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The role of speed in Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: a production thesis in acting

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THE ROLE OF SPEED IN SHAKESPEARE'S
THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA:
A PRODUCTION THESIS IN ACTING

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
Jennifer N. Kelley
B.A., University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2000
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ABSTRACT

The author chose Speed, from Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* directed by John Dennis, as her thesis project in Fall 2002. This thesis includes an introduction, a character analysis, a journal of the rehearsal process and a conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's stories deal with humanity in a true and simultaneously heightened way. I believe it is virtually impossible to become engaged with a Shakespearean play and not understand the objectives of each character. Due to the fact that the characters pursue their passions to the fullest extent with poetry and a rhythm that simulates a heartbeat. I hope to find such a passionate heart in Speed which is my casting in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The other members of the cast consist of my classmates, graduate students in their first year and a handful of undergraduates. The cast list is as follows: Adam Hose as Proteus, R. W. Smith (Smitty) as Valentine, Libby King as Julia, Debbie Fleming as Sylvia, Allison Glenzer as Lucetta, Chris Cariker as Antonio, Preston Davis as Panthino, Chaney Tullos as Thurio, John Lambremont as Eglamour, Eric Little as the Host and Graham Frye as the Duke. Also, in our production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* the outlaws double as cheerleaders and hippies.

This brings me to the concept of the play. John Dennis has decided to set the play in the height of the nineteen-sixties. After finishing high school, a group of blossoming young adults from Kansas embark on their first trip to San Francisco. They all go for their own reasons. So, we have taken Shakespeare's script and relocated it in another time and place. In our version, we will be embarking to the West Coast. In Shakespeare's original version the characters travel from Verona to Milan. I find our concept specifically intriguing, because my parents are hippies/beatniks and they, too, have taken their own journeys to the coast.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona is Shakespeare's shortest play. However, it is not overlooked by scholars. The comedy includes a vicious act: rape. The rape scene, at the end of the play, adds a sense of darkness and heaviness. So, it presents a challenge to actors, directors and audience members. The resolution after the attempted rape is rapid and it almost nullifies the act itself. This obstacle cannot be overlooked when looking at the comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

The set will be able to accommodate three different locales; Verona, Milan and the forest. The set will consist of a large downstage playing area, a two-story structure upstage and trees which drop down from the grid for the forest scene. These are the three major set changes. Verona/Kansas will be represented by the downstage area, Milan will be represented by the two-story structure which is the Duke's house and the trees will be dropped from the grid creating illusion of a forest.

I wanted to audition for this character, in September 2002, because I felt I had an understanding of Speed. Speed is witty, clever and enjoys playing games. For Speed, fulfillment is not only the ability to one-up everyone she meets but also the infinite possibility of meeting a challenge. Speed is a perceptive and devious creature with a respect for playfulness. I found a doorway to Speed through a secret; her love for Valentine. After being cast, my director, John Dennis, and I came to the decision that I will play Speed as a woman in love with Valentine. Within this secret, the puzzle starts to come together. Also, there are other hints I discussed with my mentor, John Dennis. For example, the gift of the name Speed. Consequently, we have derived that I will be quick

in not only speech but also in action. Speed is a character who has the ability to slip the rug from under anyone's feet, except Launce who is the perfect opposite for such a woman. This is how my process starts, and how my ideas the weekend before rehearsal have started, and begin with such verbs as to spin, to dizzy, to wrestle, to shake, to spark and to wake up.

I am not only excited to be working with the concept and my character, but also my fellow classmates. I feel, with them, anything is possible. I will be able to work with some new actors as well and some actors who will be returning to Swine Palace. In the pages which follow, I have included a journal of my rehearsal process and a character analysis. These two things aided in my discovery and exploration of the role and I hope any reader can catch a glimpse of what was truly experienced on stage.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

What are the special moments between Valentine and Speed?

One of my most special moments with Valentine is one which was born out of the special relationship we had agreed upon. Valentine says, “Belike, boy, then you are in love”(II.1.74), and I say, “True sir; I was in love”(II.1.76). This moment encompasses the love I have for Valentine. It is a moment of truth followed by a joke. The punch line is, “with my bed”(II.1.76). The line sums up the unrequited love Speed has for Valentine followed by the mandatory joke. Basically, she says she is in love but instead of confessing the truth, she lies and says she was in love with sleep. Another one of my favorite moments is Speed explaining to Valentine how Sylvia has written a letter to him by making him write to himself. Speed does this out of genuine care for her friend’s feelings because she knows how much Valentine cares for Sylvia.

