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The role of Olympia in Charles Mee's Big Love: a production thesis in acting

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THE ROLE OF OLYMPIA IN
CHARLES MEE'S *BIG LOVE*:
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
Elizabeth N. Travis
B.A. Hendrix College, 2004
May 2007

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Rehearsal Process.....	4
Character Analysis.....	8
Actor’s Score of Charles Mee’s <i>Big Love</i> from the Perspective of the Character Olympia.....	21
Conclusion.....	61
Bibliography.....	63
Appendix: News Article.....	64
Appendix: Production Photo.....	66
Vita.....	67

Abstract

The role of Olympia in Charles Mee's *Big Love* was selected as a thesis project in the fall semester of 2006. This thesis is a written record of the actor's work on the character throughout the rehearsal process and performance in the form of an Actor's Score. It also includes an Introduction, a Chapter on the Rehearsal Process, Character Analysis, News Article, Production Photo and a Conclusion.

Introduction

This thesis is a character study of Olympia in Charles Mee's "Big Love". Olympia comes from a very large family, 50 sisters in all. The girls have been promised in marriage to

"My own work begins with the belief that human beings are, as Aristotle said, social creatures—that we often express our histories and cultures in ways even we are not conscious of, that the culture speaks through us, grabs us and throws us to the ground, cries out, silences us."

-- *Charles Mee*

their 50 cousins, but are not pleased with the arrangement. So, when their wedding day finally arrives, instead of making their way to the church, they make their way to the family boat and set sail. Heading in no certain direction, the

girls finally reach Italy, and Olympia and two of her sisters, Thyona and Lydia, make their way to the nearest house and are taken in by a man named Piero from whom they hope to receive sanctuary and release them from their ill-fated contract.

I personally had fallen in love with this play before Leon Ingulsrud, the director of "Big Love," had mentioned that Swine Palace would be producing it. Hendrix College, where I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree, had produced it only months earlier and since I kept in contact with old friends I had heard many good things about it. So, I was very excited to be performing it myself.

Upon reading the script I was captivated by all three female characters. I thought that each one would be enjoyable to play and I would be happy being cast as any of them. However, Olympia seemed to be the least likely casting for me. I pictured her as a little shy, seemingly younger and smaller. I had this beautiful picture of a curly blonde haired girl whose eyes screamed innocence at the top of their lungs. I, being almost 6'0" tall and quite thick, didn't see myself in that part at all. But, evidently Leon did.

A typical audition process for a production usually consists of two elements: a monologue and cold readings. These elements are used in different combinations to suit the preference of the director, but in casting “Big Love,” Leon chose a different process. He had previously worked with our acting ensemble, the MFA class of 2007, viewed our past performances and graduate school auditions which consisted of two 90 second monologues. Through those experiences, Leon was familiar with the strengths and shortcomings of my fellow actors and myself. Since we made up the majority of the acting pool from which Leon would be casting he made the decision to trust his familiarity with our talents and assign characters to the individual actor whom he felt would most successfully embody them. He wanted to bring strength to Olympia and not make her out to be the thin-skinned follower who she seemed to be in the script. She is a girl who chose her own path and lived to make her sisters happy. I feel honored that Leon decided to give me the chance to create an Olympia that didn’t just fall by the wayside in making an attempt to make her life better.

This thesis documents the process of my characterization of Olympia. It consists of an examination of the rehearsal process, a character analysis, and a score of the role. The examination of the rehearsal process will look at how the rehearsal process for “Big Love” ran its course and how its unique exercises helped form the production. The Character Analysis examines beyond what is superficially apparent about a character and reveals minute details that are specific and essential. It begins with a brief autobiographical sketch of Olympia, drawn both from the text and from my own imagination. It is followed by a series of questions concerning the elements that make up Olympia’s character. The score is made up of three different elements: Objectives, Actions and Tactics, and Obstacles. Objectives are the character’s wants and needs. Actions and tactics are ways that the character attempts to achieve those objectives. Obstacles

are the circumstances that block the character from reaching an objective. There is also a column in the score for the character's focus and images. These images and points of focus may be based on the text or from my own imagination.

Big Love was produced by Louisiana State University Department of Theatre, December 2-11, 2005 in the Reilly Theatre. The production was directed by Leon Ingulsrud. Lighting design was by Heather Gilbert, sound design by Eun-Jin Cho, costume design by Polly Boersig and Rana Webber, and the stage manager was Elena Russo. The cast was, in order of appearance:

Lydia.....	Anna Richardson
Giuliano.....	Ron Reeder
Thyona.....	Kesha Bullard
Olympia.....	Nikki Travis
Bella.....	Tara MacMullen
Piero.....	Chris Krejci
Constantine.....	Mark L. Jaynes
Oed.....	Reuben Mitchell
Nikos.....	Derek Mudd
Eleanor.....	Christine Menzies
Leo.....	J Hammonds

All quotes from the production used in this thesis are taken from Charles Mee's *Big Love*.

Rehearsal Process

When the 2005-2006 Swine Palace Season was announced in the spring of 2005, it originally consisted of the following shows: “Big Love” by Charles Mee, directed by Leon Ingulsrud, “Tobacco Road” by Jack Kirkland and Erskine Caldwell, directed by Steven Young, and “She Stoops to Conquer” by Oliver Goldsmith, directed by Jane Page. We, the MFA class of 2007, had already met with Steven Young to audition for “Tobacco Road” and steps were being made to prepare for a very successful season. However, on August 29, 2005, an event occurred that would not only affect Swine Palace’s season but also the lives of thousands of people along the gulf coast.

Hurricane Katrina was the sixth-strongest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded and the third-strongest to ever hit the United States. With 175 mile-per-hour winds this category 5 hurricane became the costliest natural disaster in United States history with damages of \$81.2 billion in 2005 alone. Many charities and private donors graciously donated time and money to aid the areas and people affected by the storm. For many arts organizations this meant one thing: loss of funds that may have been allocated to the arts. It is understandable that in a time of great devastation monetary donations would be allocated to basic needs. Swine Palace, along with many other arts organizations in the area, willingly made changes in their season to accommodate the anticipated drop in funding.

The only production to keep its place in the schedule was “She Stoops to Conquer.” Due to anticipated high costs, “Tobacco Road” was replaced with an original production by LSU Theatre Professor John Dennis. “Tennessee Williams in Quarter Time” was a beautiful compilation of scenes, letters, and poems written by Tennessee Williams which honored the city he loved so much and that in the past few months had suffered such loss: New Orleans. Last, but

not least, “Big Love” was cancelled indefinitely. It was to be replaced with an LSU production that my MFA class had already begun work on: “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw, directed by Jane Brody.

