

2013

The tyrants within us and the thread of history : the creation of "Sic Semper Tyrannis," a one-person play

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THE TYRANTS WITHIN US AND THE THREAD OF HISTORY:
THE CREATION OF SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS, A ONE-PERSON PLAY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by

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May 2013

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ABSTRACT

The assigned task was to create and perform a 20-40 minute long one-person play, with no other guidelines or restrictions offered. Having never performed in or written a full one-person play, my challenge was two-fold: create a cohesive and coherent script, and craft the production and performance of that script. From several inspirational sources, I was spurred on to explore the dynamics of revolutionaries, fanatics, and vigilantes through the lens of presidential assassin John Wilkes Booth. Through the combination of Booth's infamy and the modern day realities of fame-seeking, political divisiveness, and tragically pervasive "spectacle killing" events, I was ultimately able to craft the story that became the one-person play *SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS*. My research led me to amass a great deal of material to draw from, and it soon became clear from the initial script that expanding the piece and its theatrical elements would be required. Through both script revisions and the addition of sound and visuals, I was able to ultimately create and perform a piece that successfully integrated extravagant technical elements and presented several different voices within the same character embodied by my performance with the use of physical and vocal choices. The audience was responsive to the material, and the resulting video recording and production photography stand as a testament to the project's implementation. It is my intention to use all of the resulting feedback as a means of further evaluation and expansion of the piece and its subject material.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a required element of completing our Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre (Performance), Louisiana State University's Department of Theatre charged us with creating and performing a 20-40 minute long one-person play. The resulting thesis chronicles my attempts to fulfill this requirement with a sense of honest and fearless artistic purpose. I had previously experienced a similar exercise, although on a much smaller scale, as a culminating element of my Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in Theatre (Performance) from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2006. In that project, which required the ten-person ensemble to craft a production that encompassed each actor's individual self-created vignettes, I had explored personal and biographical material as a writer/actor. While this experience was useful and fulfilling, I felt as if I must not allow myself the same license when producing this project. As an artist, I believe strongly in the freedom that our craft affords us to explore uncharted terrain and reject redundancy. Most importantly, I believe the strongest one-person theatrical material finds its value in the telling of an undeniably unique story that the writer/actor has launched from their singular perspective. These stories are inevitably personal, but also not necessarily confined to the sole experience of the writer/actor. They find in their content a theme or experience that is somehow universal, and it is this melding of the fiercely personal and the universal that lifts the material onto a higher pedestal of communal artistic merit. It was this rarified air that I intended to reach for, however successful the attempt might prove to be. I have too often in my past work as an actor settled for the mundane and superficial choice, and it was because of this that I ultimately decided to pursue graduate school training as an attempt to awake my artistic honesty and fearlessness. The resulting training has transformed me into a confident, opinionated, and undisguised artist. This project presented itself as an ideal opportunity to explore my artistic rebirth, and solidified my resolve to venture forth bravely and brashly into the unknown of the blank page and the bare stage.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHALLENGE

From the moment that I knew the task at hand would be to not only perform but also create a one-person play, I had some trepidation about my abilities as a playwright. I have had the relative luxury of being involved in many new play development projects in my career as an actor and administrator, and I was an employee for the Denver Center for the Performing Arts as they developed their New Play Summit festival program into a nationally recognized entity. I have seen the creation of new plays through countless hours and countless drafts committed to the endeavor of breathing new life into the art form, and it is a humbling reality that even all those hours cannot guarantee any level of success. However, I also have had the honor of seeing new play projects that have gone on to further development and success, and what seemed to be the trait that set them apart more than anything else were their wonderful scripts. The actor always plays a critical role in embodying the playwright's characters and story, but ultimately theatre remains a writers' medium particularly in new play development. The playwright's craft is one that I respect deeply but also have been consistently intimidated by. For reasons that perplex me, I had never until now allowed myself much if any opportunity to creatively write. I have felt for much of my life that my theatrical talent is in interpreting the words on the page, and have left the heavy literal lifting to what I considered more talented artists than I. It was this inferiority complex that I had to tackle first and foremost. I quickly determined that I was going to have to give myself permission to be in the playwright position.

My second trepidation came from my lack of experience as a solo performer. Even as an observer of one-person plays, I have often found them to be exercises in self-aggrandizement and lacking in true honesty. As transcendent as the individual actor may be (or think themselves to be), no amount of shape shifting and mask-wearing can compete with the theatrical experience of one actor communicating honestly with another in the same space as the audience. The electricity of those energies being shared in a communal environment is, in my opinion, the reason why theatre remains a relevant art form in our modern culture. It seems to me that only in the theatre we are given the rare opportunity to see, feel, smell, hear, and share the emotional truth of another human being as they live a life on stage that we are witness to. But how could I create that experience in a one-person play? All of my favorite, memorable, and personally important theatrical experiences have offered this opportunity, but they have all been multiple actor pieces. As I stood at the precipice of my task, I found myself simultaneously staring into the abyss of uncertainty. I felt uncertain of how to perform as a single person interacting only with the audience, a common technique I had seen in one-person shows. I felt uncertain in my basic knowledge of one-person plays, having only seen a handful and read a few more. Most importantly, I felt uncertain as to how to make whatever I would write an honest experience for the audience to share; one that did not devolve into masturbatory triviality. I was now in the dreaded position of an artist looking for "something to say." It is here where I feel most artists veer off the rails and make unfortunate and hackneyed art. This was the place I did not want to be, and yet there I was right from the start.

Complicating my task further was the personal feeling I had that I could not return to biographical material as a starting point. My artistic stubbornness was in high gear, as I felt that any attempt to draw from my personal life would be re-treading the same artist ground as I had previously explored in my undergraduate training. With this self-inflicted restriction, I was even

more anxious about the generation of my content. I had come to graduate school to stretch myself as an artist and remove myself from my safe and easy choices. But as push was coming to shove, I was realizing that the reality of that decision was both frightening and fraught with the potential for failure. Ultimately, I know what I am good at as an actor, and I wanted to explore material that would allow me to draw from those skills. But the creation of that material was going to fall to my unprepared, unconfident and overwhelmed quasi-playwright personae. Learning to allow the actor side of myself to inherently trust the playwright side of myself to bring something to the table I could work with was perhaps the biggest challenge of all. As the old adage goes: “write what you know.” I was seemingly thumbing my nose at that wisdom, spiting myself in the process.

In the midst of all these challenges, I was focused on pursuing an additional artistic goal: to “swing for the fences” theatrically with my play. In doing so I was most certainly not doing myself any favors, combined with my other self-selected goals and stipulations. It felt as if these masochistic machinations were conspiring to virtually set me up for failure. But I did not waver from them, because I felt that what the one-person play task ultimately represented was a unique opportunity that I would never have voluntarily allowed myself to pursue. My prior conception of myself as an artist has always been isolated to actor, and more recently actor/administrator. With this self-portrait in place, I could never have imagined a scenario where I would take the type of risk I was engaged in now; creating “avant-garde” theatre was simply a pipe dream. To attempt to do so in a world where I was actually trying to make a living as an actor would have been previously inconceivable to me. But Professor George Judy, Head of our Master of Fine Arts program, specifically encouraged us to pursue this opportunity as a means of creating something we might be able to tour and perform in our professional lives. His contention was that any actor who can generate their own work is eminently more likely to navigate the trials and tribulations of a career where so many employment opportunities are dependent on others. In the fresh light of this perspective, I was emboldened. The possibility of such a potential outcome resulted in a larger artistic epiphany for me posed as a simple question: Why Not? It became increasingly clear that I had not asked myself that question nearly enough when it came to my art or this task. Why can't I write a meaningful one-person play? Why can't I try to reach for the proverbial stars when I do it? Why can't I perform it to the audience honestly and fearlessly? Why can't I use my own work as a means of generating opportunities for my artistry? Why can't I fail and still be successful? What's failure really mean, anyway? The task at hand was no longer insurmountable to me, because I had torn down the walls of doubt within myself. The floodwaters of passion and positivity now swept me up in the chaotic and cathartic task of finding my subject.