What are the special moments between Proteus and Speed?

Speed and Proteus have a special moment after their “wit off” in I.1. Speed needs to follow her master, and she asks Proteus where Valentine has gone, and he sends her in the right direction. This solidifies their relationship because, after all the “grief” she has given him, he could easily choose to send her in the wrong direction. Proteus also plays with Speed. In I.1. he has a verbal sparring with her regarding sheep before he gets completely fed up and pressure’s her to give him a straight answer.

What are the special moments between Launce and Speed?

Launce and Speed's reunion is very special. She is pleased Launce has come to join the gang in Milan/San Francisco. Speed then gets embarrassed by Launce's sexual innuendo and this leads to a very tense moment in their first scene together (II.5.) before they leave for the ale house. Launce's kissing of Speed is also a special moment. She is caught off-guard, overwhelmed, flustered and excited. This excitement leads to their pairing-up at the end of the play.

What are the questions I really need answered? (Really ask these questions)

My character's life onstage begins with a question. Speed asks Proteus, "Sir Proteus, save you! Saw you my master"(I.1.70). Of course, she really needs this answered because she must accompany Valentine to Milan/San Francisco. I also ask, "You conclude my master is a shepherd then, and I a sheep"(I.1.76-77). For my Speed, in particular, this is an important question because she cares so much for Valentine and she would like to know how others perceive this love. The point is: Speed asks a lot of questions. Speed is very curious and she loves to get the scoop. For example, she really wants Launce to tell her the situation between Julia and Proteus in II.5.,but when she makes a statement it is always the truth and it is usually pointed.

Statements my character makes

Speed makes statements about needing money to Proteus; " less than a pound shall serve me for carrying your letter" (I.1.105-106). Speed also makes statements about Sylvia to Valentine which substantiate her love for him. For example, she tries to

convince Valentine that Sylvia is deformed when she says, “You never saw her since she was deformed [?]” (II.1.60). Speed also attempts to explain that love is blind; she blatantly says, “Because Love is blind” (II.1.67). Sylvia tricks Valentine into writing himself a love letter as if it were from her and Speed nimbly attempts to clarify the game Sylvia is playing with him. Speed tells Valentine, “Herself hath taught her love himself to write unto her / lover” (II.1.158-159). However, Valentine is not a quick study. Some statements Speed makes are asides. For example, she explains the letter situation to the audience when she has this aside in II.1. 130-134:

My master sues to her; and she hath taught her suitor,
He being her pupil, to become her tutor.
O excellent device! Was there ever heard a better,
That my master, being scribe, to himself should write
the letter?

Many of the statements Speed makes are intended to pry information from others through her verbal trickery. For example, she tries to exhaust Proteus when she says, “Well I perceive I must fain to bear with you”(I.1.120).

Speed’s Past

I come from Verona. A small town high school and a farming community. Every one knows everyone. My childhood was a patchwork quilt of experiences. I studied more than my classmates. However, I’m clever enough to blend in. I met Valentine through several unusual consequences. His parents hired my parents to work on their farm and one day, three years ago, my parents were involved a fatal car accident. Valentine’s parents took me in, under the condition that I take care of Valentine. Valentine was a slow study so I tutored him and tried to get him to where he needed to be. Before my

parents' death, my family situation was middle-American, blue collar, and I was carefree. I did not mind the work I did for the family. I am a hard worker because of the way I was raised. My parents died when I was fifteen and since then I have been sheltered by Valentine's family. This was a hard transition but, overall it has helped me develop my sense of independence.

Major influences on me are: my parents, who always knew how to work and how to enjoy life and Valentine's family who have molded me as well. I know they enjoy my company and get to see, in me, things which they would have never gotten to experience without my being around. I live with abandon which is a pleasant opposite to the strictures of their society. I think they find this abandon entertaining. Experiences which made a lasting impression on me were: (1) being first in my class, (2) ,watching my parents play charades, (3) seeing Valentine grow up into a handsome young man, (4) watching the hippies pass through Kansas on their way to the west coast. These experiences developed my sense of humor. The ten most important facts about me are: (1) I like to stand out, (2) I am very clever, (3) I have no real ties (with the exception of Valentine), (4) I have never been a beauty queen, (5) I long for new experiences, (6) I feel like I can survive under tough circumstances, (7) I have good friends, (8) I am in love with Valentine, (9) I like to have fun, (10) I long to go to the west coast to explore a new life style. The five people who matter the most to me are: (1)Valentine,(2) Launce,(3) my parents,(4) Proteus,(5) Julia. The most crucial events in my life are my parents' deaths, being taken in by Valentine's family, and my upcoming trip to the coast. I am independent, thankful, witty, and in love with the boy next door. I don't have any

