THE EVOLUTION OF A TECHNIQUE

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Prior to beginning my graduate career in Fall 2006, I had studied The Meisner Technique at The Neighborhood Playhouse, an acting conservatory where Sanford Meisner taught until his death in 1997. The Meisner technique defines the foundation of acting as “the reality of doing.” Actors are trained to listen, respond “in the moment” and to communicate not only the words of the script, but the action of the text. After graduating from The Neighborhood Playhouse, I realized that the technique provided me with an excellent foundation, but had one shortcoming that became evident as I was faced with more challenging roles. In the Meisner technique, character is defined as “how you do what you do;” character is the manner in which the action is portrayed. For this reason, I always felt that it was imperative that I decide on a characterization immediately when beginning rehearsal on a role so that I would know how to execute the action. Sometimes these decisions were made organically and the characterization was successful. Other times, I felt that I forced a characterization on the role before I really had time to discover it. In my first thesis role, Darlene, an organic characterization arose from the dialect that was required. I was able to successfully use the Meisner technique to bring this role to life.

In the course of my graduate training, I had the opportunity to learn the Michael Chekhov technique. Though both the Michael Chekhov and Meisner techniques derived from Constantin Stanislavski’s System, the Michael Chekhov technique includes several unique components such as Psychological Gesture, Qualities of Movement, Archetype and most importantly, Quality of Action. In the Michael Chekhov technique, the Quality of Action is how you do what you do; it is the adverb that modifies the action. By
incorporating the Quality of Action and the other unique components of the Michael Chekhov technique into the creation of my final thesis role – Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* – I was able to free myself from the limitations that I felt in the Meisner technique’s approach to character. Since I had another means by which to make the action specific, I could be patient and allow the character to develop over the course of the entire rehearsal process. As a result, I achieved a depth and specificity in this role that I had never before experienced.

Between *The Diviners* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, I undertook my second thesis role – Helene in *Sweet Charity*. I did not yet have the Chekhov training to apply, so my process in working on this role was similar to the first thesis role. However, *Sweet Charity* presented special challenges that arose from the demands of musical theatre, and from my own insecurities. Overcoming these challenges required that I let go of my fears and place trust in others. I was forced to be open and take risks. In doing so, I came to understand the interconnectedness of my art from a new perspective.

I will discuss the process of creating each of the three thesis roles and, in doing so, will document the evolution of my acting technique from the solid, but limited Meisner foundation, to the layered and seemingly unlimited methodology I now employ.
CHAPTER II
DARLENE

In preparing my audition for *The Diviners*, I considered the roles in which I thought I had the prospect of being cast. Being a graduate student and older than most of the other students by almost ten years, I thought I would most likely be cast as Goldie or Luella – two of the older female characters in the show. However I imagined that in the professional world, I would more likely be cast as Darlene since I look younger than my age. I opted to prepare an audition specifically for the role of Darlene as it would present me with real challenges that I might face in the professional world. I selected a monologue spoken by a sassy young character in the play *Real Queen of Hearts Ain’t Even Pretty*, by Brad Bailey.

Once cast in the role of Darlene I assessed the role’s challenges and its propriety for thesis declaration. Developing the character of Darlene would provide ample opportunity to test my ability to make specific active choices and to listen and respond “in the moment” as I have previously been trained in the Meisner technique.

In creating the character of Darlene, I began with the voice. The creation of Darlene’s voice required two components. First, we were instructed by the director, Eric van Baars, that we would be using a Midwest rural dialect for the show. I worked with a dialect CD and participated in group and one-on-one sessions with dialect coach Chuck Richie. Quickly I became accustomed to the vowel changes and rhythm that would become a part of Darlene’s speech. Second, it was necessary to alter the pitch of my voice since Darlene is a teenage girl. I experimented with a higher pitched voice that rests more forward in the mask than my own voice does. The combination of the voice and dialect provided me with a clear idea of how Darlene would speak. Hearing the text...
being spoken in “Darlene’s voice” unlocked the character and enabled the next stage of my process.

Once I have a clear understanding of the character, I analyze the script, break each scene into beats, and assign action to each beat. I experiment throughout the rehearsal process until I find the most active choice for each beat. For example, in the following section of text I chose “to flirt” with C.C. Showers.¹

Darlene: Evenin, Pastor Showers.

C.C.: Evenin, Darlene.

Darlene: I can’t sleep for nothin when the moon’s shinin down.

C.C.: It’s warm weather for sleep.