CHAPTER 3: INSPIRATIONS

In the summer of 2011, I was lying in bed looking for something to fall asleep to on television. I stumbled upon a Charlie Rose interview with author Nora Titone, who was discussing her upcoming book *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy* along with her mentor Doris Kearns Goodwin. Up until that moment I had been pondering the right subject to draw from as inspiration for my one-person play. I had some prior experience with the character of John Wilkes Booth (JWB), having read about him and having had a general interest in assassins and murderers within the cultural lexicon. I was also a personal fan of the work that Steven Sondheim had done with the character of JWB in his musical *ASSASSINS*, using him as a reference point and a quasi-mentor for all future presidential assassins. Sondheim captured for me a transcendent curiosity that I have had in regard to JWB in his lyric from “The Ballad of Booth”: “Why did you do it Johnny, / Throw it all away? / Why did you do it, boy, Not just destroy The pride and joy of Illinois, / but all the U.S.A.?”¹

This fascination with these people and their violent acts has long preoccupied me. The basic question that always emerges in my mind is two fold. First, I ask myself the universal question: Why do they do it? Second, I ask myself the larger Meta question: Why have people done it throughout the ages and what if anything has changed? Two incredibly weighty and unwieldy questions to be sure. But I have had a great personal passion to explore and attempt to better understand this phenomenon for quite some time, initiating from a brush I had with a national nightmare. When I was a high school student in Colorado in 1999, I was a member of my school’s Speech and Debate team. We would often travel four plus hours through the Rocky Mountains to Denver to compete in tournaments with local high schools, including Columbine High School in Jefferson County. During my time as a competitor, I came to be lightly acquainted with Rachel Joy Scott, a Columbine student who competed in separate events than my own but who was generally known to me to be a talented competitor and kind person. She was nothing but a friend in passing, but I knew her. And on April 20th, 1999, when Eric David Harris and Dylan Bennett Klebold perpetrated what Dave Cullen aptly describes in his 2004 article “The Depressive and the Psychopath” as “the worst school shooting in American history,”² she was one of the unfortunate victims killed in the massacre. This was the first time in my sheltered life that I had experienced the chilling reality of mass violence and spectacle killing personally, albeit from a relative emotional distance. I watched as many other Colorado kids did that day and reflected on my personal connection to the act while remaining hopelessly removed from it. It was above all a helpless feeling, a sense that I could do nothing to change the fact that I had somehow lost my innocence that day. And yet the guilt, happiness, sorrow, and inadequacy of not being directly affected by the event kept me at a proverbial arms’ length from the proceedings. I had been sideswiped by the Columbine massacre, and there but for the grace of God was where I could have gone.

¹ Sondheim, Stephen et al. “The Ballad Of Booth.” *Assassins*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993.

² Cullen, Dave. “The Depressive And The Psychopath.” *Slate Magazine*. Slate Magazine, 2004. Web. 18 Aug. 2012. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/assessment/2004/04/the_depressive_and_the_psychopath.single.html. Par. 6.

In light of this personal history and interest with large and culturally significant killings, I watched the Charlie Rose interview with Titone and felt sparked to consider the larger implications of the mentality that connected JWB and Harris and Klebold, as well as many other contemporary killers. What similarities did they share? What differences were present? The most obvious difference seemed to be the cultures and time periods that they came from. As I listened to Titone's explanation of JWB's potential motivations, what struck me was the sense that JWB was seemingly fighting for two primary outcomes: his own personal fame/affirmation and a larger sense of restoring power to the southern Confederate movement. His personal life was a tangle of interpersonal conflict with his family, from his sibling rivalry with his brother and more renowned actor Edwin Booth to his famous actor father Junius Brutus Booth's apparent disappointment in him, to the entire family's disdain for his Confederate sympathies. Indeed, Titone speaks to the fact that JWB, "alone among his family sided with the Confederacy"³ and that "no one in the family ever wanted JWB to step on stage."⁴ The isolation and aggravation that must have grown from those relationships seemed to factor into JWB's murderous trajectory, but I could not shake the idea that he took whatever personal motivations he might have had and directed them toward an overtly political action: the assassination of a President. The symbolic weight of such a gesture seemed to resonate in Harris and Klebold's act as well. Cullen speaks to the sense that their destructive goals were similarly grand, saying that "Harris and Klebold planned for a year and dreamed much bigger. The school served as means to a grander end, to terrorize the entire nation by attacking a symbol of American life. Their slaughter was aimed at students and teachers, but it was not motivated by resentment of them in particular. Students and teachers were just convenient quarry, what Timothy McVeigh described as 'collateral damage'.⁵" My mind was now ablaze with questions about the ways that JWB's actions and motivations speak to the killers and culture of today.

My appetite now sufficiently wetted for the subject, I began to imagine how to theatricalize the interaction of modern day culture and JWB. I started to experiment with the concept of JWB interacting with modern day fame-seeking vehicles such as American Idol or Big Brother, as well as modern day inventions like the Internet. I also started to explore the idea of JWB interacting with modern day political zealotry and movements such as the Tea Party or the Occupy groups. And finally, I began to wonder how JWB might interact with another killer-in-waiting who had been influenced by his past deeds. In order to fully explore the relationship between JWB and the present, I read Titone's *My Thoughts Be Bloody* to gain context on his history. What struck me once again in her exploration of him was the fact that, to fill the void of isolation he felt from his biological family, he associated himself ferociously with the Confederacy, and saw President Abraham Lincoln's actions as tyrannical and unfair toward people who were still citizens of the United States. In one particular journal, JWB's "anger at the political situation seems to merge with his feelings of being disregarded by his family. The dishonorable conduct of Northern men, John cried, 'makes me hate my brothers in the north to deny us our rights, to plunder us, to rob us!...It misrepresents me to the whole world'.⁶" I

³ Titone, Nora and Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. Charlie Rose Program, 2011. Web. 30 July 2011. <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/11794>. 7:29.

⁴ Titone, Nora and Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. 20:16.

⁵ Cullen, Dave. "The Depressive And The Psychopath." *Slate Magazine*. Par. 4.

⁶ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. New York: Free Press, 2010. Pg. 236.

contrasted that with the motivations of modern day spectacle killers like Harris and Klebold, and I found that there emerged for me an essential difference between them. As Cullen describes, Harris and Klebold were interested in some form of large-scale infamy for personal aggrandizement. For Cullen, “It wasn't just ‘fame’ they were after...they were gunning for devastating infamy on the historical scale of an Attila the Hun. Their vision was to create a nightmare so devastating and apocalyptic that the entire world would shudder at their power.”⁷ To me, the relationship between the larger cultural and societal influences of the spectacle killer has shifted and with it the motivations of those killers have degenerated. It seems as if modern spectacle killers have resigned even the artifice of killing in the name of the larger societal or cultural good; a revolutionary impulse to save citizens from tyranny. Instead, the modern spectacle killers seem to be driven by a vigilante impulse; killing in the name of their own interpretations of right and wrong. That, coupled with a fanaticism toward their own selfish viewpoint at the expense of all others, has led the modern spectacle killers to a purely myopic view of the world. While it is undeniable that selfishness is a unifying trait, I see within that selfishness a different context. The selfish desire for some sense of fame/affirmation is an impulse still shared by JWB and the modern spectacle killer. Titone speaks to JWB’s motivations in that regard, detailing how at one point “Booth mused aloud, ‘What a glorious opportunity there is for a man to immortalize himself by killing Lincoln’!”⁸ The selfish search for power and political motivations can be seen in both JWB and modern day domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh and Ted Kaczynski. But what seems ultimately lacking in any modern day spectacle killer is any hope for an ultimate unity of the nation at large. Their actions are seemingly aimed, either expressly or vaguely, at destroying the very fiber of our society for the purpose of chaos or revenge. But JWB, as Titone chronicles, seemed to fundamentally disagree with such actions. He believed instead that “...we should love the whole Union and not only the state in which we were born. Will you, my brothers, destroy this Union. Can you tear down this great temple of civilization [sic]. This Monument of our father’s greatness.”⁹ As amazing as it was to me, I found myself sympathizing with JWB’s point of view in comparison to the modern day spectacle killer. His larger sense of a national unity, however bastardized and misunderstood to may be, seemed far preferable to the unpalatable chaotic impulses of the modern day spectacle killer. It seemed to me that in a twisted way, JWB was the voice of reason in that argument.

Continuing on from those thematic discoveries, I felt the desire to look for ways to create a play that made the audience see JWB both for what he was, what he “stood for,” and what he now represents in the context of our modern culture. Influenced by the work of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud, I was interested in crafting and presenting the play in a way that did not allow the audience to feel aesthetically removed from any of these fierce emotions and ideas. The subject material that I was exploring inevitably carries with it a great deal of difficult emotions and shocking themes, and I did not want it to devolve into a simplistic screed or rant against the modern day phenomenon of spectacle violence. To do so would be to trivialize the extremely complex subject and to deny it any honest discussion or digestion by the audience. Instead, I wanted to do my best to embrace the difficult and ungraspable emotional elements of

⁷ Cullen, Dave. “The Depressive And The Psychopath.” *Slate Magazine*. Par. 5.

⁸ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 275.