brothers or sisters. The closest thing I have to a brother is Launce. My early years were filled with work and love: my parents offered me support and independence. My education has been important to me and I feel it is a tool I possess which sets me apart from most others. The most prominent external force on me, right now, is my desire to follow the people going to the west coast. Forces which still have an affect on me are my parents. I feel they can live through me.

Speed's Present

The major factor influencing me at this moment is my need to catch up with Valentine. Other people tend to describe me as funny, fast and smart. I describe others as kind, attractive and slow. In groups I hang out with Valentine and I view him as a motorcycle and myself as his side-car. I also hang out with Launce and through him I attempt to get news of Proteus and Julia. He might say I am nosy. I am fun-loving. My physical appearance is cute and I am sexy. I have blonde hair and green eyes and possess a nice figure. I get freckles in the sun. I anxiously await a change of appearance. I want to blossom in Milan. I also hope to change drastically when I get out of Verona. I am full of energy. I like to run everywhere. I seem to always be catching up to others. My usual clothing is overalls, big boots with accessories. My vocal life is loud: I am not afraid of being heard. I like to accentuate my vocal life with physical punctuation. I do this to make sure others are on the same page with me. My most distinguishing characteristics are my rosy cheeks. I have them from running everywhere. I also have little braids all over my head. I like these braids because they make me different from everyone else. My favorite activities would include going out to drink with Launce and following Valentine

around. My temperament would be described as enthusiastic and jovial. I am hopeful, child-like, awake and playful. My life-style involves picking on Valentine and getting him to understand things without having to teach him. I usually leap out of bed ready to face a new day, and I enjoy chilling-out with Launce. I am most interested in new things. I am least interested in repetition. I am most interested in Valentine and I am least interested in staying in Verona. I do not really have objects which mean a great deal to me emotionally. I do, however, have my boots. I really like having them; I feel like I could travel the world in my big boots. My interior monologues usually sound like, "What," "You're kidding me," "Tell me more," and "Get a load of this guy!" Scenes in my life which I often repeat are my verbal matches with Proteus and attempting to steer Valentine in the right direction. I am surprised by my ability to play off of others and I am surprised by them. I usually deal with problems in a humorous manner. I also try to get Valentine out of trouble. I am constantly worried about him. I try to be a leader when facing a problem. When facing physical altercations, I count on Valentine's strength. Above all else, I believe that life is worth living to the fullest extent.

Self Descriptions

I perceive myself as being very healthy, cute and bright. I have great analytical skills. I catch on to things others might miss. My favorite food is candy. I like music from the period in which I exist like Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix. Before I was exposed to this genre of music, I enjoyed hearing the high school band. My favorite pastime is "cutting up" at the ale house. I have an audience there. We enjoy telling jokes on each other and raising a raucous. My favorite people are my friends, Valentine and his family, Launce,

Julia and Proteus. I do not think I have been to my favorite places yet. I think my favorite place so far is Milan. Physically, I am small but strong. I live in my limbs. I have strong legs and I like to express myself physically, using the full length of my arms. I have an open sense of space because of the corn fields in which I grew up. I make eye contact with every one with one exception: Sylvia. I usually run everywhere and I am not afraid to invade other people's space. I have been known to tackle people. My voice is big and if I drew it, it would look like a big funnel. I talk very fast and like to punctuate my speech with similes. I sometimes use rhyme because I find it challenging. Rhyming is a game I play with myself to sharpen my skills of word use. I also like to wear a myriad of colors. I enjoy looking like a ragamuffin. The bright colors accent my bright outlook and my sense of humor. I like sparkly things and I like to put them in my hair. I think they are cute and fun to wear. I feel like my style really reached its full potential once I made my trek to the west coast. Manners are not important to me. I do not feel like hiding myself behind formalities but I usually fit in with most groups. I think this is because of my education and ability to make friends. I do not adhere to peer pressure. I like to do my own thing. However, I do follow Valentine around because that's my job. My work and play are married to each other. Work is fun to me because all I have to do is keep Valentine in line. It is difficult when he is being stubborn about understanding something I am trying to explain to him. I have not had sex. I plan on it and I delight in the possibilities of others having sex. I am driven by my sexual tension. I like to flirt. I am aware of myself. I sometimes forget myself when talking to Valentine and I open up to him in hopes that he will fall for me.