Well, things didn’t exactly happen that way. “Big Love” was a big deal to my fellow actors and me. The director of the show was Leon Ingulsrud, a man to whom my classmates and I had become dedicated. For most of us he was responsible for our introduction to the Louisiana State University Department of Theatre since he had recruited us. He was also the first director we worked with in our MFA career, when he allowed us to understudy his production of “Macbeth” in the fall of 2004. We learned early in the fall semester of 2005 that Leon would be leaving Louisiana State University and that “Big Love” would be his last LSU project. When we heard that we would be deprived of our last chance to work with our beloved Leon, we were not very pleased. Some meetings were had, letters were written, and the Swine Palace administration as well as the Louisiana State University Department of Theatre was gracious enough to listen to our pleas. They gave us our greatly desired “Big Love” back with a couple of stipulations: we had a meager budget and only two weeks in which to rehearse the show between “Arms and The Man” closing and the opening for “Big Love.”

When Leon announced the good news we were overjoyed to have our show back! However, when he explained to us that we would only have two weeks to put the show together and sparse funding, that joy soon turned to sheer panic. How were we going to put an entire show together in two weeks? A typical rehearsal process consists of approximately 4-6 weeks. Each week would have six days of rehearsal with one day off, and each rehearsal lasting 3-8 hours. Tech weekend would then consist of two or three days of 12 hour rehearsals with a 2 hour break in the middle (commonly referred to as a 10 out of 12). The key to putting together a show

in two weeks is to use every spare moment. At the time, we were still in rehearsal for “Arms and the Man.” We used the only time we had to work on “Big Love”: class time. We had an acting class with Leon that semester so it was a great opportunity to find extra rehearsal time.

The first day after announcing the casting we all expected to come in and have a first reading, the typical thing to do during a first rehearsal. This didn’t happen with Leon. He had his own special way of doing things and they always worked. We had all already read the script and were familiar with the story. He made a list of the play’s themes such as love, matriarchy/patriarchy, hope, justice, violence, etc. Then we got on our feet and created a dance to this list of themes. He had not made up his mind whether or not this “dance” would make its way into the actual production. It didn’t. However, it was a great way to get us into the world of the play.

Leon often used movement and dance to rehearse this piece. For instance, when exploring the first meeting between the characters Lydia and Nikos, he had each of the women play Lydia and each of the men play Nikos then sent all three couples off to create their own “dance” (movement and blocking) for the scene. Then we selected the best from each scene in order to find the final form of the scene that we eventually used for the production. Dance was also used when working on the women’s opening scene where they enter while singing “You Don’t Own Me,” by John Madara and David White, and while staging the men’s and woman’s “Throw-down” scene. Both the men and the women had a scene where they expressed their anger at each other by throwing their bodies down onto the floor.

Everything was rehearsed in class, in a small studio where all of our movements felt a little silly and larger than life. When the day came to move our rehearsals over to the venue where the show would take place, The Reilly Theatre, its giant space justified our physical life.

We suddenly found that Leon was right. All of these grand movements and the energy we had been using were not overdone but just right! Those two weeks in that wonderful Reilly space seemed long. Many hours of sweat, blood, tears and Tylenol were put down on the dusty old mats that made up the majority of the set. In the end it was completely worth it.

This rehearsal process, all in all, was a great collaborative effort between director and actors. Leon allowed us to express our ideas and opinions and very often the ideas of the actors

“I like plays that are not too neat, too finished, too presentable. My plays are broken, jagged, filled with sharp edges, filled with things that make sudden turns, careen into each other, smash up, veer off in sickening turns, that feels good to me. It feels like my life. It feels like the world.”

-- *Charles Mee*

made it into the production. My most memorable moment of the entire rehearsal process was when we were joking around about the set. Since we had no money to

spend on the set it consisted of an old bathtub and a bunch of old tumbling mats we had laying around in a class room. Christine Menzies, one of the cast, and myself were to enter the stage from the back door of the theatre at one point in the show. The back door is a huge double door located at the back of the stage area that dwarfs Christine and me. The entire cast was joking about having ridiculous objects on the set to fill the wedding scene and one of the actresses, Tara MacMullen, shouted, “Well why don’t we just have a giant cake on stage?” To which Leon responded, “Well, why not?” Thus the giant wedding cake which followed Christine and me out those double doors was born.

We fought with all our hearts to resurrect “Big Love” from the grave that Hurricane Katrina dug for it. With our love for this production, our director and each other we gave birth to an amazing piece of theatre that will live in us forever. The show, for us, became a metaphor for triumph over tragedy.

Character Analysis

My name is Olympia and I was born in a small town in Greece nineteen years ago. I am one of 50 daughters to my parents, Nikolas and Adara. I love my parents and siblings very much. One may think it difficult to become close with a family that large and I have to admit I am closer to some sisters than to others, Lydia and Thyona in particular, but I love all my family just the same.

One of my favorite memories growing up was picking olives with Papa in a grove near our house. We would spend so much time outside that my skin would turn a lovely golden color

“And so we might ask ourselves, you and I, what is character? Someone says character is the external life of the person onstage, the way that that person moves or stands or holds a handkerchief, or their mannerisms. But that person onstage is *you*. It is not a construct you are free to amend or mold. It’s you. It is *your* character which you take onstage.”

-- David Mamet

and Papa said I looked like a goddess, that I was his little goddess. Thyona overheard our conversation one day and became jealous. She was the sister I always looked up to. To me she was the

goddess but hearing Papa praise me so was very hurtful to her. He took her aside and explained to her that we were all goddesses in a way. We all had special talents and dreams that we would one day use to become the powerful, strong, and beautiful women he had always dreamed of us being. I don’t think Thyona ever forgave Papa for that day, or me for that matter. It seemed from that moment on she held something against me, not out of spite or hate but out of hurt. When Papa passed on several years later she didn’t even bother to come to the funeral.

The day Papa died was one of the worst days of my life. I love my Mama, but I was definitely Papa’s girl. He was everything to me. He showed me what a true man was and how wonderful it was to have a man like that in my life. I would often think how lucky Mama was to have a man like Papa. I remember moments when he would come in from fishing and have not

only the fish for dinner, but a freshly picked flower for Mama. Sometimes he would have one for us girls too. I also remember when he would softly sing lullabies to her and she would fall asleep outside in the grass. Or when he would wipe the flour from her face while she was cooking and tell her that he had never seen such beauty. My father was a great man but also a very proud man. His fishing company soon became bankrupt and money scarce. He needed to think quickly in order to save his family and the best fix for his current state of affairs was to sell his daughters to their rich American cousins.