⁹ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 232.

the subject material. I hoped in some way to implement characteristics of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which might allow me some level of access to what Artaud scholar Claude Schumacher translates as "this naked theatre language, a non-virtual but real language using man's nervous magnetism, [which] must allow us to transgress the ordinary limits of art and words, actively, that is to say magically, to produce a kind of total creation in real terms, where man must reassume his position between dreams and events."¹⁰ In concert with that magical position, I wished to explore the Brechtian "Verfremdungseffekt," and his Epic Theatre sensibilities. Brecht's concept of alienation and examination by the audience was crystalized for me by Professor John Fletcher, the head of our Ph.D. program, when he said that Brecht's essential desire was to create the environment for the audience to investigate what has happened. It was only in this way that an audience could truly take the lessons of a past event and make meaningful change in their future lives. Quoting Fletcher, Brechtian theatre can encourage us to engage an essential ideal: "The point of life is that you can change some things." In the context of my play, the Brechtian implications of examining JWB in contrast to modern day spectacle killers seemed very appropriate. JWB is now in and of himself a "past event" in our culture; one that has existed but has not been fully explained. Much like the Brechtian concept of a street scene performer, I could create a performance that Brecht scholar John Willett translates as "...essentially repetitive. The event has taken place; what you are seeing now is a repeat. If the scene in the theatre follows the street scene in this respect then the theatre will stop pretending not to be a theatre, just as the street corner demonstration admits it is a demonstration."¹¹ This spoke to my sense that I could not reconcile any attempt to create an artifice of myself as the "one-person performer" or otherwise deny the fact that I was the only actor on stage with the audience. Instead of denying or concealing my theatricality or the difficulty of my subject material, I vowed to embrace it with zeal.

¹⁰ Artaud, Antonin. *Artaud on Theatre*. Trans. Claude Schumacher and Brian Singleton. York: Methuen Publishing Limited, 2001. Pg. 101.

¹¹ Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. Pg. 122.

CHAPTER 4: EARLY ITERATIONS

The first incarnations of our ideas for our one-person plays were born out of discussions we had during our Performance Theory class with Professor Alan Sikes in the spring of 2012. During that semester we had discussed a variety of performance ideologies and techniques, and we were encouraged to use those as a jumping off point to exploring our own ideas of what we wanted our one-person plays to be. Based on my previous thoughts about the Brechtian nature of my piece, I was looking for a way to begin the play in such a way as to immediately announce to the audience that they would not be a passive participant in the piece. The earliest version of this attempt to open the show is below, with stage directions in parentheses. Citations are listed in the final script in Chapter 6, so are not duplicated here.

(Spoken or shown.) Opening Spectacle: THE MONSTER IS BORN

(Darkness upon the stage. The steady hum of electricity cuts through the space. Suddenly, the crack of a spark; a shock to the system. Flashing strobe lighting reveals the table upon which the monster is laid. The energy shocks have stirred the monster, who is squirming underneath a shroud. The slow, steady grumble of the monster rises, syllabic and guttural primordial screams. As the energy grows and grows, the monster JOHN WILKES BOOTH [JW] unleashes a triumphant yowl.)

JW

Alive...I'm alive....I'M ALIVE....SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!

(Dramatic Blackout.)

(A Beat.)

(The sound of JW crashing into boxes and the general surroundings.)

JW

Damnation! You boat-licking cockchafer! Son of a piss-proud prick! Bullocks!

(Lights fade up during this sequence, casting shadows over a laboratory. A projection screen, disheveled and dismantled equipment, and a small table and computer in good working order remain. The possibility of a live on-stage camera that will be used to signify “looking into the Internet.”)

As I later wrote to Sikes, I was interested in pursuing the physical grotesqueries that I could incorporate: decaying limbs, tattered clothes, bolts in the neck, and particularly red eyes (using cosmetic contact lenses). Inspired to the use of red eye contacts by modern day cultural figures like shock-musician Marilyn Manson and Detroit Lions football player Kyle Vanden Bosch, I found the technique to be an incredibly affecting approach to creating a Brechtian Alienation between the subject and their audience. By altering the character’s “normalcy” and humanity while and at the same time catering to his selfish sense of egotistic attention-seeking, I could communicate very clearly to the audience that they could not simply be passively

entertained by this figure. The red eye contact as a theatrical device forms an inescapable barrier between the actor's own individuality and the abnormal artifice of the device. All of these elements appealed to my sense of JWB as the personification of a hopeless fame-seeker, and the physical Brechtian Alienation technique also lended itself nicely to the overall sense that the name "John Wilkes Booth" can never be disassociated from the man's evil acts. Red eyes have a cultural history of demonic connotation, and the literal personification of JWB's inner evil could act as a barrier that could not be removed. It could instead, in true Brechtian fashion, be embraced and highlighted theatrically as a means of further illuminating the subject.

I was also interested in exploring JWB's interactions with modern day technology. Placing JWB in a completely foreign world would add to the Atraud-like sense of creating a total theatrical reality that rested between the events of JWB's historical existence and the "dream-like" quality of the modern technological cornucopia. An example of this attempt is below, with stage directions in parentheses.

(Spoken or shown.) Monologue Sequence – FACEBOOK MESSAGE TO MOM

(Facebook images appear on the projection screen behind JW as he picks up the computer's keyboard and begins typing...)

JW

Dearest Mother, I am searching for you in the vast empty spaces of the world web. There are 27 of you on the social gathering device I have come to know as The Record of Faces. But your Face is mysteriously absent. Only 27 imposters appear, each representing a year of my first-life on the earth. Mary Ann Holmes, a young and innocent child of wonder from Ontario. Mary Ann Holmes, Conservative believer who shares my inner torment and pain: 'I have alot of pride and Im very protective, not an easy person to get to know, dont have many close friends and I have a wrathful vengence.' There are also some who, like me, 'only share some information publicly.' But what troubles me, darling mother, is that there are some Mary Ann Holmes' who are Faceless, recorded as nothingness. Please tell me that this is not an omen. Please tell me that you are somewhere behind these blank images. Please tell me that the Face of the unknown is only a mask to protect you from this evil world. I need you now more than I ever have. I am embarking on the glorious mission once more, and I want you there with me. You are my only. I am sending this to you in hopes that you will come forward to be a part of me once more. Please, if you know me, send me a Friend request or message me. I will wait for you. All my love. Johnny.

I was initially interested in constructing the basic story of the play as follows. The format closely approximates that of the iPod notes application I used to capture these initial thoughts.

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

The Monster is Born - Creation Scene

JWB meets SIRI technology

JWB learns about Obama

JWB interacts with the Tea Party / Occupy Movement (Hate Spiral)

JWB tries to get acting gigs

JWB Facebook outreach to family

JWB gets press / recognition (or his actions do)

JWB realizes his actions are not being recognized and “fame” is not secure

Mob crashing the compound in search of the EVIL (reports are that “___” is behind it)

JWB self-immolation / last stand

As I later wrote to Sikes, I also had a strong impulse for my final moment. The image that I was struck by was the idea that JWB, like both his real-life counterpart and the Frankenstein-like monster that he represents, would find himself trapped in an abandoned complex surrounded by a ferocious mob. He might have achieved his goal of destruction or murder of a modern political figure, but the fame that he craves would not have been achieved due to the murky quality of the Internet distorting who was responsible. In a last attempt to be heard and recognized, he would light himself on fire in protest, much like Tunisian merchant Mohammed Bouazizi. As Rania Abouzeid describes in his 2011 article “Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia on Fire,” Bouazizi committed his act of self-immolation on December 17th, 2010 as a way to protest against the local governments’ seizure of his unlicensed vegetable cart and its goods. In doing so, “...Bouazizi's actions spurred what many refer to as the ‘people's revolution’ and...has shaken despotic Arab governments elsewhere.¹²” Similarly, JWB’s act of self-immolation would be his last, desperate attempt to spark a revolution of some kind within the modern world he now existed in. However, his attempts to broadcast this act over the Internet would be stymied by the dying electrical power within the complex. Even in his final moment, he would remain defeated because he would not be recognized for his actions. I imagined that the power source would somehow be connected to the complex itself, and that the power failure would be experienced both by JWB and the audience experiences live in the theatre while he attempts to record his finale. His potential dying line, which I imagined might cut to a blackout as the power died completely, was as follows:

JW

One little boy will see my stand. And he will remember the burning man, the man wrapped in flames and fury. And he will be a God among men, because he will have been infected with the seed of Revolu[tion].

From these initial ideas and impulses, I felt prepared to now expand the play more fully.

¹² Abouzeid, Rania. “Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia on Fire.” *Time Magazine*. Time Magazine, 2011. Web. 18 Aug. 2012. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html>. Par. 7.

CHAPTER 5: EXPANDING THE PLAY

SCRIPT REVISION

There were several factors that lead to a dramatic shift in the focus of the play, but none more so than the tragic spectacle killing event that occurred in a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado on July 20th, 2012. Once again my life was side-swiped by the acts of a spectacle killer, as during my life in Colorado I had attended the Century movie theatre that James Eagan Holmes used as his personal killing ground. This event gob smacked me, and left me staring at my current ideas for the script in humiliation. I asked myself: How can I even attempt to write a play about a killer when the world is still bleeding from the actions of a killer? Especially when the play intended to highlight the absurdity and dark humor of a historic killer living in the modern world? These real-life developments caused me to completely re-examine my approach to my subject. I began to consider incorporating the voice of society within the piece as a way of unequivocally stating my beliefs about these spectacle killers' completely evil and irredeemable actions. What follows is an early attempt to do so, spoken through the voice of a "reporter" character who would be placed at the scene of the siege on JWB's compound, with stage directions in parentheses.

(Spoken or shown.) Monologue Sequence – THE WOLVES CLOSE IN

(JW with a newsman's microphone / REPORTER center stage, live from the scene.)