Darlene: Don’t I know it?²

Specific, active choices using action verbs make possible the last phase of my process – improvisation. Action enables reaction. “Flirting” not only provided action but also demanded that I pay attention to my scene partner to gauge his reaction to my flirting. It is this component that transforms acting from a static, technical process to something that feels fresh and alive.

My process involves detailed analysis and experimentation. Because of my background in dance, I bring a discipline to my rehearsal process that demands complete awareness of my physicality and spatial constructs. I am happy to work and rework the mechanics of a scene until it is smooth and has achieved the essence of spontaneity. But when the rehearsal process is complete, I no longer think about the choices I have made. They are “a sequence of reflexive mechanisms, responding to an inner plan that has been carefully worked out in advance.”³ As Diderot wrote in *The Paradox of Acting*, “The
The essence of acting is its apparent spontaneity. Perfect illusion is attained when every effect seems to be an accident. During performance, while my body is executing the action, my mind is concerned only with the task of listening. Because listening can only take place in the moment that it is happening, the performance appears spontaneous. But because the mechanics of the performance have been imbued in my body, I can recreate the work “with the same exactness” at each performance.

Some scenes required extra attention to make their execution clear and specific. For example, the first words I speak in the play are in a scene between Darlene and her aunt, Norma. Norma is coaching Darlene in the recitation of Bible verse. This scene establishes their relationship and introduces my character. After reflecting on a way to make this scene active, I settled on an activity. Different from an action, an activity is specific movement or physical process. I asked the actress playing Norma to braid my hair during the scene – tightly. This not only made our relationship immediately understandable to the audience, but it provided me with an opportunity to establish the “sassy” nature of Darlene’s character which would be more fully realized in later scenes.

I found another special challenge in the scene where Darlene is being tormented by Buddy who is digging for worms. When I think of worms, I have no inner response. I could have acted my general idea of what someone being “tormented by worms” would have looked like, but instead I chose to personalize this moment. I made the adjustment that Buddy was chasing me with a can of cockroaches. Thinking of cockroaches produces an involuntary shiver in my body. I don’t have to “fake” a response. Instead I just imagine a situation that invokes a genuine response in me that is appropriate for the scene.
I faced one special challenge while working on this piece and that was in regards to my costume. I am an actor who is greatly influenced by the clothes I wear. Because being affected or informed by my costume is a significant part of my process, I found it especially disappointing that I was one of the last cast members to have a costume fitting or be provided with rehearsal shoes. When I did see my costumes at the fitting, I was surprised by the dress that was built for me to wear in the scene when Darlene is scolded by Aunt Norma for sneaking out to a dance. I imagine that Darlene would wear something scandalous; in fact, the text demands it. Norma has the line, “I can’t be bringin you to a baptizin in somethin you look like you were born in and been growin into ever since.” The line seems to require that the dress be too tight or ill-fitting. The dress in which I was costumed, however, was far too large and revealed even less of my shape than the regular, everyday dress I wore for the majority of the show. This was an example of an idea that probably seemed appropriate in concept, but did not evolve in the course of rehearsal. In the book Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century, Christopher Baugh wrote, “If finished costume designs are presented to members of the cast at the beginning of their work then, in effect, the designer of those costumes is saying that although the process of discovery has not yet begun in rehearsal, nevertheless these are the clothes that will be worn by the, as yet, undiscovered characters.” In future work, I hope to have the opportunity to collaborate with a costume designer and to see an evolution in my costume that reflects the evolution I undergo in the experience of creating my role.
Another special challenge I faced in working on this role was in the direction I was given in one scene to walk on top of the benches. I am afraid of heights, or more specifically, falling. The rehearsal benches were extremely unstable and each time I had to execute this blocking I became so distracted that I lost all connection to the scene I was playing. When I confessed this fear to the director he saw it as a positive. He thought, and I agreed, that it was appropriate for the character to feel like she is flirting with danger. However, in order for me to play that the character feels dangerous, I needed to feel safe. Fortunately the actual show benches were more stable and I was able to perform the scene confidently, while creating the illusion of danger.

In reflecting on the performances, I observed that my energy remained consistent throughout the run. The work I had done during rehearsal was solid, and it carried me through each show regardless of any personal distractions. Other cast members became thrown if they perceived that the audience was not giving them the validation they expected. Often they would either push harder, or become withdrawn reflecting the energy that they were receiving from the audience. For me, audience inconsistency did not pose a challenge. If the audience did not respond in the manner that was expected, I was still confident in my work and did not vary my energy or attention.