When I first heard the news I was shocked. Though I was still young and the date was still years away, I had learned enough about love from the people that raised me to understand that this was not right. I wanted to marry someone who would bring in flowers with the fish, who would sing me lullabies in the grass and wipe the flour from my face. I wanted to marry for love! The hardest part was trying to understand how such a romantic, loving man could sell his most precious possession like a common fish. Is being poor not awful enough? Is it not worse to sell the thing he loved most?

When I confronted him he had only one thing to say, "It is for the love of my family that I do this, not for the love of money." He further explained that he needn't be a rich man. He only wanted to be able to support his girls until they no longer needed him and 50 daughters cost a lot in upkeep. He spoke of me in particular and my make-up and soaps, hair-creams and baubles. He asked me if I would like to lose all that I have come to love so much. I responded with a quiet, "No." "I want to make you happy," he said. He left the conversation at that and I was satisfied.

I soon came to think that I would come to love the man I marry. Even if I didn't, I would certainly love the children that came from the union just as Papa and Mama cherished my sisters

and myself. Lydia, another one of my sisters with whom I was close, also agreed to the decision that Papa had made for us. However, she did not feel like she really needed love in her life so she didn't really care one way or the other. I thought she was silly for that and I also thought Thyona was silly for the protests that she launched against the union.

Thyona's protests went unheard or ignored until the day my Papa died. Mama went into a deep depression after losing the love of her life and didn't pay much attention to us girls. Thus Thyona decided to take the throne. She started something like a campaign and changed the minds of many of my sisters who felt like I did. She made them believe what an awful thing it is to marry our cousins, that we would be slaves drowning in the chains of marriage from which we should break free. I continued to think that what Thyona preached was silly until the day Lydia came into my room with a frown on her face.

"Thyona is right," she said. All I could do was sit there and stare at her dumbly. She had been my ally in this fight! Together we had won so many battles against Thyona but now how was I going to win the war? She explained that we really needed to get our heads together to unite against our cousins to save ourselves and our livelihood. I repeated what Papa had

"The sacred is a transformation, in terms of quality, of that which is not sacred at the outset. Theatre is based on relationships between humans who, because they are human, are by definition not sacred. The life of a human being is the visible through which the invisible can appear."

-- *Peter Brook*

preached to me. He wanted a better life for his daughters and I truly believed this would happen once we married our cousins and went to America. Lydia refused to agree.

The plans had already been made. The morning we were to marry our cousins, we would stow away on our ship and never to look again on this place that would make us prisoner. I wanted to hit her. What poison had Thyona fed to

the sister to whom I had become so close? I had no other choice. Call me a follower but how is one little sister supposed to stand up against the other 49?

The morning of the wedding, dressed in the beautiful gown my Papa had helped me pick out many years before, I boarded the boat with my sisters. As we pushed off, and the waves lapped up against the hard wood of the vessel, I looked back to my homeland with tears in my eyes and one promise in my mouth: “Papa, I will never forget what you said and I will be happy. I will love.”

What Does Your Character Say About Herself?

From the beginning Olympia has a very high opinion of herself. She sees all of the thoughts and ideas that her Papa instilled in her. Everything from being a goddess to upholding the lifestyle that she held dear. She sees herself as beautiful and even being shipwrecked in a place far from home will not keep her from keeping up appearances.

“Yes. We're all sort of goddesses in a way”

“Nothing seems to be working out.
I was hoping for a wedding dress from Monique Lhuillier,
but back home in Greece,
all I could find was an Alvina Valenta,
not even a Vera Wang
and I'd been planning all my life
or most of it
for something with little spaghetti straps and some lace right on the bodice
and little lace flowers just where the straps join the bodice
and people said sometimes you just have to settle
but I don't want to
I don't think I have to settle
I don't see why
at least on my wedding day
I can't have things exactly the way I want them!”

She also sticks with her ideal that she likes men. She keeps her ideas steadfast for as long as she possibly can. She is strong and states her ideas: that she is not afraid of men; that when she plays with them she is in control but that she also likes to be submissive. Also that it's alright to be that way because she likes to be vulnerable. However, the side of her that longs to be loved and accepted soon gives in when her rock, Lydia, commits to the killings of the men. Olympia follows and commits the heinous act which she knew all along was wrong in her heart even though her head said it was right. So, when Lydia changes her mind and saves the life of her fiancé, Nikos, Olympia states that she felt betrayed and that she would have liked to have also been married. That she feels like a follower and a terrible person for doing what she has done.

“It’s not that no one’s never said no to me,
but I don’t think I’ve ever asked a guy to save me
in a situation like this
and had him say no.”

“I’ve known men who have a good side, Thyona.”

“These men!
These men!
All I wanted was a man who could be gentle
a man who likes to cuddle
a man who likes to talk
a man who likes to listen”

“[still yelling simultaneously with Thyona]
And I don’t think it’s wrong
to lie in the bath
and curl my hair
and paint my nails to like my clothes
and think they’re sexy
and wear short skirts
that blow up in the wind
I don’t think it’s wrong
for a man to love me
to like to touch me

and listen to me
and talk to me
and write me notes
and give me flowers
because I like men
I like men
And, I like to be submissive.
because, to me,
submission is giving up your body,
and your mind and your emotions
and everything
to a someone who can accept all the responsibilities that go with that.
And I myself enjoy the freedom that submission gives me.
I like to be tickled and tortured
and I like to scream and scream
and feel helpless
and be totally controlled
and see how good that makes someone else feel.
It is for me the most natural high.
It is so much better than taking drugs.
You can just relax and enjoy yourself
and feel alive and free inside.”

“We’re still sort of thinking about it.” (about marriage)

“I’d like to take it in.
You know, I wouldn’t mind, like,
going swimming even.
Plus guys.
I don’t have a problem with guys.”

“I think,
for me,
there’s nothing quite like it
when you know a person is attracted to you
and you look into his eyes and see your own reflection
through the tears of joy in his eyes,
as you’ve always wanted to see yourself,
and never have since you were a child
just sharing the daily things with another person
knowing you can count on him.
And I know he loves me all the time,
hugging me all day
treating me as though I were precious.”

“I’d like to love the person that I marry”

“I’m not afraid of men, Thyona.

In fact, I kind of like them.”

“Maybe you think I shouldn’t play their game, but I think I’m not a helpless victim.

When I put on a short skirt and paint my toe nails and dye my hair

I don’t think that I’m a twit.