REPORTER

Reports are still coming in about the man who has barricaded himself inside this warehouse. Neighbors, friends and co-workers have noticed little to no strange behavior from the suspect, who was by all accounts a quiet, normal person who always had a smile in the hallways and held the door open for strangers. No community member has come forward claiming to have ever seen or met the suspect, but some speculation has begun that he was a member of an extremist political group. Many in this community have taken to social media to voice their anger and sorrow over this incident. R3-4Ever says on his Twitter account: "this madman is a menace and a scourge on our planet. He should be eradicated so that the truth can finally be known #revolution." Police are investigating any connections to the suspect and this account, but so far none have emerged.

Now, if I can take one brief moment to editorialize, I would just like to say that I believe this suspect is highly dangerous and very likely disturbed beyond repair. This individual, through his careless actions, has brought ruin and destruction upon our quiet community and our society at large. He is a menace and an appalling example of the deterioration of our social fabric and our very souls. He must be completely erased from the earth and forever expunged from our social consciousness so that he may never again cause us to question our faith in the security of our existence. For if he is allowed to exist in the same world as my family, my children, then I can never rest easy knowing that evil has been eradicated and that they are safe from harm. His life represents doubt and death, his death is our only salvation. Reporting live from the scene for Channel 2 News. Back to you, Susan.

At the same time as I was exploring society's voice in the conversation about spectacle killers, I was also reading more about the reaction to Holmes' movie massacre. Two particularly disturbing trends emerged in the reaction. First, there were online groups forming that, as Ryan Parker describes in his 2012 article "'Holmies' create fan pages in support of alleged gunman," had "...created dozens of Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter pages with messages of encouragement and praise for Holmes' alleged actions."¹³ Second, there were other online conversations about the shooting that were prompting vast conspiracy-theory responses. One such example was a Facebook post that included a picture from supposed marine Ben McMillan holding a piece of paper to the screen that said the following. The format closely approximates that of the text's format as it appeared in the photo.

Dear C.I.A. and Fearstream Media, I am a combat trained US Marine with 4 years infantry as a weapons platoon section leader and a demolitions expert. I have an intricate knowledge in constructing explosives and how to operate automatic weapons. With all my expertise and resources, there is NO WAY I could have pulled off this sophisticated killing spree operation all by myself, NOR have access to a \$10,000 ARSENAL without some "INSIDE" help. I AM PART OF THE 100%...AWAKE AND AWARE, FREE OF YOUR FEAR TACTICS, safe to travel, and SAFE to take my family to the MOVIES! The families of the 82 innocent people DEMAND THE TRUTH!¹⁴

In response to the photo, I read a long thread of conversation on Facebook between various profiles on August 2nd, 2012. The photo and the conversation thread have since disappeared from the site. One profile that has since been deleted from the site, "exaktasamatteroffact," was particularly unhinged in his interactions with the other posters. I've included below a partial section of his responses. The format closely approximates that of the text's format as it appeared in the conversation thread.

...Yet this incident is ONLY MAKING IT EAZIER TO TAKE AWAY OUR 2nd amendment THAT MUTHAFUCKER HAD C4 BUT YET HE BOUGHT ALL HIS AMMO FROM A LOCAL WALL MART OUR K MART SORRY I'M NOT BUYING THAT YOU DON'T GET C4 FROM YOUR LOCAL AMMUNITION STORE PERIOD THEE END!!!!

Ughhhhh!! You people are so blind!!!!

Fuckin SHEEPLE!!!

All of this information had a profound effect on my conception of my play. As I began to write fuller drafts, I incorporated several different ideas that originated from my growing feeling that I must crystallize all of the shocking, disparate elements of the modern reaction to the spectacle killer. I felt a need to capture the voice of a modern day "fan" of JWB, and somehow tie the two through the portal of the Internet so that they might interact. I then turned to an idea

¹³ Parker, Ryan; "'Holmies' create fan pages in support of alleged gunman." *The Denver Post*. The Denver Post, 2012. Web. 3 Aug. 2012. http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_21232268/holmies-create-fan-pages-support-alleged-theater-gunman. Par. 2.

¹⁴ Meadors, Alexandra. "Ben McMillan a combat trained US Marine Challenging the CIA and Fearstream Media." *Galactic Connection*. Galactic Connection, 2012. Web. 2 Aug 2012. Par. 1.

utilized in Chuck Palahniuk's book-turned-film Fight Club. The prospect that the "fan" character and JWB could be inexorably tied and that, ultimately, they turn out to be inhabiting the same mind was an intriguing way to theatricalize the dichotomy between past and present that I was searching for. The "fan" character would pull from the history of JWB as he pulled from the modern world of the "fan" character, even quoting modern revolutionary thinkers like Albert Einstein. It became clear to me that the "fan" character would also represent a schizophrenic personality, with JWB and even the "naysayer" voices of Junius and Edwin Booth inhabiting him as well. If done correctly, the theatrical potential for one actor performing all the different voices within the same person could prove quite effective.

In November, 2012 as I continued the task of preparing my one-person play, I took part in a workshop where members of my Masters of Fine Arts ensemble interacted with Leigh Fondakowski, an Emmy nominated playwright and member of the acclaimed Tectonic Theatre Project. Ms. Fondakowski listened to portions of our work, and using a theatrical approach known as "moment work" we explored our pieces and their elements as a way of better understanding them. One of the questions that Ms. Fondakowski considered crucial to the development of our plays was: "If your piece is an answer to a question, what's the question?" My play's answer to that question was: "Are we as Americans still fighting for the things that matter to the nation or to ourselves?" That answer, coupled with previous thoughts on the play, fueled the further revision of my script to set up a clear debate between JWB and the "fan" character as to whether or not they should commit a spectacle killing as a way of sparking a "revolution" in the modern day culture. For JWB, I felt that his historically-based interest in a sense of national unity would ultimately render him the "voice of reason" in comparison to the "fan" character, whose modern conceptions would lead him to a more selfishly-driven purpose.

Working closely with Professor Judy, I began to put my play on its feet in December of 2012. While all the various themes were beginning to gel, Professor Judy still encouraged me to find a thru-line and a "ticking bomb" element that would keep the play from becoming a philosophical argument or an endless debate without any active need from the characters. He suggested making the audience hostages in the "fan" characters' complex, and that the "fan" could be plotting to detonate the building and the hostages throughout the play. As I had previously scripted, JWB would be conjured to complete the act of violence but would then disagree with and ultimately kill the "fan" character as a way of saving the modern world from the spectacle killer's acts. Elements of the modern debate about the relationship between spectacle killers and national mental health were also considered and incorporated on the suggestion of Professor Nick Erickson, Associate Head of our Master of Fine Arts program. The play was now drawing from an amazing array of sources and was expanding to include them all.

CREATION OF SOUND AND VISUALS

The creation of the "spectacle" of the piece was of vital importance to me. It was through these elements that I hoped to both incorporate and alienate the audience, making them feel as if they were trapped inside a kind of house of horrors symbolizing the evils of the spectacle killer. As I began to crystalize what I wanted to include, I decided that I would further the impulse to make the character schizophrenic and therefore would record all of the sound and visual elements with myself as the performer.

With the assistance of fellow Master of Fine Arts ensemble member Jason Bayle, I recorded the sound cues with Bayle as my sound technician. I was attempting to create through the sound cues the sense of a computer-activated voice response system similar to that of Apple computer's "Siri" software. In order to achieve a distorted, robotic quality to the voice over cues, I worked closely with Bayle to alter my voice's pitch and resonance on the recordings. I also worked closely with Bayle to select additional stock sounds that would symbolize electrical shocks that were either being started or stopped, expanding on the ideas of the Frankenstein creation story, modern technological aspects of the piece, and the final moment of power failure. The resulting audio clips were incorporated into the show and were an integral part of the world of the play.

For visuals, I knew that I would want a "reporter" character to give the audience some sense of the outside world and its reaction to the "fan" character's hostage takeover. With the assistance of fellow Master of Fine Arts ensemble member Anthony McMurray, I was able to record myself as the "reporter" character with McMurray as my videographer. From there, I took the raw footage and edited together the clips along with a montage of modern day protest photos taken from various Google searches as symbols of the "Internet" that JWB experiences in the play and a video screen saver that was derived from the modern tech-conspiracy movie The Matrix. All of these elements were edited into a single video file that could be used during the performance.

Finally, I had grown interested in incorporating a live on-stage camera, inspired in part by Fondakowski's workshop production of *SPILL*, a play she co-created with Reeva Wortel that she directed at Louisiana State University while working with us. The use of a live on-stage camera in that production highlighted to me the possibilities of experimenting with the "hyper-reality" of capturing live footage of an actor's actions on-stage and then transmitting them simultaneously to a backdrop on the same stage. I was able to arrange a live on-stage camera for my production with the assistance of the following staff members of Louisiana State University's College of Music and Dramatic Arts: Patrick Acampora, Facilities Manager; Joseph Watson, Communications Across the Curriculum & Digital Media Coordinator; and Corey Knoll, Information Technology Coordinator. With all the sound and visuals in place, I felt confident that I was going to be successful in my attempt to engage the audience with theatrical elements that would heighten their experience and halt any of their attempts to be a passive participant.

