grant to UNO Student Stevie Caufiel ("the Filmmaker") the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, silhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student project tentatively entitled The Pinata (the "Picture").

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I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

| Actor Name: | Lizeth Hutchins | Email: |
| Character: | Aunt Nadia | Phone: |
| Address: | |

**ACTOR SIGNATURE**

11-3-18

DATE
CAST RELEASE

I, the undersigned, hereby grant to UNO Student Stevie Cavalier ("the Filmmaker") the right to photograph me and to record my voice, performances, poses, actions, plays and appearances, and use my picture, photograph, silhouette and other reproductions of my physical likeness in connection with the student project tentatively entitled The Pinata (the "Picture").

I hereby grant to the Filmmaker, the University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre, and their successors, assigns, and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and sound track recording and records which the Filmmaker may make of me or of my voice, and the right to use my name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by me, in connection with the production and/or postproduction of the Picture.

I agree that I will not assert or maintain against the Filmmaker, University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre or their successors, assigns and licensees, any claim, action, suit or demand of any kind or nature whatsoever, including but not limited to, those grounded upon invasion of privacy, rights of publicity or other civil rights, or for any reason in connection with your authorized use of my physical likeness and sound in the Picture as herein provided.

By my signature here I understand that I will, to the best of my ability, adhere to the schedule agreed to prior to the beginning of my engagement. Additionally, I agree, to the best of my ability, to make myself available should it be necessary, to rerecord my voice and/or record voice-overs and otherwise perform any necessary sound work required after the end of filming. Should I not be able to perform such sound work, I understand that the Filmmaker may enter into agreement with another person to rerecord my dialogue and/or record voice-overs and use this sound work over my picture or however they deem appropriate.

I further acknowledge that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named Student and not the UNO Department of Film & Theatre.

I hereby certify and represent that I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Actor Name: Estela Colacho
Character: ABUELA

Estela Colacho
November 3/2018

ACTOR SIGNATURE
DATE
Student: Stevie Cavalier
Course#: 6912
Project Title: The Piñata
Email:
Phone:
Professor: James Roe
Date:

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Actor Name: Turner Crumble
Character: "Erik"
Email: 
Phone: 
Address: 

[Signature]
ACTOR SIGNATURE

DATE: 1-02-18
MINOR ACTOR RELEASE AND INFORMATION

Minors (anyone under eighteen years of age) may be used in student productions only under the following conditions:

- Approval of the Course Instructor or Thesis Supervisor
- Signed permission from a parent or legal guardian.
- Parent or legal guardian must have read, approved of, and initialed the production script.
- Parent, legal guardian or person approved by parent / legal guardian agrees to be present during filming.

I/We, the undersigned, am/are the parent/parents or guardian of the below named minor child.
I/We, the undersigned, being of legal age, do hereby consent and grant to the Student Filmmaker named above, (hereinafter sometimes referred to as "you"), permission to photograph the below named minor child in connection with the student project tentatively entitled

The Piñata

I hereby grant to the Student Filmmaker, the University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre, and their successors, assigns and licensees the perpetual right to use, as you may desire, all still and motion pictures and records which you may make of his/her voice, including the right to substitute his/her voice for the voice of another person or persons, and the right to use his/her name or likeness in or in connection with the exhibition, advertising, exploiting and/or publicizing of the Picture. I further grant the right to reproduce in any manner whatsoever any recordings including all instrumental, musical, or other sound effects produced by him/her, in connection with the production and/or post production of the Picture.

I further acknowledge and agree that any commitments beyond the scope and intent of this release are the sole responsibility of the above named Student Filmmaker or its duly appointed representative, and NOT the UNO Department of Film & Theatre.

I/We, further agree and warrant that the below named minor child will not disaffirm or disavow said consent and permission on the grounds that he/she was a minor on the date of execution thereof or any similar grounds whatsoever, or endeavor to recover from you personally or through any guardian, any sums for participating in the Picture.

I hereby certify and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the below named minor child, and I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

(SIGNATURES ON PAGE 2)
Minor Actor Release and Information
Name of Minor: ADALIN BROWN
Age: 11

Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:
SON ☐ DAUGHTER ☒ STEP-SON ☐ STEP-DAUGHTER ☐
BROTHER ☐ SISTER ☐ NEPHEW ☐ NIECE ☐ OTHER ☐
Character:

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian:
LIZETH HUTCHINGS

Address:

Guardian on Location: MOTHER

Email: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]

NOTE: MINORS ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO BE ON SET FOR A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS AS STATED IN THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD RULES OR BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, WHICHEVER IS MORE RESTRICTIVE.

NOTE: IF MINOR WILL MISS SCHOOL, STUDENT FILMMAKER MUST COMPLETE “MINOR ACTOR RELEASE FROM SCHOOL” FORM.

[Signature]
MARCH 28, 2019
PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNATURE
DATE

[Signature]
MARCH 28, 2019
STUDENT SIGNATURE
DATE
MINOR ACTOR RELEASE AND INFORMATION

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I hereby certify and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the below named minor child, and I am over 18 years of age and have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

(SIGNATURES ON PAGE 2)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Minor: Madison Harrington</th>
<th>Age: 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Parent or Legal Guardian:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON □ DAUGHTER ☑ STEP-SON □ STEP-DAUGHTER □</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER □ SISTER □ NEPHEW □ NIECE □ OTHER □</td>
<td>Character: Sofia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent or Legal Guardian: Dustin Harrington</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian on Location: Danni Harrington</td>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** MINORS ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO BE ON SET FOR A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS AS STATED IN THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD RULES OR BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, WHICHEVER IS MORE RESTRICTIVE.

**NOTE:** IF MINOR WILL MISS SCHOOL, STUDENT FILMMAKER MUST COMPLETE “MINOR ACTOR RELEASE FROM SCHOOL” FORM.

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

3/27/19

Date

Student Signature

Date
The DVD copy of the thesis film *The Piñata* is located in the Earl K. Long Library.
Vita

Stevie Cavalier has lived in Metairie, Louisiana since birth. For high school, she attended Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies, from which she received her high school diploma in May 2013. She then went on to graduate summa cum laude with her BA in Film Production from The University of New Orleans in May 2016. She continued her studies by enrolling in the graduate school at The University of New Orleans in the fall of 2016. Throughout her time at The University of New Orleans, she has written, directed, and edited seven short films. She graduates with her Master of Fine Arts degree in Film Production in May of 2019.