I think men know what I’m doing

and they think it’s fun

and I think it’s fun, too,

and I think I’m an equal

in the game we play.

I wouldn’t mind some sort of negotiation.”

“I can’t kill them.

Are you crazy?”

“I was confused.” (about killing Oed)

“Lydia!

If I’d known it was okay to do what you did,

I might have loved someone, too.

I was just

I know everyone says this

but the truth is

I was just following orders in a way.

I should kill myself probably

now that I see the kind of person that I am.”

What Does Your Character Say About Others?

Olympia and Thyona have a very volatile relationship. They have completely different views on love and men and often butt heads over the subject. Olympia tries her best to stand up to Thyona but there is only so much a little sister can do against the big sister with everyone on her side.

“Not all of us.” (to Thyona about hating men)

“I liked him.

You should give a person the benefit of the doubt.”

“Except for Constantine.” (when Thyona calls him weak)

Olympia’s love for men, especially older father figures, is very apparent in her trust in Piero. Although they never develop a close relationship and don’t speak very much in the play, she is constantly defending him and his actions. She has complete and total trust in him. When Piero finally does betray the women by giving up sanctuary and handing them over to their cousins, Olympia feels completely lost. This is yet another event that leads to her confusion and the killing of her fiancé:

“Look at you, you're a rich person.”

“Now you see, there are men who are kind and decent.”

“We have an uncle here, Constantine.
and he is going to take care of us.”

“He’s going to solve it peacefully.”

“I don’t think he would do that.”

Lydia is Olympia’s last hope. Lydia is the only sister who will come close to listening to what Olympia has to say. Olympia worships her for that. Lydia’s commitment to killing the men is the final straw that leads Olympia to do the same. In the end, when Lydia has the change of heart not to kill Nikos, Olympia feels completely confused and betrayed.

“I thought you said it was a good idea, Lydia.
Remember, you said you agreed?”

What Do Other People Say About My Character?

Many of the statements made about Olympia by her sisters refer to all the sisters collectively. Olympia is not allowed to speak to the men herself. Lydia and Thyona do most of

the speaking for all of the sisters. Shoving Olympia into the collective “we” hurt her terribly and whenever she protests she is always reprimanded or ignored.

LYDIA

“It’s an old contract. It seems they will.
We have nothing against men—“

“We are not nervous.
It’s like Thyona says.
We don’t want wedding presents!”

THYONA

“There is only one question to ask:
do we want to marry them or not?
No, we don’t.”

“We’re not accepting gifts.”

“You are a twit.”

“I’ll tell you something, Olympia.
You’re the kind of person
who ends up in the bottom of a ravine somewhere
with your underpants over your head.
I’m trying to save your neck
and you don’t even get it!”

“We don't accept your deal.
You can tell these men we don't accept it.
What we would accept is
if these men like
they can come to us one by one
and beg us to marry them
give each one of us time to make up our minds
postpone the wedding day
let us consider and reconsider
let us think about it when we are on our own ground
when we are strong and they are weak
let us come to them one by one
and say freely if we want to marry them
otherwise there's nothing to be said”

OLYMPIA

“Except....”

THYONA

“Nothing.
We reject your offer.”

“I speak for all of us.”

Olympia’s revered Piero tries at first, though not very fervently, to defend the women. He explains to the men that the girls don’t wish to be married now and gains Olympia’s trust.

PIERO

“I understand the women are no longer interested.”

Eventually Bella, Piero’s kind-hearted mother becomes judge at the end of the play. She takes the girls in. She helps them understand the wrong they have committed, attempting to turn it into something positive so they can go on with their lives and try to better themselves. Finally because of this turn of events, Olympia encounters a mother figure with the wisdom of her father. She finally learns from Bella that a woman need not have a man in her life in order to find real happiness.

BELLA

“You did a dreadful thing, you women, when you killed these men.
What could be worse than to take another’s life?
And I like a woman who sticks with her sister.
You’ll see,
one day you’ll find a good man.
Or not.”

What Is My Character Fighting For?

Olympia is fighting for her right to love, her right to make her own decisions and not to be ruled by her sisters. Olympia wants to be married, to be loved and to have a family. This may not be the most ideal circumstance for the kind of relationship that she wants in her life but it is what her father wants and what she believes he has set up for her and her sisters’ happiness. Her

only weakness is her craving to be loved and her need to be accepted by her sisters and other people. She has a huge heart and cares deeply for every person she meets and has a great respect for human life. However, when her point of view contradicts that of the people she loves she feels the need to change herself.

How Do I Resemble and Differ From My Character Inside and out?

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, I did not physically picture myself as Olympia at all. My image of her was of a beautiful, innocent, petite and vulnerable young girl. I definitely do not fit this description. I have never been the younger sister/ ingénue type. I'm almost six feet tall and very athletically built. I look intimidating but I believe that my physical type added interest to the character: a strength and sense of power that she might not have had in other productions. However, on the inside we are very alike.

I have never had a very close relationship with my father but I do love and respect him very much. I also have a weakness for men and enjoy them very much. I have an ideal in my head about what a man should be and what I want a man to be. I would like to have a family and have a husband that will give himself up to me as I will give myself up to him. I have encountered some resistance in my professional and personal life because of some of my ideals, not necessarily about men and relationships but in other areas like religion and lifestyle. Like Olympia, I have had to defend myself and my ideals. I do believe that I differ from Olympia in that I would never allow myself to be totally submissive to a man. I would never follow my family into something that my heart felt was wrong. I am stronger than her in that sense. I don't feel a need for acceptance as she does, although I have changed myself and my ideals several times in order to "fit in" with people that I deeply care about.

How Does My Character Move?

Olympia is very light on her feet. I imagined her as a child outside frequently, running barefoot along the beach with her sandals in hand. She to me was a happy free spirit, hard to

“Gesture is tied intimately to the words being spoken; indeed, words *represent* human gesture. There can be no words spoken that are not intimately connected to bodily sensations and rhythms.”

-- *Tadashi Suzuki*

confine. Her movements are more consistent with the “glass half-full” sensation, always moving upward toward the sky. However, as the trip and her sisters wears on her she becomes more weighed down.

Throughout the show she is skipping less. Her head starts to hang lower. She doesn't fly with the clouds as much anymore. Her shoulders slouch as if they can't take the weight that has been put on them. She is giving up. During the killing, the big heavy boots that are forced upon her by her sisters are the end to her lightness. She walks with heavy steps which jar her entire body into a mechanical movement, much like a robot. It is a sad transformation, like a bird getting its wings clipped and transforming into a snake.

Other Inspirations For My Character.