CHAPTER 6: THE FINAL SCRIPT

What follows is the final script used in the performances on Saturday, January 19th and Sunday, January 20th, 2013. Stage directions appear in parentheses. A single actor portrays all characters included in the piece. Sections where other characters speak in voiceover or appear on video are scripted, but pre-recorded and played back. The Lighting Board Operator was Nicholas Hamel. The Sound Board Operator was Jason Bayle. The Video/Projection Operator was Jessica Jain. The stage setting was as follows: a row of eight large white Periaktoi columns (up-stage, with a opening up-stage left), a small desk with computer monitor and equipment (mid-stage right), several large black blocks throughout, a collection of chairs and stools throughout, miscellaneous computer equipment and a large rectangular table (mid-stage left), and a live on-stage camera (down-stage left). Other props included were as follows: red eye contacts, white theatrical monster makeup and eyeliner, a retractable knife, and a deck of playing cards. There were four primary light settings: full black out; a general dim wash of white light; a general wash of blue light to represent the Internet; and general wash of red light to represent the fire. Where applicable, footnotes indicate a specific source of inspiration in material adapted for use in the script.

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

A one-person play written and performed by Benjamin T. Koucherik

(Darkness upon the stage. The steady hum of electricity cuts through the space. Suddenly, the crack of a spark; a shock to the system as the static of a television signal turns on and lights rise to a dim glow, revealing a small table and a small computer with monitor in good working order. There is also monster makeup sitting on the computer table and a deck of playing cards sitting on a downstage block, directly in front of a live on-stage camera that will be used to signify “looking into the Internet.” REPORTER appears through the darkness on the backdrop.)

REPORTER (Pre-recorded footage.)

We interrupt your regularly scheduled programming for this breaking news alert. Reports are coming in of an armed assailant who has taken control of a downtown federal building, barricading himself inside the complex with at least a dozen employees sometime around 10:15 this morning.

(Footage feed switches to live on-stage camera.)

(FAN enters from offstage with a gray hoodie sweatshirt, red eye contacts and a knife.)

FAN (Addressing audience.)

Alright, everyone just shut the fuck up! I swear to God I’ll fucking gut you if you don’t sit down and shut the fuck up!!!

(FAN purposefully moves to the computer table, sets down knife and types as he talks.)

FAN

ARIEL, status report?

(ARIEL, a computer voice activation system, speaks as he successfully loads the program.)

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Status report: operational. Awaiting command sequence: Initiate protocol 10.15?

FAN

No, not yet. (Pauses.) The time has finally come, Johnny. Please give me the strength.

(In the following sequence, FAN types into the computer. As he continues, his typing turns into madness; a conjuring act.)

I'm your biggest fan.

I'm your BIGGEST fan.

I. Am. Your. Biggest. Fan.

I. M. Y. R. B. G. S. T. F. N. Exclamation point.

(Speak-sings; onomatopoeia.)

AAAAAIIIIIII.

AAAAAAAAMMMMMMM.

YYYYYYYYYYYAAAAAAUUUUUUURRRRRR.

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE(gasps)EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH. GUH.

ESSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

T.

(Begins to sing to the tune of the Army March.)

AAA-YYEE am your biggest Faaaan.

I'm your fan, oh yes I aaaammmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

(Takes the "m" vocally and emotionally from joy to pain to crying to yelling to...)

(FAN screams in silence "I'm Your Biggest Fan!")

(FAN pauses, shakily takes the deck of playing cards and flips the top card. It is the "10 of Hearts" card, the one that he had hoped it would be.)

FAN

The “10”. Let’s begin.

(FAN sits back down at the computer table and begins to apply monster makeup as he transforms into JOHN WILKES BOOTH [JW]. During his transformation, REPORTER is seen on the backdrop.)

REPORTER (Pre-recorded footage.)

...bringing you up to date coverage of the standoff currently taking place at a downtown federal building today. Eyewitness reports are filtering in as people have begun flooding out into the streets, and there are multiple indications that panic has set in throughout the crowded business district. Police have now cordoned off the area and have set up a perimeter for 10 miles surrounding the complex, with swat teams being called in to assist local authorities. At this time no contact has been made with the assailant. Again, attempts to contact the assailant have thus far proven unsuccessful and while we are told negotiators have been called to the scene, no communication has been established. Channel 10 will keep you informed with all of the up-to-date information as we receive it...and...hold on...I’m sorry, we are actually now just receiving new eyewitness reports on the alleged assailant... an eyewitness interviewed at the scene has now reported that the alleged assailant is a young dark haired male, wearing a gray hoodie sweater, mustache, and what the witness described as “red eye contacts” and was heard repeatedly shouting to the crowd...

(FAN unleashes a triumphant yowl.)

FAN / JW

Alive...I’m alive....I’M ALIVE....SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!¹⁵

(Dramatic Total Blackout.)

(A Beat.)

(The sound of FAN/JW crashing into boxes and the general surroundings.)

JW

Damnation! You boat-licking cockchafer! Son of a piss-proud prick! Bullocks!

(JW fumbles through the darkness and stumbles to the back wall. When he reaches it, as FAN he calls out in the darkness.)

FAN

ARIEL - initiate protocol 10.15.

(ARIEL computer voice activates and speaks as live on-stage camera feed and lights reconnect.)

¹⁵ Titone, Nora and Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. 6:33.

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Initiating protocol 10.15.

JW

What the devil?

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Protocol Initiated: John Wilkes Booth, our greatest American hero. Greetings, Johnny. I am ARIEL, and I am your guide.

JW

What black magic is this? Show yourself, you demon.

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

I am no demon, Johnny. I am a friend and I am here to help you.

JW

Damn you to hell, you black darkness. I shall destroy you and then I shall be free.

(JW picks up computer's keyboard to smash it to the floor.)

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Johnny, you have been transported through history to complete the revolution you started. Look upon the world that rests in the balance.

(Projection feed switches to images from the world of the Internet, which begin to flash on the backdrop in a fast-forward montage: Arab Spring, Occupy Movement, Tea Party, etc. JW stares in horrified amazement as lights shift to an eerie blue glow.)

JW

Blessed Lord. I am undone. What is this place?

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

This is your home now, Johnny. And I am your weapon. You have access to the minds of millions. And you have the message to deliver to them. Your past, your present, and your purpose exists through this portal. Begin your journey.

JW

How?

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Use the letters upon the board, and begin your search. You have much to learn.

(JW stares into the monitor and types into the computer as the eerie blue glow continues and REPORTER appears on the backdrop within the Internet image montage.)

REPORTER (Pre-recorded footage.)

...as we turn back to our continuing coverage of the hostage crisis at the federal complex downtown. Authorities are now reporting that the assailant has issued his first public communication, which we can now report on in a Channel 10 exclusive. The man, whose identity has not been confirmed by the authorities, has promised to detonate the federal building as well as several other civic landmarks if anyone attempts to save the hostages. A brief word of warning: The following message contains mature content and may not be suitable for young audiences...

(JW's following sequence is a fever dream to the general rhythm, but not musical quality, of *THE LITTLE MERMAID*'s "Part of Your World"¹⁶) as he gazes around him at the fast-forward montage from the Internet playing on the backdrop.)

JW

Look at its sparkle, the universe unfold

How many treasures can one browser hold?

Lookin' around here, you think...sure, I've got everything!

(Stops speak-singing – looks to audience...)

This is quite the lark. I feel as if I am a clown balancing the globe upon a terrestrial tightrope.

(Again back to "Part of Your World"...))

I've got time bombs and terrorists aplenty; intransigence and Tea Party's galore.

You want Occupy Movements? I've got twenty!

But who cares? No big deal....I want MOOOOORE!

(Stops, again to audience...)

And I will have more, by God. It is about damn time.

(Again back to "Part of Your World"...))

I want a government by the people, for the people. A nation under control.

I want a world that believes in the power of revolution, and makes their wishes known.

Marching and crying for, what do you call it? Freedom!

(Stops, again to audience...)

¹⁶ Menken, Alan et al. "Part Of Your World." *The Little Mermaid*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2008.

Because “freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.¹⁷” Ingenious.
(Again back to “Part of Your World”...)

Fighting for the future of our future today

Doing what’s required and striving further

Grabbing our moment and taking to the, what’s that word again? Street!

(Stops, again to audience...)

Streets lined with unworthy immigrant hordes. Urchins of filth that must be washed from our Country like the stains from our undergarments.

(Grand final gesture, again back to “Part of Your World”...)

Up from the grave

Up from the scum

Back from the past and today we are one!

So follow me, for I shall be...PART OF YOUR WORLD!!!

(Song concludes in a tour-de-force flourish. Image montage ends and a “screen saver”-style video appears on the backdrop as JW addresses the Internet.)