Speed's Future

I want to have a fun life full of travel and different experiences. I would like to discover all of myself. I think the majority of this self-discovery occurs in Milan because I find that I fit in well there. I face the obstacle of growing past my crush on Valentine and moving on to a more fitting relationship with Launce. I did not realize this until we made our trip to the ale house in Milan. My strategy for the near future is to go back to Verona, watch my friends tie the knot, and then leave with Launce, backpacking throughout the world. It will be fantastic fun!

Tactics I will most likely use in my life are, to trick, to pull a leg, to wake, to shake and to tempt. Sometimes I do not see what is best for me, such as the relationship with Launce but, in general, things come to me when they are supposed to. My life plan would be a life full of travel and meeting new and exciting people all over the world. Launce and I could do this by working small jobs here and there; in five years I see myself on the road. In ten years we might have found an interesting place to play for a while. In twenty years I will come back to Verona and settle down with Launce. We will have the best parties filled with our tales of the times we had on the road. If I am remembered, it will be for my free spirit and ability to make others smile. In my darkest fears I am afraid I will end up bored, uninspired and living in a dull pattern of monotony. In my wildest fantasies I join a traveling group of musicians, entertainers and gypsies to tour the world. If all my dreams come true I will be satisfied by the joy I see in others. The relationships I most seek are the ones with the people I have yet to meet.

Relating the following list to Speed:

color- Red would be a color I would associate with Speed, because it is so vibrant and loud. I would also add in some green for Speed's vibrancy and some blue for her unrequited love for Valentine.

fabric- Speed's fabric would be a psychedelic print with lots of color.

animal- Different animals could be associated with Speed. Some of these would be a lion, a monkey and a robin.

music- Once in Verona, Speed "gets hip" to Jimi Hendrix, The Grateful Dead and The Allman Brothers Band.

center- Speed's center is in the hips. She also uses her arms and legs but these gestures are also driven from the hips.

rhythm- Speed's rhythm is fast.

opposite- The opposite of Speed would be lethargic, non-vibrant and quiet.

JOURNAL

Prior to rehearsal

I will begin by doing a summary and a scene by scene breakdown of objectives prior to rehearsal. In the first scene in which she appears, Speed is looking for Valentine, her childhood friend and companion who she keeps in line. She finds Proteus and asks him if he knows Valentine's locale. Proteus discloses that he has left for Milan. They have a sparring of sorts because Proteus calls Speed a sheep. Proteus asks about a letter Speed was to deliver to Julia and Speed then requests some retribution/money for the successful delivery. Speed, perhaps, needs some funding for her trip to attend Valentine to Milan. She then does everything she physically can in order to gather the tokens for her work. Perhaps, she is a witty vagabond traveling from small job to small job. However, the majority of her work involves taking care of her friend, Valentine, with whom she secretly is in love. She leaves with change in her pockets, ready to go to Milan with Valentine.

In the next scene in which she appears, Speed is traveling with Valentine doing a groovy, pop festival, trippy scene on the west coast of Milan, when she stumbles upon a glove. Obviously, it is Valentine's; he hasn't ever been able to keep up with anything! So, she retrieves it immediately and would like some appreciation for her keen eye. The glove turns out to be Sylvia's. Valentine admits he is in love with Sylvia. Speed is jealous and stabs him with her sharp wit. She plays her best game, and shoots out rapid negative responses to Valentine and Sylvia's relationship when Sylvia appears. Speed gets hungry

and tries to wake Valentine from his love slumber to eat. That is the first scene of act two. The next scene in which Speed finds herself, she is pushing Valentine to beat up Thurio. The scene then turns into a struggle, for wit, honor, and most of all Sylvia, between Thurio and Valentine. It is a scene in which one gets just a glance of the devotion which Speed has for Valentine.

Then, comes II.5. Launce and Speed reunite. These two buddies counterbalance each other in an exceptional way. Launce teaches Speed how to relax and they are the best of friends. In this scene Speed manages, hopefully, to cheer Launce a little with a trip to the pub and works on him to give her the scoop on Proteus and Julia. He does so and they head out to the pub. Launce always has the final shot. Perhaps, this freedom of wit brings the two together at the end of our version of the play.