One of my favorite movies of all time is “Steel Magnolias.” I thought of this movie when I first started thinking about Olympia and watched it soon after being cast. The character of Shelby was a great inspiration to my Olympia, a young, light-hearted girl on the verge of marriage with her whole life ahead of her. She was close to her family and was willing to sacrifice everything for them, including her health and her life. She stood up to her mother when she found out that she was going to have a baby even though she knew it could kill her. She stood up for what she wanted in life and even though it ended in her death she was very happy for a short amount of time. Her love and big-heartedness had a positive effect to all those people

who left themselves open to her. Olympia could have had that same effect on her sisters if they would have only heard what she was trying to say.

**Actor's Score of Charles Mee's *Big Love*
from the Perspective of
the Character of Olympia**

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Objective: to cheer my sisters</i> <i>Obstacle: they don't listen to me</i> <i>Essential Action: to play</i></p> <p>Olympia goes to the bathtub, pulls up her dress and sits on the edge with her feet in the tub as Clarke's Trumpet Voluntary segues into the intro for "You Don't Own Me," and, Olympia sings with all her heart.</p> <p><i>Objective: to get rid of this strange woman.</i> <i>Obstacle: She is nosy</i> <i>Essential Action: to reject</i></p> <p>BELLA You have been married already.</p> <p>OLYMPIA No.</p> <p>BELLA So, it's none of my business. And yet, I can tell you marriage is a wonderful thing</p>	<p>to clown</p> <p>to dismiss</p>	<p>everyone is tired from traveling all this way</p> <p>she wants to know everything!</p>	<p>Focus: the water Image: being on the beach</p> <p>Focus: my sisters</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Objective: to find a common soul</i> <i>Obstacle: my sisters will think ill of me</i> <i>Essential Action: to bond</i></p> <p>BELLA but, a good man is hard to find</p> <p>[thinks better of it, starts to put it with the others she has saved]</p> <p>OLYMPIA That's so true</p> <p><i>Objective: to see if Piero will accommodate us</i> <i>Obstacle: my sisters don't want me to speak</i> <i>Essential Action: to ask</i></p> <p>PIERO May I offer you something?</p> <p>LYDIA No, thank you.</p> <p>PIERO A glass of wine?</p>	<p>to agree</p>	<p>my sisters are listening</p> <p>my sister's judgment</p>	<p>Image: my father Focus: the saved egg</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>OLYMPIA AND THYONA No, thank you.</p> <p>PIERO Coffee? Tea?</p> <p>LYDIA No thanks.</p> <p>PIERO Something to eat?</p> <p>LYDIA No, thank you.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Actually, I don't know how to say this, I don't want to complain but you don't seem to have a lot of products.</p> <p>PIERO Products?</p> <p>OLYMPIA Soaps, you know, and creams, things like...</p>	<p>to free</p>	<p>my sister's insistence</p> <p>her denial to let me be heard</p>	<p>Focus: Piero's kind face</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>OLYMPIA or some Prescriptives Uplift Eye Cream, not in the tube: firming, Mac lip gloss in Pink Poodle just some things to make a woman feel you know fresh.</p> <p>LYDIA Olympia....</p> <p>PIERO I am afraid I don't know about these things, but I'll ask Giuliano to go out and see what he can find.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Thank you.</p> <p>LYDIA Really we were mostly hoping to ask you to just: take us in.</p> <p><i>Objective: to make Piero believe we are connected</i> <i>Obstacle: he is very smart</i></p>	<p>to appreciate</p>	<p>her ridicule</p>	<p>Focus: my nervous twitch</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Essential action: to outwit</i></p> <p>LYDIA [thinking quickly] Oh. But. We are related. I mean, you know: in some way. Our people came from Greece to Sicily a long time ago and to Siracusa and from Siracusa to Taormina and to the Golfo di Saint'Eufemia and from there up the coast of Italy to where we are now. So we are probably members of the same family you and I.</p> <p>PIERO [amused] Descended from Zeus, you mean.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Yes. We're all sort of goddesses in a way.</p> <p>PIERO Indeed. It's very enticing to recover a family connection to Zeus.</p>	<p>to support</p>	<p>he doesn't believe us</p>	<p>Focus: Lydia struggling with the situation</p> <p>Focus: Piero's mockery</p> <p>Image: Papa in the olive grove</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>PIERO A relative.</p> <p>THYONA This is a crisis.</p> <p>PIERO And yet... You know, I am not the Red Cross.</p> <p>THYONA And so?</p> <p>PIERO So, to be frank, I can't take in every refugee who comes into my garden.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Why not?</p> <p>PIERO Because the next thing I know I would have a refugee camp here in my home. I'd have a house full of Kosovars and Ibo and Tootsies, boat people from China and god knows what all.</p>	<p>to examine</p>	<p>his unwillingness to help</p>	<p>Image: The garden full of my 50 sisters</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA I've known men you could sit with after dinner in front of the fireplace and just listen to the way he speaks and hear the gentleness in his way of speaking and the carefulness</p> <p>OLYMPIA I've known men who think, oh, a woman, I'd like to take care of her not in any way that he thinks he is superior and has control but in the way that he understands a woman is a different sort of person and precious because of that vulnerable in certain ways because of that in ways that he isn't although he might be vulnerable in other ways because of his stuff that he has and that he treasures what a woman has and thinks, oh, if only I could be close to her and feel what she feels and see the world as she sees it how much richer my life would be and so, because of that, he thinks,</p>	<p>to impact</p>		<p>Focus: the stars</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>oh, a woman, I can really respect her and love her for who she really is.</p> <p>THYONA I know a man who will say I want to take care of you because he means he wants to use you for a while and while he's using you so you don't notice what he's doing he'll take care of you as if you were a new car before he decides to trade you in.</p> <p>LYDIA I've known men like that, too. But not all men are necessarily the same. Sometimes you can hear the whole man just in his voice. How deep it is or how frightened where it stops to think and how complex and supple and sure it is.</p> <p>OLYMPIA You can hear the strength in it and you can know that you're safe.</p>	<p>to strengthen</p>	<p>her joining of Thyona</p>	