In this project, I was given the opportunity to test myself and my process. The confidence that the director had in me gave me the freedom to be creative. In rehearsal, I clarified and solidified my choices. Finally, in being challenged to articulate my process, I have gained insight as to how the work that I do is connected to an art that is centuries old. And though it is continually evolving, some aspects of this craft are constant: the need for action; the need for connection.
Prior to the *Sweet Charity* audition, Director Terri Kent suggested that I prepare specifically for the role of Helene. For the audition, I rehearsed with Music Director Melissa Fucci and learned the two songs that Helene sings. I felt more prepared at this singing audition than I had for any other audition in the past. Despite my preparation, my nervousness at the audition prevented me from singing my best. Still, I was called back and was given another opportunity to sing and read for the role.

I knew that, if cast, dance would be an important aspect in this show so I began taking dance classes two days a week beginning in January. Since I have been a dancer for many years, these classes served to reinforce my technique and bolster my confidence. When it was time for the *Sweet Charity* dance callback, my technique was solid and I was prepared.

I felt most confident with my acting callback. I was familiar with the show, so I knew what type of character this was – a hard-boiled dance hall hostess. With only a few minutes to work on the script, I made a quick yet strong choice to read the role as a brassy, New York City broad with an overall quality of cynicism. I knew that it was appropriate, given the character’s profession, and would also contrast the optimism and naiveté put forth by Charity’s character.

Once cast, I proposed “Helene” as a thesis role because the role offered distinct challenges. Playing Helene would provide me with the opportunity to make active choices not only with spoken text but also in the lyrics of the songs. Furthermore, I would need to make said choices on pitch and in tempo; external forces with which, as an
actor, I have not had to comply. In addition, since musical theatre is a genre in which I
do not have much experience, playing this role would challenge me to push myself
beyond my comfort zone and help me grow as an actress.

Due to my familiarity with the script, I had a general understanding of this
character from the beginning. I struggled for the first few weeks of rehearsal to make my
choices specific. I thought that because my character was always interacting with the
character of Nickie that I had to distinguish my character from hers. I waited to see what
choices were made by the actor playing Nickie before I made my own choices. I soon
realized that this was limiting my options, and not serving the play. In conversations
with Assistant Choreographer Sean Morrissey, I discovered that the two characters have
similar backgrounds and lives, and their roles together serve to illustrate the life from
which Charity is so desperate to escape. I decided I would not make choices based on the
other actors’ choices. I could only play the character the playwright created; I went back
to the text for inspiration. The most revealing line about Helene occurs toward the end of
Act II when Charity instructs the new dance hall hostess to quit “before you wind up like
the rest of us.” Helene responds, “Don’t look at me. I’ve always been like this.” That
was the clue I needed to find my specificity. I decided that “this” meant cynical and
hard. That information combined with the play’s New York setting led me to choose to
base this character on my grandma. She was a tough broad who grew up on the lower
east side of New York. She was loud, sarcastic and told it like it was. This realization
provided the inspiration for the character.

Like grandma, Charity, Nickie and Helene are from the same background and live
similar lives, but reflecting back on their differences now that I have been studying the
Michael Chekhov technique, I see that each of the three characters differs in her center. The “center” is the physical location on the body from which the character’s action is generated. Charity operates predominantly from her feeling center located in the area of her heart; she is light, radiant and passionate. Nickie operates from her willing center located in the area of her pelvis; she is fiery and her songs generate forward movement. My character operates from her thinking center located in the head; Helene is cold, sharp and matter of fact. Charity wants to find love and change her life. Helene and Nickie want Charity to stay exactly where she is. Even if we all used the same dialect and had the same objectives, the differences in our centers provided clear and actable distinctions between our characters.

In his book, *On the Technique of Acting*, Michael Chekhov wrote:

> “The actor must seek refuge from his worst enemy, clichés, by a constant and sharp observation of living people with their characteristic and individual manners. He must observe greedily how a person puts his foot on the ground, what is his favorite gesture, why he uses it, how he polishes his spectacles and why he doesn’t put them on immediately, how he hides his embarrassment…; then, when the circumstances allow, he must try to imitate, to incorporate all the characteristic features he has accumulated during his observations. This valuable material will be stored in the actor’s subconscious and, being forgotten, will appear of itself when needed in a transformed, individualized way.”