The next scene is III.1 in which Speed and Launce go over a single's add or newspaper. I believe the provocative essence of the scene takes over and causes Speed to flirt. Launce finally informs me of the need for me to attend Valentine. Frustrated with Lance, and also with herself for liking him, she throws caution to the wind, gives him a smack on the lips and runs off.

Of course, these thoughts about the scenes and characters will change over the course of the rehearsal process. I have learned the best places to begin one's exploration of character are the script, the director, research and one's own imagination. I believe the more time I spend with the play the more likely I am to come up with sparks or

discoveries which lead me to character development. As an artist, I actively pursue sparks. When a spark does happen it must be carefully cradled. These sparks become the birth place for character.

October 15th

I have just finished the first four days of rehearsal. Friday, we began with I.1. at 10 a.m. which was early for me. I knew Speed was going to be fast and I knew I needed to be off book. I also knew I needed to get money from Proteus during the first scene in which I appear. Yet, I could not get hold of a clear physical life for these objectives. Therefore, the first scene seemed a little off kilter. I ran in to the space. I went on as quickly as possible. I have some very complex lines such as: “ The shepherd seeks the sheep and not the sheep the shepherd, but I seek my master and my master seeks not me therefore I am no Sheep” (I.1.87-89). I felt my way through the scene. Saturday, I felt a little weary again. I just could not put my finger on the life of the first scene. Again, we repeated the same scene, I.1. and I decided to slow down a bit and try to listen to what Proteus and I were saying. I had previously just attempted to act as fast as possible. Adam (Proteus) reassured me, we would find the scene. J.D. then came up to the space and strategically blocked the moments and physical life of the scene. I took notes which amounted to needing to pick up the cues and needing to make Speed more physical in general. I also had the joy of watching Allison Glenzer, an equity actor who graduated from the program. From her, I noted the commedia stances which seemed to be engrained in her body and I found the style in which I needed to head with Speed. The following day we were off.

Monday and Tuesday then proved to be much more fruitful, for I began to understand how to physically punctuate with my lines in a strong, yet, true sense. I began to review my lines while physically embodying commedia poses and I let a physical life be born out of this Italian form of comedy and improvisation. This was a wonderful base for my character. We also moved on to the first scene I have with Valentine in Milan. Milan equates to San Francisco in the play. I felt much more solid here. I felt as if I brought more to the space. I hope, now, I can return to I.1. with Proteus and add my own sensibility to the physical style of that scene. I believe we will return to it tomorrow. I have begun to jog before rehearsal, which makes me feel more physically, vocally and mentally alive. I hope to activate my focus.

October 18th

Today we ran II.1. which begins with a street scene in Milan. This scene is one in which the most is revealed about my character. In particular, my love for Valentine. I enjoy this scene a great deal. Speed mocks Valentine's love of Sylvia throughout the scene. I have found that it is very easy to mimic Debbie (Sylvia) because we have worked together for the past two years. I also am excited about my first scene with Launce, in which our friendship and interdependence is disclosed. I have rehearsal for the fight scene tomorrow morning. I look forward to working with Payson Burt, our fight choreographer.

I also went for my costume fitting. I will be in brown patchwork, short overalls and boots for the first scene. I then change into a psychedelic, long, bell-bottomed pair of

overalls. I am excited and I always feel so flattered by designers and costumers because of all their hard work. I know they put much time and thought into their creations.

October 22

We worked the fight choreography Saturday and Monday. We finished the first part of the fight on Saturday. It was great. I felt exhilarated and then we did a spin or counterbalance move which I really did not achieve on Saturday. Yet, I feel like I will connect with it as soon as I build up my strength. On Monday, It was so wonderful to do choreography with Payson. His work in the show is so organic and fluid. The moves have such a natural progression. I feel very positive about the fight and I think it is very funny.

Tonight, we went back and worked the beginning of the show which I really feel is coming together. It was very clear that I want money from Proteus. J.D. brought up that I need to make the choreography in the first scene more fluid and I need to own it. So, I will. He is very happy with my work. I called Adam tonight and I have made the choice that Speed runs through the space and then realizes who she saw and goes back. Speed completely runs through the space and then re-enters. So, all is well. Fifteen days until preview.