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>THYONA The male the male is a biological accident an incomplete female the product of a damaged gene a half-dead lump of flesh trapped in a twilight zone somewhere between apes and humans always looking obsessively for some woman.</p> <p>LYDIA That's maybe a little bit extreme.</p> <p>THYONA Any woman because he thinks if he can make some connection with a woman that will make him a whole human being! But it won't. It never will. Boy babies should be flushed down the toilet at birth.</p> <p>LYDIA I know how you feel, Thyona.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I've felt that way myself sometimes.</p>		<p>her hatred of the male species as a whole</p> <p>siding with Thyona</p>	<p>Image: a world without men</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>CONSTANTINE I am an American now, Olympia. I'm not afraid of your uncle. Do you watch television? Do you see what happens when Americans want something?</p> <p>THYONA That bastard! What did I tell you?</p> <p>OLYMPIA He's going to solve it peacefully.</p> <p>THYONA He's giving in, don't you get it? These men and their deals.</p> <p>LYDIA Right. You could be right.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I don't think he would do that.</p> <p>THYONA Sometimes a person can talk a good game,</p>	<p>to pacify</p>	<p>she has formed her own opinion of Piero</p>	<p>Image: the men</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>but when push comes to shove, they're weak right to the core.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Except for Constantine.</p> <p>THYONA And except for me. I haven't given in either. This game isn't over till someone lies on the ground with the flesh pulled off their bones. Men. You think you can do whatever you want with me, think again. you think that I'm so delicate? you think you have to care for me? You throw me to the ground you think I break? [she throws herself to the ground] you think I can't get up again? you think I can't get up again? [she gets up] you think I need a man to save my life? [she throws herself to the ground again] I don't need a man! I don't need a man!</p>	<p>to campaign</p>	<p>her unflinching hatred of men</p> <p>her strength and conviction</p>	<p>Focus: Thyona flying through the air</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>[she gets up and throws herself to the ground again and again as she yells] These men can fuck themselves! these men are leeches these men are parasites these rapists, these politicians, these Breadwinners, [she is throwing herself to the ground over and over, letting her loose limbs hit the ground with the rattle of a skeleton's bones, her head lolling over and hitting the ground with a thwack, rolling over, bones banging the ground, back to her feet, and throwing herself to the ground again in the same way over and over music kicks in over this— maybe J.S. Bach's "Sleepers Awake!" from Cantata No. 140 and, as she hits the ground over and over, repeating her same litany as she does, Olympia watches her and then she joins in, and starts throwing herself to the ground synchronously</p>			<p>Image: men that have hurt me</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>so that it is a choreographed piece of the two women throwing themselves to the ground, rolling around, flailing on the ground, banging angrily on the ground, rising again and again.]</p> <p>THYONA [yelling simultaneously with Olympia] these cheap pikers, these welchers, these liars, these double dealers, flim-flam artists, litterbugs, psychiatrists!</p> <p>[And now Olympia starts to yell, too, simultaneously with Thyona, on top of her words, as both of them continue to throw themselves to the ground over and over.]</p> <p>OLYMPIA These men! These men! All I wanted was a man who could be gentle a man who likes to cuddle</p>	<p>to acquiesce</p> <p>to emit</p>	<p>her assumptions she makes about men</p>	<p>Focus: the ground</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>a man who likes to talk a man who likes to listen.</p> <p>THYONA Men who speak when they have nothing to say! These men should be eliminated! These men should be snuffed out! Who needs a man? Who needs a man? I'll make it on my own. I'm an autonomous person! I'm an independent person! I can do what I want! I can be who I am!</p> <p>OLYMPIA [still yelling simultaneously with Thyona] And I don't think it's wrong to lie in the bath and curl my hair and paint my nails to like my clothes and think they're sexy and wear short skirts that blow up in the wind I don't think it's wrong</p>	<p>to testify</p>	<p>her ability to persuade other people and myself</p>	<p>Focus: my fists</p> <p>Image: Papa singing to Mama, picking her flowers, telling her she is beautiful</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>for a man to love me to like to touch me and listen to me and talk to me and write me notes and give me flowers because I like men I like men And, I like to be submissive.</p> <p>[and, finally, Lydia joins in, too, until all three women are yelling their words over the loud music and throwing themselves to the ground over and over]</p> <p>ALL THREE WOMEN TOGETHER Why can't a man be more like a woman?</p> <p><i>Objective: to lure my sisters with the perks of having a wedding.</i> <i>Obstacle: their ability to not take what I say seriously.</i> <i>Essential Action: to entice</i></p>	<p>to link</p>	<p>Lydia gives in</p>	

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>OLYMPIA [picking up one of the wedding gifts] Plus some of these things are nice. Can we keep them?</p> <p>THYONA No, Olympia. Not if you aren't getting married.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Maybe we should think about it. Some people go on honeymoons, too.</p> <p>LYDIA Olympia.</p> <p>OLYMPIA They go to places where there are hammocks and white sand and people hold them by the waist and lift them up out of the water splashing and laughing and they dive underwater without the tops to their swimming suits and the sun sets and people drink things through straws</p>	<p>to entice</p> <p>to tempt</p>	<p>her not allowing me to make my own decision</p>	<p>Focus: the big packages</p> <p>Focus: the blue sky Image: lying on a sandy beach with the one I love</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA Olympia....</p> <p>OLYMPIA and they listen to the waves and even make love in the afternoon and even like Giuliano says to be submissive because, to me, submission is giving up your body, and your mind and your emotions and everything to a someone who can accept all the responsibilities that go with that. And I myself enjoy the freedom that submission gives me. I like to be tickled and tortured and I like to scream and scream and feel helpless and be totally controlled and see how good that makes someone else feel. It is for me the most natural high. It is so much better than taking drugs. You can just relax and enjoy yourself and feel alive and free inside.</p>	<p>to defend</p>	<p>her not listening to me</p>	<p>Image: a big, beautiful, strong man taking me away from this place</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA I think we're losing the point. Like shouldn't we be leaving?</p> <p><i>Objective: to assert my position</i> <i>Obstacle: Lydia's conviction</i> <i>Essential Action: to contend</i></p> <p>LYDIA We are not nervous. It's like Thyona says. We don't want wedding presents!</p> <p>OLYMPIA Yet.</p> <p>ELEANOR House guests, dear. Guests of Piero. Eleanor and Leo. And you're the brides?</p> <p>THYONA No.</p> <p>OLYMPIA We're still sort of thinking about it.</p>	<p>to challenge</p>	<p>my sister speaking for me</p>	<p>Focus: the houseguests</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Objective: to win over Eleanor</i> <i>Obstacle: Thyona's jealousy</i> <i>Essential Action: to charm</i></p> <p>ELEANOR In Italy, to go out is to come home.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I'd like to take it in. You know, I wouldn't mind, like, going swimming even. Plus guys. I don't have a problem with guys.</p> <p>THYONA I don't have a problem with guys either. This is not about sunshine and olive oil. This is about guys hauling you off to their cave.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I think, for me, there's nothing quite like it when you know a person is attracted to you and you look into his eyes and see your own</p>	<p>to stimulate</p>	<p>my sister's point of view about men and their faults</p>	<p>Image: swimming in a pool of men</p> <p>Image: playing with my husband and child in the olive groves like I did with Papa</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>OLYMPIA Oh! What did I say wrong?</p> <p>THYONA Do you think I like feeling this way? Do you think it feels good to feel bad all the time? Do you think I wouldn't rather just be a nice, happy well-adjusted seeming person who can just take it as it comes and like it? But I can't just not be honest. Do you think that makes me happy? To spend my whole life on earth the only life I'm going to have feeling angry?</p> <p>[she turns and runs out]</p> <p>OLYMPIA Thyona! [she runs after Thyona]</p> <p><i>Objective: to get the wedding that I want</i> <i>Obstacle: my sister walking in on the preparations</i> <i>Essential Action: to manipulate</i></p>	<p>to console</p>	<p>my sister's jealousy</p>	