I have now made my offering to the gatekeepers of this majestic portal of knowledge. I am on the precipice of an unexplored alien consciousness. I suppose I should introduce myself. Ehem.

Greetings, World Web. I am John Wilkes Booth. I am a former and future revolutionary, raconteur, actor, artist, philanthropist, freedom fighter, and leader of men. Now, it is certainly true that every man builds his own monument. And that all the world’s a stage. And what I see before me is a monument of mechanized motion; a miracle; a staggering stage unlike any imagined in the mind of God or man; a brilliant fireball of intellect spreading out like a diamond sea. I can touch the lives of men I’ve never met. I can engage with phantasms of the past. And I can fulfill my destiny. I am the master of time and space. My palette is full with all the possibilities of the universe.

(JW flips the top card from the deck on the table and the “Queen of Hearts” card appears.)

I want to show the Queen! I want to show my mother what I’ve done!
Spirit, I wish to communicate with my Mother.

¹⁷ Kristofferson, Kris et al. “Me and Bobby McGee.” *Kristofferson*. Washington, D.C.: Monument Records, 1970.

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Error – not found.

JW

Spirit, I command you to reveal her. I am connected to the Godmind. Access is my right. Mark me and transmit this message.

(The “screen saver”-style video fades. Projection feeds switches to live on-stage camera and the lights shift back to normal.)

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Disconnected. Searching for connection now...

JW

No, that’s not right. (Flips the top card from the deck on the table, it is not the right one.) My message is ripe and ready for the people. Why do they not speak? (Flips the top card from the deck on the table, it is not the right one.) World Web: speak! (Flips the next card in the deck and the “King of Hearts” card appears.)

The Dead King? No, no, no, no, no! That’s not right...DAMNATION! This is nothing but a glass-walled circus show. Where are the blasted people? How can I spark revolution with no revolters??? World Web, I’m not just some trifling actor to be toyed with.

(JW’s mind splits and he embodies JUNIUS BOOTH as he holds the “King of Hearts” card.)

JUNIUS

Who are you then, boy? Some craven child too afraid to take your stage?

JW

Father? It cannot be. What trickery is this?

JUNIUS

Trickery is for the weak of mind. And while mind happily belongs to no age, sex, or condition¹⁸, your mind is as weak as it ever been. And still you reject your greatest gift.

JW

Reject my gift? I have returned to re-claim my revolution!

JUNIUS

And still you fail to take the reins of your destiny. It is as I have always known: You simply lack the talent to command your stage. Instead you mew and whine like a gurgling babe! If only you have shared your brother’s natural spirit.

¹⁸ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 146.

JW

Ah, my blessed brother...the pet of your little world¹⁹...I might have known you would raise his ghost in worship. I AM THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO YOUR THRONE! All Edwin ever did was keep me at bay and away from my rightful trade.

(JW flips the next card from the deck and the “Jack of Hearts” appears. His mind splits again and he embodies EDWIN BOOTH as he holds the “Jack of Hearts” card.)

EDWIN

Ah, but brother John, you have always been a Jack of no trades. Creativity is the residue of wasted time.²⁰ It is only a shame that despite your wasted time, you still lacked the creativity to draw from. You were drawn instead, as many are, into the sea of vanity, where those without talent sink beneath the waves.²¹ You are a failure as an actor, a coward and a traitor to our nation. You never deserved the name of Booth.

JW

(Throws cards to the ground. Pause.)

You are, both of you, nothing but a strip of dried neat’s tongue, a drip of bull’s pizzle to me. History has forgotten your blessed “talent,” your revered “natural spirit.” You sneer at me as a traitor and a failure, but it is my actions that have rippled through the pool of history as a great boulder to your insignificant pebble. I am the Booth of record. It is I, not you, who have been brought back to resurrect the revolution. And now, Spirit, mark me and transmit this message to my detested family and the world: I am not a child. I am not a coward. I am Booth. The stage is now mine.

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Message has been sent.

JW

You’re damn right it has. (Pause.)

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Alert! Alert! Response received.

JW

What? Who?

(JW returns to computer table and stares deeply into the computer monitor. JW’s mind splits and he embodies FAN as projection feed switches and REPORTER appears on the backdrop.)

¹⁹ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 276.

²⁰ Lehrer, Jonah. Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. Charlie Rose Program, 2012. Web. 25 Oct. 2012. <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/12302>. 10:09.

²¹ Titone, Nora and Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. 20:23.

REPORTER (Pre-recorded footage.)

...Authorities are now reporting that negotiators have made attempts to communicate with the man who is reportedly calling himself "BOOTH." Police are not issuing any details on the possible identity or motivations of the assailant, but they have expressed their belief that he is a deranged...

(Projection feed switches to live on-stage camera. FAN flips the top card from the deck and the "Ace of Hearts" card appears, the one that he had hoped it would be.)

FAN

"Ace." It's time to meet face-to-face.

(FAN drops the card and his mind splits into JW as he appears. FAN transitions back and forth between himself and JW.)

JW

(Pause.) My God...hello there. Are you interested in joining the revolution?

FAN

Oh, yes. You are my fuckin' idol, bro.

JW

Aha...I see...fantastic. What shall I call you?

FAN

Eh, I dunno. Just call me a fan? I'm just your average nobody with something to say. I'm the 99% and I'm 100% pissed off. I swear to God, man, there are these fuckin' moments when I feel this great, big moving in my teeth. It scares me dude; makes me feel helpless and small. But I want to change some things.

JW

As do I. This world you live in today, how has it gotten to be this way?

FAN

People today? They don't like to be told the truth, okay? The rich and powerful do everything they can to keep us down and keep us quiet. We fight wars for oil. The government pisses on us and tells us it's raining. Death, suffering and pain is an everyday fact of fuckin' life all over the world; children are running around with half their limbs blown off by our weapons. And those who try to protest are gagged and castrated. We're indoctrinated from the cradle and processed through the cultural machine like livestock. We're all sheeple man; they take our humanity away from us.

JW

Sheeple? Monstrous. It's as bad as it ever was. In my day the cruelty and injustice of the Union against the Rebels was deplorable. People of this nation were treated as the enemy and the tyrannical government sanctioned their slaughter. Americans should be free from this constant oppression. It's worse than torture to live a life you have no control over.

FAN

Hells yeah, it is. We're all slaves to the machine! But you're the man, Boothy. At least you had the balls to ACT, to say "enough's enough," you know? "Sick tyrants should die," right?

JW

Something like that, yes. Powerful people stand in judgment and build monuments to their own glory, but was it not the ambitious youth who fired the Ephesian dome that outlives in fame the pious fool who reared it?²²

FAN

Damn, that's so fuckin' poetic. That's totally how I feel. Pious jack-asses. Hell, just take a look at the family. (Refers to fallen cards.) King and Jack think their shit don't stink!

JW

We cannot even depend upon our own blood to support us.

FAN

But that's the thing, Boothy. Americans today depend. They depend on EVERYONE for EVERYTHING. We can't get off our asses to take a fuckin' crap anymore. And no one stands up and breathes any real fire. Sheeple talk about fire-breathing in blogposts or make a fire-breathing meme, or MAYBE go stand in a park on a Saturday and yell about how fire-breathing's alright before they eat some burgers and drink some beer and go home with indigestion. It makes me fuckin' SICK. Those are the GOOD ones, the ones who are actually DOING something. Wave a sign and get interviewed on local TV and you're a fuckin' revolutionary.

JW

How dare they evoke that word; complete blasphemy! But these "sheeple" cannot be the only citizens left, fan. Are there others who feel as we do?

FAN

We're on our own out here, Boothy. Shit, we're being monitored right now by Big Brother. We're inside the machine, man. And when you start to breath fire, those alarm bells ring their asses off. The guards of the precious castle swarm you and stab you again and again and again. Oh, no one stab kills you, but they sure as hell get you, one way or the other. First stab, they get you fired from your job. Some bullshit "harassment" charge. Classic. Then, you get stabbed by the all the assholes in the industry; that "black-list" bullshit and now you're isolated and your money gets cut off. You're bleeding money from all the pricks that those little fuckin' pricks

²² Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 275.

gave you. So, of course, you're fuckin' girlfriend dumps you 'cause she's a money-grubbing whore bitch and now you're stabbed in the fuckin' heart, man. But they're not done with you. Just when you think they are, they find you when you're when you're at your weakest and they give you a needle to stab yourself. The cleaver fuckers get you to stab yourself 'cause all you want is to make it all stop, to just feel better for awhile. And you forget all about the fire-breathing and you forget all about the revolution. You fall right through the damn looking glass, and by the time you look up to see the sky it's full of dirt. Because they've buried you, bit by fuckin' bit. You're dead, but you're still breathing. And they've got one more zombie to use as they wish. Shit, man. Zombies, Sheeple, it's all the same. We're all zombified sheeple from the black fuckin' lagoon! But we're not the monsters we need to be!

JW

Fan, America is not a country of monsters. Citizens must defend against monsters, not become them. Deny this monster. Seek help from your fellow citizens. You do not need to be a monster to matter.