November 2

We have just entered tech weekend and we are polishing the work throughout the process. In the past week, I have gotten some really good feedback, with the exception of

scene III.1. This scene really seemed to be headed nowhere. Then after further consideration and our first complete run thru on Thursday October 31st, J.D., Sean and I have come to some conclusions. This scene must further the relationship between Launce and Speed. We also have decided that Launce and Speed have a make-out session offstage and it occurs during their jaunt to the ale house. In turn, this helps the listing scene because it is about another woman and causes Speed to become jealous and more involved with the list. She does this because she wants Launce to recognize her in his life. She gets flustered and then Launce suddenly grabs her in *Taming of the Shrew* fashion and gives her a big smooch.

Rehearsal for the week went well, I found myself solidifying most of my scenes. Now, act two is my major focus. Sean had some really great ideas today and J.D. molded what we discovered. Now, I think it will really sing. Speed has ended up having a big heart. She loves the unattainable Valentine. She gets tamed by Launce and is also approached during the fight scene by a French outlaw who flatters her.

Tomorrow, we will move on to make-up and costumes. I have not figured out what I want to do with my hair. I think Speed has rosy cheeks. This can be justified by all of her running. I too have been running three to four times a week. This has helped with my agility on stage. I would like my crosses to be full-out sprints. So, the week has been productive. I missed my entrance with Launce today, which really ticked me off. Yesterday, we seemed to be going so slowly with tech and today we picked it up. So, I

was behind. It is really unfortunate that I was not on time. I think I will look over my lines and then see if I can retire to bed.

First Dress

Today was our first dress rehearsal. Therefore, there were many new elements. My first scene with Proteus was forced today. I forgot the playful edge which I need to assume. However, the Milan scene went really well. After my entrance in II.4. I slide off with a “joint” and leave Valentine and Thurio to brawl. I get a big kick out of it because I get the joint and leave Valentine in turmoil. After that, it was time for the new Launce scenes, not new but without the pig and without our usual blocking. Furthermore, we were adding sexual tension between us. This too went well, considering it was our first time to do it in this manner. In III.1. I have the listing scene with Launce which now has been moving in the right direction. I take the toilet paper from Launce and I figure out he is reading about another woman. I become angry and he smooches me. Then, I run off. It went well. It is all coming together. I feel pretty good about the entire play. I need to remember to play with Adam and also remember to get the money from him. We did the fight today, it went well. We went fifty percent and I felt like it was quite fast. The fight is built into my body now. Overall, the show is physically taxing. I ran four miles today to engage my body and breathing. After all, Shakespeare’s works are the Olympics of plays. The notes I got today were all relating to opening up some things more. J.D. said I sounded great out there which makes me feel secure.

As far as my costumes they are both comical and there are dynamic differences between the two. One is short overalls and they are brown plaid. I have a shirt which consists of brown, checkered patterns too, big boots and brown long socks which I pull up like knee socks. I also clip some things in my hair which are curly braids glued on clips, the same color as my hair. This gives me a country, tom-boy, and nerdy look. That outfit is Verona (Kansas). For Milan, Speed gets funky with some blue, green, and purple, water-patterned, bell-bottom overalls. I also wear the cutest colored shirt ever. It is a peasant shirt with child-like cut out flowers and zigzag ribbon on the sleeves. It reminds me of Twiggy which is the direction I am headed with Speed in Milan (San Francisco). I also change my clip on braids, to a pink color, and I put blue eye shadow on.

November 5th

Tonight we ran thru the show and all went well. I felt as if my scenes were all very solid, I had one line mishap. I feel as though we are ready for the preview tomorrow. I remembered to open up my movement when mocking Sylvia. I also could be heard by J.D. My notes consisted of really making Adam the butt of the “noddy” joke. I also need to turn out from Adam on the shirt joke. I also need to have a stronger choice regarding my use of the toilet paper. After the kiss, I need to recognize my connection with Launce and I. I will think through these notes before rehearsal in order to make the adjustments.

I am ready for an audience. I will look over every line tomorrow and say each one out loud, remembering my intentions. I also was amazed by my classmates today. They

are all doing so well. This is such a good opportunity to see them growing and activating Shakespeare. There are many technical people involved in this show. I appreciate them to the utmost degree. Tonight, in particular, I noticed the follow spots and what a demanding job they have during our run. I am proud of all of them. Jo Curtis, our voice coach, is stressing how important it is to really drink a lot of water due to the fact that the Reilly Theater is dusty. I have been filling up on what I think is a reasonable amount. We also have the luxury of area mikes for voice amplification so hopefully, we will be able to take care of our voices during the run. Tomorrow is preview. I look forward to having some people there to react with and talk to. There may not be many people but, there will be new people and new reactions. I guess I will get some rest before tomorrow's show.