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>ELEANOR Let's put it here, dear, over here.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Does it have candles?</p> <p>ELEANOR No, dear, no. Usually it has a little bride and groom on top but this time we need fifty little brides and fifty little grooms so we will have them all around on all the different tiers and it will be like a huge party like Carnival.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I would like candles.</p> <p>ELEANOR Oh, candles. You want candles. Yes. Of course, love. Think nothing of it. You'll have candles if you want them.</p> <p>[Thyona enters.]</p>	<p>to insist</p>	<p>her want for the traditional</p> <p>my sister treating me like a child</p>	<p>Focus: the huge wedding cake</p> <p>Image: the light coming off of the millions of candles on the wedding cake</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>THYONA We don't want a cake. What are you doing, Olympia, helping with this cake?</p> <p><i>Objective: to convince Piero that its possible to love someone</i> <i>Obstacle: his cynicism</i> <i>Essential Action: to influence</i></p> <p>OLYMPIA I'd like to love the person that I marry.</p> <p>PIERO Yes, we all would. To be sure. And sometimes we do—at first. Sometimes it lasts a little bit.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I know people who have loved one another all their lives.</p> <p>PIERO I do, too. And yet, it's very rare. For the rest of us, we make do.</p>	<p>to compel</p>	<p>his disbelief that people can love each other indefinitely</p>	<p>Image: Mama and Papa</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Objective: to finally stand up to Thyona</i> <i>Obstacle: my fear of being rejected by her</i> <i>Essential Action: to challenge</i></p> <p>THYONA Didn't get that far? How long does it take to get that far? These men think they can do anything.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I'm not afraid of men, Thyona. In fact, I kind of like them.</p> <p>THYONA So?</p> <p>OLYMPIA Maybe you think I shouldn't play their game, but I think I'm not a helpless victim. When I put on a short skirt and paint my toe nails and dye my hair. I don't think that I'm a twit. I think men know what I'm doing and they think it's fun and I think it's fun, too, and I think I'm an equal in the game we play. I wouldn't mind some sort of negotiation.</p>	<p>to clash</p> <p>to validate</p>	<p>her ability to brush me off</p> <p>her strength and conviction that is so much greater than mine</p>	<p>Focus: Thyona's face</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>THYONA We don't accept your deal. You can tell these men we don't accept it. What we would accept is if these men like they can come to us one by one and beg us to marry them give each one of us time to make up our minds postpone the wedding day let us consider and reconsider let us think about it when we are on our own ground when we are strong and they are weak let us come to them one by one and say freely if we want to marry them otherwise there's nothing to be said.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Except....</p> <p>THYONA Nothing. We reject your offer.</p> <p><i>Objective: to uphold my values</i> <i>Obstacle: my inability to say no to my sisters</i> <i>Essential Action: to defend</i></p>	<p>to contest</p>		<p>Focus: Piero</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA Right.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Right.</p> <p>THYONA And when these men take us to bed on our wedding night these men who left us no alternative these men who force themselves on us, we will meet force with force and we will kill them one by one.</p> <p>LYDIA What?</p> <p>OLYMPIA Kill them?</p> <p>LYDIA Kill them?</p> <p>OLYMPIA I can't kill them. Are you crazy?</p>	<p>to refuse</p>		<p>Image: 50 dead bodies strewn all over the house</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>THYONA Would you kill them if they were soldiers coming through your bedroom door?</p> <p>OLYMPIA Of course I would. But to kill them.</p> <p>LYDIA We can't kill them.</p> <p>THYONA What choice did they give you but to stop them the only way they ever will be stopped. All these men understand is force.</p> <p>LYDIA But to kill them? At the least maybe we don't want to kill them all.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Maybe some of them are good.</p> <p>THYONA None of them are good.</p>	<p>to endorse</p>	<p>her persuasive argument</p> <p>her hatred of Piero, Constantine, and all of the other cousins</p>	<p>Image: being raped</p> <p>Focus: Lydia</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA How can you say that?</p> <p>THYONA Here's how you can tell: none of them objected to Constantine, not one of them stood up against him and said: No, Constantine, let's take this deal, or let's at least negotiate, let's talk to these sisters and see if one or two of them wants to marry us and let the rest go free let those go free who don't want to marry. Take the risk that some of us will be rejected. No, no one stood up against him. All his brothers are his silent partners. Would you want to live with someone who just gives in like this? Would you ever be safe with a person as weak as this?</p> <p>[silence]</p> <p>LYDIA No.</p>		<p>her ability to guilt us into doing what she wants</p>	<p>Image: Constantine and the other cousins</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>LYDIA Yes.</p> <p>OLYMPIA Yes.</p> <p><i>Objective: to point out to my sisters that I don't feel comfortable doing this so as it doesn't give the plot away</i></p> <p><i>Obstacle: Eleanor being in the room</i></p> <p><i>Essential Action: to mask</i></p> <p>OLYMPIA Nothing seems to be working out. I was hoping for a wedding dress from Monique Lhuillier, but back home in Greece, all I could find was an Alvina Valenta, not even a Vera Wang and I'd been planning all my life or most of it for something with little spaghetti straps and some lace right on the bodice and little lace flowers just where the straps join the bodice and people said sometimes you just have to settle</p>	<p>to grumble</p>	<p>her being in the room so I cant speak with my sisters about the plot</p>	<p>Image: trying on gowns in the gallery of Vera Wang Focus: my dress</p> <p>Focus: my sisters</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p><i>Obstacle: everyone's judgment of us</i> <i>Essential Action: to prove</i></p> <p>PIERO The judge?</p> <p>THYONA You?</p> <p>BELLA Yes. Who else?</p> <p>[to Piero]</p> <p>You want to put it in the hands of some judge chosen by the business associates of your brother?</p> <p>I don't think so. I will be the judge. Is that okay with you?</p> <p>LYDIA Yes. Good. I agree to that.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I agree to that, too.</p>	<p>to ratify</p>	<p>being judged by some crooked Italian judge</p>	<p>Focus: Bella</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>THYONA All right, then. Betrayal is the charge. What Lydia did, in any other country, would be treason.</p> <p>LYDIA I love him. I have nothing more to say. Olympia, how could you just kill someone You're just a girl.</p> <p>OLYMPIA I was confused.</p> <p>LYDIA How could you be confused?</p> <p>OLYMPIA I thought you said it was a good idea, Lydia. Remember, you said you agreed?</p> <p>LYDIA I had to agree with the argument the way Thyona put it, But if we live in a world where it is not possible</p>	<p>to protect</p>	<p>her inability to see love</p> <p>her blaming me for following through with the plan</p> <p>my own guilt for doing the murders</p>	<p>Image: Lydia making love</p> <p>Image: Lydia agreeing to the plot</p>

