

Statement on Research and Creative Work
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As the oldest child in a large, extremely expressive family, my desire to perform is part instinct, part passion. I believe the values of listening, observation, and connecting were present from the time I began to understand the value of sharing a good story. I recall my Italian father saying that if you discover that you do not have a story to tell then you probably are not listening hard enough. Listening to what is happening around you and the stories that others *need* to tell is the goal, rather than always sharing stories you wish to be heard. In the process of understanding my father's perspective I also embrace the responsibility of the storyteller. This personal credo has much to do with the way in which I view myself as an actor, director, movement and voice specialist.

Acting / Performance

My interest in the dynamic power of the artist's instrument, the physical body and voice, is at the very heart of my own development as an actor. It is that dynamic relationship between the physical body of the actor and the work being performed, whether that playscript is an original creation or part of an already established text, which fuels my own passion to create interesting characters and discover new ways to embody a story onstage.

There are two methods in which I am most frequently called upon as a performer: as a professional actor having been cast and hired to play a role in a project that is produced by a professional theatre company, and as an actor-creator who is part of the collaborating artistic team that creates the performance event. Both avenues of working are equally captivating for me in my creative work, although the process is different.

When I am hired to perform a role in an extant play, creating the character involves research (investigation of the era and its issues) and working collaboratively with a professional ensemble (performers, directors, designers, etc.). By maintaining professional affiliations with professional theatre companies, I am able to stay abreast of current practices in the area of live performance. Since coming to CU in 2008, I have been hired as an Actors' Equity Association actor by the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Colorado Shakespeare Festival (CSF), Maya Productions, and Bas Bleu Theatre as well as other regional theatre companies. These invitations are based on an initial audition or as a result of the directors seeing my work acting work in other productions.

I have had opportunities to play a wide range of roles: *Mistress Quickly* (HENRY IV–PART 1 & 2, MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR), *Maria Callas* (MASTER CLASS), *Corryn*

(GIDION'S KNOT), *Gertrude* (HAMLET, CSF), *Jean Louise* (TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, CSF), the parts of the two mothers, *Mrs. Gabor* and *Mrs. Bergman* (THE AWAKENING OF SPRING, Department of Theatre & Dance, UCB), and *Claire* (THE VISIT, UCB). In each case, it was necessary for the character to have a specific way of behaving, moving and speaking, unlike my own. In the event of playing two roles in one play (AWAKENING), I had to make the character differences extremely clear and concise. It is an attention to the unique components, which creates a character: vocal quality, physical behavior, and understanding how the heart and mind of the character respond to the other characters in the play that are essential.

As an actor-creator, my role in the creative process is equally divided between the creation of the piece of work itself and the development of an individual role. This has been the process in the continuing development of my solo performance work, THE GREAT GODDESS BAZAAR. I chose to explore ways to create the body and breadth of a character first and then move to language. The project is proof positive that it is not always about the story as it is about what is gained in the process of the actual sharing of that story, in this case a new and exciting approach in creating a character.

As experiences and intriguing characters emerged in the development of THE GREAT GODDESS BAZAAR, it was apparent to me that I needed the collaborative voice of a playwright to join with me in creating this piece. Chicago playwright and former head of the MFA in Playwriting program at Southern Illinois University, David Rush, agreed to join me in continuing to develop the play. He eventually wrote more than 30 monologues that explore the topics of choice and consequence. (The completed collection of Rush's monologues for women is entitled, *Women of Choice – A Collection of Monologues*, published by OnStage Press, 2013.) The shaping of the solo performance piece, THE GREAT GODDESS BAZAAR, consists of my own cutting and arrangement of nine of these monologues from the original WOMEN OF CHOICE collection.

The process of creating THE GREAT GODDESS BAZAAR has been, at this point in my career, one of the most challenging and fulfilling experiences. I have been honored to perform the work nationally and internationally, and plan to continue to market it in the future. Currently, I am devising a new solo performance piece, ("Littlebirds") based on the work and women most closely connected to Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop.

Directing

The cornerstone to how I approach directing a play is deeply rooted in my understanding and passion for the art of acting, especially when it comes to communicating with an ensemble of actors, creating interesting characters, relationships, and atmospheres. As a director who respects

this communicative art form, one of my strengths is creating a team of collaborators who are all equally invested and represented in the process. I must simultaneously be specific, encouraging, and challenging during the creative process.

I am most interested in directing plays outside of the contemporary canon, plays that require attention to a specific style and/or aesthetic, and plays that invite great exploration of range in the physical and vocal instrument. I also find great opportunity in that which can be devised by the ensemble within a given rehearsal process. The directing projects that excite me most involve a process through which the entire creative and production team may learn something outside of what they already know. For example, most recently I am considering George Orwell's, *Animal Farm*, with masks, music, and movement and *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, by Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop ensemble.

Movement and Voice Work

When I am invited into the production process to provide movement direction, I must understand the time period and historical background of the play. Once that research is completed, I am able to clearly articulate a process in order to guide the actors toward the embodiment of a physical style and way of moving that is true to the time period and the vision of the director. I work closely with the creative team in order to create movement that is cohesive with the world of the play and the design of that world, as well as accessible to the actor.

As one who also understands the complexities of the vocal instrument and its essential role in communication for the actor, I am frequently called upon to provide specific voice support to the production as the voice or dialect coach. Aided by my training in the Fitzmaurice Voice work, I can identify specific vocal qualities and/or physical challenges that directly affect the voice, provide pathways to vocal clarity and communicate to the individual actor how best to embody the essential vocal elements required by the play and the performance space. My professional vocal practice – especially as a singer and a voice over actor – focuses on the stress, intonation patterns and the clear communication of thought, meaning, dynamics and emotions of the voice. The voiceover artist must innately understand the essential prosodic features of the voice in order to communicate through the vocal instrument alone, while the musical theatre actor/singer must understand how to integrate their vocal and physical work in order to create a multi-faceted character.

My professional work as an actor, director, movement/voice specialist and teacher ignites my imagination: I teach because I act and direct, and I act and direct because of the understanding I gain of the craft of acting through articulate directing and teaching. My desire to

work as part of a collaborating team of artists and to create new opportunities for collaboration is at the core of all of my creative work.