November 6th

Today we did our first preview. It was absolutely wonderful to have people to talk to. The Proteus scene went well. They really dug my sheep lazzi. I think I am being clear. The Milan scene went well. I felt solid and understood. I think it is the scene in which the most is revealed about Speed. It crescendos with a small monologue, explaining to Valentine what exactly is going on with Sylvia. The small Thurio scene was fine. I try not to steal focus as I exit with the joint. I then meet with Launce in Milan. Guess what? He wasn't there. We were able to have cue lights and mine did not go off. However, having done the scene previously I knew the Mamas and the Papas were singing past my cue so I entered and looked for Launce (as Speed). He wasn't there. What a shock so I exited. I did not feel I could improvise the Bard and I knew it was not a plot dependant scene. Meanwhile, Launce did enter to an empty stage and exited. He

came off stage right and we were face to face! J.D. got up and had a brilliant impromptu speech about this being a preview and that these things happen. So we made it. We entered and went straight to the end of the scene with J.D.'s brilliant insight. Whew, our second act scene went well. The fight was nice; again I have to thank Payson. We made it!

November 7th

Tonight was our second preview. I think we were all a little tired. The audience was a bit smaller. Last night it was eighty-eight. Mike Tick, the interim artistic director of Swine Palace Productions attended and he really enjoyed the show. Launce made his entrance and our scenes went very well. I remembered my notes from last night, which were mostly about opening up some things. The Proteus scene went the best it ever has tonight. I cannot stress how important listening is! My fate lies in my scene partners; my classmates. The Milan scene was hot, until in the final monologue a train passed through Baton Rouge. I hope it is not a nightly occurrence. The Launce scenes were on the money. Our kiss was fantastic. We took a moment to realize what we had done and I ran off. It was magical. Tomorrow we have two shows on opening day. The morning will be for school children and tomorrow night is our formal opening. I am excited and I probably need some rest. I hope for the best.

Opening Weekend

Friday was a fun day. In the morning we had a matinee for about twenty-five students. Twenty-five is a generous estimate! The show felt very intimate. I have

concluded that theater is more exciting when houses are filled. Part of having a good response is having a big response. Popularity helps theater stay alive. We, as a cast, needed the show. It is important to try to relate the language in order to understand it more ourselves. We all went our separate ways to prepare for opening night. We were called at 6:30, but we did not have fight call. We went straight into the show at 7:30. The show was on fire and the audience was very receptive. I love opening nights and opening night audiences. Everyone seems so together. I felt like the show went very well. Smitty (Valentine) fell during the fight but we played off it really well. When we sang the song at the end of the show the energy and excitement was very easily felt. Saturday night we did the show and some of us were tired. I slept in very late on Saturday, to be well rested for the show. I twisted my ankle in the first scene when Adam tossed me off of his back. However, it still seemed to work. The San Francisco scene went well except it was a little more serious than it had been. I think it is important to keep it light. The Launce and Speed scenes are developing well. The kiss seems to hit home with the audience. It is strange. The Sunday matinee was great. I thought there were quite a few people there for a Sunday. The audience was quiet but not asleep. I really enjoy connecting with them. Some friends of mine from New Orleans will be coming to the show this week and next. Actually, strangely enough, Romeo and Juliet are coming to the show from The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane. Tomorrow the review will come out. Yet, I think a good one could only help attendance for the show. The reviewer from The Advocate came on Saturday which is sad because the second night is generally so different from opening; less energy. Tomorrow we have a school matinee. Today is our day off. I took full advantage of it and straightened my house and did laundry for the week. It was nice to be

off. I hope to keep my energy up and not to hurt my ankle again. I only have a minor sprain and I have really been trying to take care of it. I am sure I will be refreshed for the next shows we do.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the show went well. I am glad I have gotten the opportunity to explore the character of Speed and really make her my own. I have learned so many things about physical comedy and reaching the audience with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can become distant due to the language barrier the general public might feel they are facing. I believe this production did a good job of making the language and characters easy to relate to and easy to understand. In conclusion, I had a great time and anxiously await the next time I will be able to do one of Shakespeare's plays.

VITA

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