TEXT	TACTICS	OBSTACLES	FOCUS/IMAGE
<p>to love another person I don't want to live. Objective: to shame Lydia Obstacle :Bella's kind heart Essential Action :to condemn</p> <p>LYDIA I couldn't!</p> <p>OLYMPIA Lydia! If I'd known it was okay to do what you did, I might have loved someone, too. I was just I know everyone says this but the truth is I was just following orders in a way. I should kill myself probably now that I see the kind of person that I am.</p> <p>BELLA That's enough now. That's enough. I'm ready with my verdict. This is what I have to say.</p>	<p>to censure</p>		<p>Focus: Oed's dead body</p>

Conclusion

Every show leaves its own individual mark on an actor. I have been acting since I was eight years old and can recall at least one moment during the rehearsal process of each show that had an effect on shaping me and making me the person that I am today. Acting is not only a way of expressing oneself but a way of finding oneself too.

During my time here at LSU I have not only experimented with my art and the path that I have chosen for myself but I have also grown into a much better person. I have gained better listening and communication skills. I care more about what other people say and have more

“We live in an extraordinarily debauched, interesting, savage world, where things don’t really come out even. The purpose of true drama is to help remind us of that. Perhaps this does have an accidental, a cumulative social effect—to remind us to be a little more humble or a little more grateful or a little more ruminative.”

--David Mamet

respect for opinions that differ from my own.

Before I came to LSU I had often been told that I was hard-headed and stubborn and until recently I didn’t realize how true this was.

“Big Love” was the starting point for this realization and the changes that I have gone

through during my time here. The tightly knit collaborative from which this show grew proved to me that the age-old adage that “two heads are better than one” really works. I believe that the community at large benefited from this production as well.

After Hurricane Katrina, the city of Baton Rouge had a dark cloud hanging over its head, and a story about love just at the beginning of the Christmas season was exactly what it needed. Yes, it was nothing fancy, and yes it did have a darkly comedic twist on it, but in the end the message of “Love conquers all” still prevailed. Seeing how much the actors loved each other, together with the positive energy evident in the production, proved to the audience that life will

go on; that it will be wonderful and that there are still beautiful things in this world for which we must fight.

“Big Love” will forever live in my heart. It changed me forever and for that I thank all of the people who worked so hard to make it happen. It was a struggle but worth the pain. Here at the end, just as during the curtain call, the feeling of joy and the ability to overcome is best expressed in the last few lines of John Prine’s “In Spite of Ourselves:”

“In spite of ourselves we’ll end up sitting on a rainbow,
Against all odds, honey we’re the big door-prize,
We’re gonna spite our noses right off of our faces,
Ain’t nothing but’a big ol’ hearts dancing in our eyes.”

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Appendix: News Article

LSU Theatre performs delayed opener

Play originally had out-of-town cast

by Kelly Caulk

Entertainment Writer, *The Daily Reveille*

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After much delay due to Hurricane Katrina, the world will finally have the chance to see LSU Theatre's production of "Big Love" – just leave the kids at home for this one.

"The show does have mature themes such as murder, sexuality, language and cartoon violence," said Vastine Stabler, director of marketing and public relations for LSU Theatre.

Nikki Travis, a Master's of Fine Arts candidate who is playing the character of Olympia in "Big Love," said despite the violence in the play, "Big Love" is a love story many students will be able to relate to.

"Love is a huge theme in this play," Travis said. "There is anger and murder, but what it all boils down to is love."

"Big Love" was written by Charles L. Mee and is a modern update of Aeschlyus' "The Suppliant Women," a story of 50 brides being forced to marry their cousins. The modern version of this story centers around three of these women, sisters Lydia, Olympia and Thyona as they either flee from or embrace love.

"I think that young people will be able to relate to being in love and not being sure if that person is the right person for you," Travis said. "It is a universal theme."

Stabler said "Big Love" was originally supposed to open the Swine Palace Theatre performance season, but was canceled due to Hurricane Katrina.

"This play was problematic because we were originally going to have an out-of-town cast, which would have been costly," he said. "After Katrina, we decided to have something lighter, so the show was originally canceled."

After completing "Arms and the Man" less than two weeks ago, the entire cast of "Arms and the Man" prepared for yet another performance to follow shortly

thereafter. Travis said the cast, along with director Leon Ingulsrud, was determined to perform this play.

"We were all pretty bound and determined to make this show happen," she said. "We have only been rehearsing for two weeks, so it has been put together quickly and with practically no budget. We really made this play happen, and there is a lot of us in this show."

Stabler said Charles L. Mee donated all of the royalties from his plays to LSU. He said this helped with costs of the play because LSU Theatre does not have to pay for royalties from "Big Love."

"Big Love" opens Friday and will continue through Dec. 11 at Reilly Theatre.

Appendix: Production Photo



Olympia (Nikki Travis) trying to get to her wedding gifts.

Vita

Elizabeth N. Travis, better known to her friends and colleagues as “Nikki,” was born in Austin, Texas on July 30, 1982. Nikki and her family moved all over the state of Texas until finally settling in her mother’s hometown of San Antonio, Texas where she graduated from Winston Churchill High School in 2000. Nikki received her Bachelor of Arts in theatre arts from Hendrix College in 2004, where she was also lucky enough to join a program studying at the University of London, England, in the spring of 2003. She is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in theatre from Louisiana State University, which she should complete in May of 2007.

Nikki has performed in numerous productions at both Hendrix College and Louisiana State University. She has performed regionally with Swine Palace.