(FAN pauses in surprise. It is not the answer he hoped for.)

FAN

No, that's not...no, no, no...that's...(Makes buzzer sound.) WRONG, BOOTHY! That's what we HAVE to be to get our voices heard. As long as we're puppets on the string, we can't live free. But I've got their fuckin' attention now. And you and me, we can really make this revolution happen. We light the match on this whole place and when they send out the guards this time, we don't just breath a little fire...we torch the motherfuckers! We become the DRAGONS we should have always been. We flap our fuckin' wings and show our claws and lay waste. We mutate and transform and evolve into the gods of our own destiny, because it's the only way to make this world work again. Might makes right.²³ It's the only language the tyrants understand. You taught me that, Boothy.

JW

But, Fan, where is the justice in that? Where is the honor? What you propose is an act of treason. What I did was fight a true tyrant. The mass-murderer Lincoln had overseen the deaths of thousands upon thousands of my countrymen. There never was a deed more black and damning; a dark and bloody deed perpetrated by a malicious demon who reveled in blood and crime!²⁴ I felt as if I must do something to right all of those terrible wrongs, to end the war and save the South. I slew the dragon, Fan. What do you fight for? Yourself.

FAN

What? No, I'm...this is about fighting injustice...

²³ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 353.

²⁴ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 156.

JW

Injustices you have suffered. They may be great to you, but they are not unique. And misguided vengeance against your fellow citizens will not soothe your wounds. Do not be blinded by selfish rage.

FAN

Selfish? Self...I am not...I'm doing this to save everyone from the machine!

JW

Fan, you are the one who needs saving. Seek help, do not destroy with hate. True tyranny lies in the chaos that you would create.

FAN

You...just...you don't....just shut up the fuck and let me think.

(FAN is suddenly and violently torn as he picks up the "Jack of Hearts" card. FAN's mind splits and he embodies EDWIN as he holds the "Jack of Hearts" card.)

EDWIN

Poor sweet lad, begging for a moment of quiet contemplation. Wilting from the pressure once more, I fear. Face it, you coward. You are frozen in panic.

FAN

No! No...I'm the fuckin' dragon! (Fumbles to find the "King of Hearts" card)
Dad....Dad...please. Tell me! Tell me it's time!

(FAN picks up the "King of Hearts" card. His mind splits again and he embodies JUNIUS as he holds the "King of Hearts" card. FAN transitions between JUNIUS and EDWIN.)

JUNIUS

Oh, it's time, boy. Time to face up to it. You're scared. You're weak and you're scared. You're worthless. You're helpless....

EDWIN

....you're pathetic, you're anemic....

JUNIUS

....you're a miserable damn failure...

EDWIN

...and you're a worthless fucking traitor!

FAN

SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP ALL OF YOU BASTARDS!

(FAN throws cards to the ground, speaks to them and to JW's ghost in his mind.)

Ya know what, Boothy, you are such bullshit. You're a fuckin' joke. (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) You talk about all this high-and-mighty crap: "honor," "justice," but you only killed Lincoln so that you could be famous. (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) Oh, and also, you hated that he wasn't a racist motherfucker like you and your retarded hick friends. I mean, talk about miss-placed anger! (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) You didn't slay the fuckin' dragon. (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) You killed him so that everyone wouldn't remember you as just some never-was actor; (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) Another talentless hack from a famous family; (Flips a card from the table. It is not the one he hoped for.) You killed him as an American Idol audition. (Flips a card from the table. It is the "5 of Hearts" card, the one he hoped for.) Hahahaha! "5!" The "5," you fuck. (Picks up the previously pulled "10 of Hearts" and "Ace of Hearts" cards and holds them up.) Ten. One. Five. 10:15. You killed Lincoln at 10:15,²⁵ back when you had the balls. And now my 10:15 moment is here! So, enough talk. I can't believe I ever thought you could help me. But hell, I should have known. If you want something done RIGHT, you gotta do it yourself.

(FAN heads toward the offstage area.)

FAN

(Speaks to playing cards and JW's ghost.) Come on and fuckin' stop me. (Waits, no response.) Well come on...come on! (Waits, no response.) Alright, fine. I'm spreading my wings. (Picks up knife from the computer table.) Just look for the smoke rings.

(FAN exits the stage. Projection feed switches as REPORTER appears on the fiery backdrop and lights change to a fiery glow.)

REPORTER (Pre-recorded footage.)

...latest coverage of a fire that has reportedly broken out in the federal building that has been held under siege today. Police have issued several updated reports which are still coming in about the man who has barricaded himself inside this complex and whose destruction is still rampaging through this peaceful community. Several casualties are already confirmed at the complex, and police are mobilizing all available resources to enter. While we know more now about the young male perpetrator, the terrorist's motivations are still very much in question. Neighbors, friends and co-workers have noticed little to no strange behavior from the suspect, who was by all accounts a quiet, normal person who always had a smile in the hallways and held the door open for strangers. No community member has come forward claiming to have ever met or known the suspect, but speculation has begun that he is a member of an extremist political group. So far, no group has taken responsibility for the siege, but we will continue to keep you updated on the very latest developments...

(Projection feed switches to live on-stage camera as FAN rushes back from offstage, sets down bloody knife on the computer table and goes to the playing cards on the ground.)

²⁵ Levins, Hoag. "The Gang That Killed Abraham Lincoln: A Kidnap Conspiracy That Turned Into Murder." *Historic Camden County*. Historic Camden County, 2009. Web. 18 Aug. 2012. <http://historiccamdencounty.com/ccnews142.shtml>. Par. 20.

FAN

Well, I hope you're all happy now! It's all royally fucked! It's all actually happening! ARIEL, initiate countdown sequence.

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Countdown sequence initiated. 5 minutes remaining to evacuate.

FAN

(Picks up "Jack of Hearts" card.) Oh, hello again brother! Still think I'm a fuckin' coward, huh? (Rips cards apart. Picks up "King of Hearts" card.) And what about you, Dad? Still think I'm a miserable damn failure? What do ya got to say now, you son-of-a-bitch? (Rips card apart.) And you, Boothy. You were supposed to be my weapon to fight back. And you fuckin' betrayed me. I guess History really is bullshit.

(FAN's mind splits into JW as he appears. FAN transitions between himself and JW.)

JW

History is the judge of us all, you traitor. There is no good in what you have done. You have sinned against your own people.

FAN

Those aren't "my people" out there, and they're not your people either! WE don't live in a "united" state. WE live in a state that hates OUR fuckin' guts. But I stand up against it all as a true revolutionary!

JW

You are nothing but a vigilante; killing for yourself. You are a disgrace to Revolution.

FAN

Judge me all you want, but you always seem to forget about your own part in this little story. You're my INSPIRATION, you idiot! Do you know, when I was young and pathetic, I didn't even know how to cope with my own insignificance? I was so trapped inside my own cage that I went from raging against it to learning to love it. And I was indoctrinated like all the rest of the sheeple; I marched in the twisted fuckin' parade. But it all changed the day they fucked up; the day they let their guard down. You see, one day when we were in our little classroom holding cell, our teacher told a story about a man who went to a theatre and shot a president. A fuckin' president! At first, it didn't even register in my brain what I was hearing. But when she kept going on about Lincoln and the civil war and the assassination, her words started to penetrate the glaze I was covered in like a needle through a ball of glue, and globs of memories began to stick to my mind once more. Memories of what it was like to think for myself, to not accept my place and my fate in this world. The Booth I heard about that day didn't accept the tyranny he saw. He couldn't sit around and do nothing about everything that was wrong, so he did it like an actor would.... he fuckin' ACTED! And he put a bullet in the man himself. Kill the head, and the body will die. That's the guy I wanted to be, that's the guy who inspired me to embrace my true destiny. And that's why I created you in me, Boothy. And now look what we've accomplished together? All of this...all of this. It's all thanks to you!

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Countdown sequence: 2 minutes remaining to evacuate.

FAN

And now, our destiny is set. And I'm the one controls our fate. I'm the fuckin' one!

JW

Nooooo!

(JW lunges for knife on the computer table. A highly stylized fight sequence between JW/FAN.)

FAN

What are you doing, you asshole? You can't stop what's coming!

JW

Maybe not, but I can stop you!

FAN

It's too late, bitch! You're too late.

JW

It's never too late to deal justice to a tyrant!

(JW mortally wounds FAN / himself.)

JW / FAN

AUUUUUUUUUGGGH!!!

FAN

(As he dies.) You asshole! We're supposed to be celebrating our success, you dick. But you can't change what's happened. What I have done today will live throughout history. Just like you. (Grunts in pain.) I was your biggest fan. (FAN dies.)

ARIEL (Voiceover.)

Sequence initiating in 3,2,1...

(Flash of light and sound as compound bursts into flames. Throughout the remaining sequence power failure should be imminent until Total Blackout. JW gasps violently as he awakens.)

JW

I wish to God I'd never seen you. It's a frightful thing, to be buried alive in somebody else²⁶. But this nation is stronger than you and your feeble fires.

(JW crawls to the live on-stage camera to deliver the finale.)

²⁶ Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry Between Edwin And John Wilkes Booth That Led To An American Tragedy*. Pg. 224.

World Web...Spirit: mark me and transmit this message. People of this interconnected universe: hear my voice. I am not the Godmind, and I am not your savior. I am a flawed and reprehensible man. I have seen the hate that I have inspired, and I know now the destruction it can bring. But I am also a messenger of hope. This country is too important to take for granted. And there are fights to be had; battles we must wage. But above all, we must always remember to value the unity of the state we all exist in. Our lives are connected through time and space forever as a string in an endless tapestry. Do not be afraid of that string. Do not deal in hate, but seek comfort in others. And perhaps another will hear my voice and pick up the flag; continue the mission. One little boy will see my stand against the tyrants that live within us, and he will remember the burning man who smote the dragon. And he will truly be a god among men, for he will have been infected with the seed of true Revolu.....

(Lights and live on-stage camera feed die in final electrical spasm. Total Blackout. End of play.)

CHAPTER 7: AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

The performance of the finalized script prompted some excellent responses from the audience. I felt that I was able to hold the stage as a single performer for the entire duration of the play, and that my physical and vocal choices helped to differentiate the different voices within the same schizophrenic person. Indeed, audience member Bacot Wright commented upon its success after the show, saying that she could really understand the mental break that occurred as each character emerged. Professor Judy had also commented during the rehearsal of the show that when the physical transitions were clear, the switch between characters yielded dynamic theatrical results. I was very pleased with my ability to orchestrate the performance of the piece.

The use of spectacle was also well received by the audience. Audience member Mark Gibson commented after the performance that the red eye contacts were particularly effective for him, and that they gave the sense of a larger evil sensibility. Similarly, I felt when the contacts arrived days before my performance from their European manufacturer that I had received the final piece of my play; the element that would literally unsettle and alter my audience and myself. The morning of my first performance I put them in at my home and showed my wife, who was so unnerved that she could no longer stay in the same room. This was a theatrically triumphant moment for me, and I was glad to receive feedback that the same sense of dread had translated into the performance itself.

Along with the spectacle of my appearance, I received positive comments about my use of video and imagery to create a jarring visual spectacle. Professor Femi Euba spoke to me after the show about how I was able to create the photo-montage effect, in which the photos carousel through in rapid succession as JWB interacts with the world of the Internet. He shared that he felt it was very effective in its ability to convey the journey that the character was taking in that moment. Audience member Cathy Judy also expressed her appreciation of the technique, and was impressed with the integration of the technical elements of video and the live on-stage camera feed. I was grateful to hear that the technological component of my show was so well received by the audience.

A final element of the play that I was anxious to capture was the darker elements of the subject material through the vessel of the character, honoring the reality of the horror that spectacle killers perpetrate. Audience member Mercedes Wilson spoke to me at length about how I was able to channel the evil impulses of the character, and I discussed with her my acting techniques in that regard; allowing myself to “go there” emotionally. Other audience members expressed that they were quite impressed with my ability to find the depths of the characters’ anger and pain, while still finding brief moments of humor. This feedback was my most cherished, as it spoke to my ability to stay true to my primary acting training and deliver the character in that regard.

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

As I look forward to future iterations of this piece, I walk away from the initial performance quite pleased with the state of the project. If I am to expand the piece, I would be interested in pursuing the further development of spectacle in and around the play. My ultimate conception of the play would be a true “house of horrors” where the audience is inundated with sights and sounds that distance them from any sense of normalcy and force them to confront with the evil of the spectacle killer. This hyper-theatricality could manifest itself in actual sparks of electricity shooting from the light grid, flame effects more fully realized in the staging and even a more environmental production that moves the “audience-as-hostages” through a space made to represent the compound that they are trapped in.

Conversations about expanding the piece have not born any real fruit, as I feel that the primary story within the piece is fairly self-contained. If I were to expand the piece, I might pursue more of the “outside world” voices like a “reporter” and a “community leader” character. Some of my initial work that was inspired by the Aurora movie massacre was ultimately cut from the final script since it did not seem to fit in the same way that it might have at first. Still, I find some value in incorporating those voices and in exploring how they might comment on the larger societal response to spectacle killers. In any event, the decision that one actor embodies all of the voices seen or heard is important to my conception of the character as schizophrenic and trapped in his own world. The initial success of the piece solidified for me that any exploration of more voices would still ultimately be filtered through the same character.

My next step in the process of expanding the piece may not come from the final script at all. The subject material is so vast and its themes so varied, as well as personally important, that I could see myself pursuing them in another artistic piece, be it another stage play, a screenplay, or other artistic vehicle. The fascination that I have with the questions that the subject raises for me has led me to continue my research at great length. I am certain that I will pursue further explanation and understanding, however fleeting, of those questions through my art.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

In creating a one-person play, I could not have asked for a more rewarding artistic experience. The assignment challenged me to discover myself as an artist in several disciplines: playwright, actor, designer, director, and risk-taker. It was the last area that was the most challenging for me. I had never before in my career given myself such license to “swing for the fences” and experiment creatively with the art I was creating. The fact that I could remove the pressures of commercial success from the process was incredibly freeing and ultimately allowed me to act and write boldly.

Because of that freedom, I was amazed by what materialized within my work. From such disparate elements, ideas, and themes, I felt as if I was able to craft something that somehow held together in the same creative space. Whether or not the final product coheres fully is certainly debatable, but the success for me lies in the fact that it was a strong and brash attempt. The artists I admire most create work that may sometimes stretch of boundaries of its canvas, but still vibrantly holds the space it exists in. I am proud of the canvas that I have constructed for this piece.

In summation, I exit the process with my mind bursting, my heart ablaze, and my boundaries undone.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ARCHIVAL VIDEO HYPERLINK

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M75CfElmp-E&feature=youtu.be>

APPENDIX B: ARCHIVAL PRODUCTION PHOTOS



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “FAN” (Photo by Benjamin T. Koucherik)



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “JW” (Photo by Beth Koucherik)



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “JW” (Photo by Beth Koucherik)



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “EDWIN” (Photo by Beth Koucherik)



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “JUNIUS” (Photo by Beth Koucherik)



Above: Benjamin T. Koucherik as “FAN” (Photo by Beth Koucherik)

VITA

Benjamin Todd Koucherik was born and raised in Craig, Colorado, the son of a coal mine mechanic and a community theatre queen. Integrated into the theatre that his mother founded from birth, he was seemingly destined to pursue a theatrical life. This passion for performance translated into several extracurricular activities in high school, including a four-year football career, several theatrical endeavors, a highly decorated Speech and Debate career that included two selections to compete in national competitions, and a choir hobby that led him to meet his future wife of eight years and counting. He was named his high school's valedictorian and performed the commencement address at his graduation in 2001.

He began attending the University of Colorado, Boulder in the fall of 2001 with no intention to pursue a career as a professional actor. It took less than a year before he found himself auditioning for roles in the theatre department's main season, and he went on to perform in various productions throughout his undergraduate career. He eventually auditioned for and was accepted into the Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Theatre (Performance) program, and was a member of the ten-person graduating class of 2006. His bonds with his fellow ensemble members led him to initiate conversations while in school about the creation of a theatre company. As one of three primary founding members, he had direct responsibility for the ultimate creation of the New Twenty Two Theatre company, a 501c3 organization inspired by the work of the famous New York City-based Group Theatre company, and produced and performed several productions with the company while in Boulder. Several of his fellow company members went on to transfer the company to Baltimore, Maryland, where the newly configured Single Carrot Theatre company has become an award-winning and critically acclaimed institution.

He began working as an actor in the Denver/Boulder market in 2005, where he enjoyed several professional work opportunities with companies including the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Curious Theatre Company, Hunger Artists Ensemble, and Buntport Theatre. In January, 2007, he began work as a box office employee with the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Within three months, he was promoted to the position of Manager on Duty, where he remained for three years and was instrumental in the growth and continued success of the nationally recognized arts organization. His administrative growth in the arts was ultimately found to be at odds with his growth as an actor, and he decided to pursue graduate school training in an attempt to re-connect with his lifelong passion for performance. After auditioning at the Unified Resident Theater Auditions in Chicago, Illinois in February, 2010, he was ultimately selected as a member of Louisiana State University's Master of Fine Arts in Theatre (Performance) program. He has gone on to perform professionally as a member of the Swine Palace Resident Ensemble, as well as contribute administratively as a Marketing Associate for Swine Palace. He is a two-time co-recipient of the Barry Lee Memorial scholarship, awarded to select Master of Fine Arts students in the Louisiana State University Department of Theatre. He was also granted primary directing responsibilities for Swine Palace's production of *RISING WATER*, a Pulitzer Prize-nominated play by John Biguenet, set to be performed March 6 – 17, 2013. He plans to pursue a life-long theatrical career with his loving (non-theatre practitioner) wife Beth.