When the text triggered my memories of grandma’s dialect, attitude and point of view, as Chekhov suggests, I tried to imitate all her characteristic features to transform myself
in an “individualized way.” Grandma moved slowly with her shoulders slightly drooped. She listened to everything anyone told her with a look of skepticism. She showed her impatience by flicking away what people said with her hands; and she laughed loudly and often. It would have been easy to fall into the trap of making Helene a cliché “tough broad.” Though this stereotypical character was appropriate for the audition, I demanded greater specificity while creating the role. By allowing myself to be inspired by the observations of my grandma that I have subconsciously made over the years, I created a character that was grounded in both the text and humanity.

Once I understood the essence of the character, it was necessary to understand what the character would look like and how the physical transformation could further affect my psychology. Director Terri Kent guided me in this process by first asking me to dye my hair blonde and tease it into a high beehive. Next, she asked me to wear an extreme amount of dark makeup. By the time I looked at myself in the mirror during tech week, I was unrecognizable. Stanislavsky, Chekhov, Meisner and other prominent twentieth-century acting teachers believed that psychological transformation was most successfully achieved through physical means. Just like in mask work, seeing oneself physically transformed sparks the imagination and can complete the characterization process. The level of physical transformation that I was encouraged to undertake enabled me to complete the psychological transformation that I had begun.

In his book, A Sense of Direction, William Ball wrote that the golden key to the art of the theatre are the wants of a character. These wants are expressed in the form of verbs. The character moves from one verb to the next through the course of the play in an effort to achieve his objective. In my previous thesis role, I challenged myself to use
verbs to express each section of text, and not to perform a single moment by “instinct” without also identifying the verb or action that I was playing. In a musical, however, one of the challenges is that much of the text is sung. As most of my stage time was spent singing and dancing, I challenged myself to identify actions in the songs as well. In many songs, the chorus was repeated offering me the choice to repeat the actions of the verbs or not. For example, many times in the song “There’s Gotta Be Something Better Than This” we repeat the lines:

There’s gotta be somethin’ better than this.
There’s gotta be some good reason to live.
And when I find me some kind of life I can live,
I’m gonna get up. I’m gonna get out.
I’m gonna get up, get out and live it.

One time that we sang this section I “dreamed” it. Another time that we sang this section, I “dared” it. Finally, another time that I sang these lines, I “celebrated” it.

I continued my work with actable verbs in the book scenes as well. Reflecting back on this work after studying the Chekhov technique, I have discovered that I not only use action, but throughout much of the script I used qualities. The quality is “how” the character expresses the action. Chekhov explains, “What is this Quality from the point of view of acting? It is nothing other than a feeling.” As qualities modify the action, they take the form of adverbs. So in the scene that precedes the song “Something Better,” Nickie and Helene scold Charity for her naiveté.

Helene: Now you’ll never get out of here.

Nickie: Baby, you’re stuck. Stuck just like the rest of us.
Helene: Yeah, and it ain’t no use flappin’ your wings, ’cause we are caught in the fly paper of life.

My action for this scene was always “to lecture” Charity. But I frequently changed the qualities, though they were all in the same family and produced the same result. I lectured her matter-of-factly, dryly and knowingly. Chekhov wrote that “action with qualities is the easiest way to the living feelings.” Adding quality to the action makes the work even more specific.

The greatest challenge of this role was singing harmony, a skill I had never worked on before. I had some success when I sang in the ensemble numbers, but in my duet, “Baby, Dream Your Dream,” I struggled with consistency and was never able to sing the harmony correctly. At first I thought that it was due to a lack of confidence. I did some self-reflection, reading and writing to help overcome my nerves. But ultimately I came to the conclusion that singing harmony is a skill in which I simply have not become proficient due to my lack of experience. In order to be confident with it, I would need much more practice than our rehearsal process allowed.

Due to the time pressure and my fears, my attempts at harmony were getting worse; I wanted perfection. In the book *Art and Fear*, David Bayles and Ted Orland wrote:

“The belief persists among some artists that doing art means doing things flawlessly. [But to] require perfection is to invite paralysis. The pattern is predictable: as you see error in what you have done, you steer your work toward what you imagine you can do perfectly…Believing that artwork
should be perfect, you gradually become convinced that you cannot make such work.”

This describes perfectly the downward spiral that I experienced during the rehearsal process. Bayles and Orland advise:

“Getting on with your work requires a recognition that perfection itself is a flawed concept…The imperfections are your guides to matters you need to reconsider or develop further. It is precisely this interaction between the ideal and the real that locks your art into the real world, and gives meaning to both.”¹¹

Although I understand this concept intellectually, it will take much more time and self-discipline to free myself from my unhealthy, self-imposed demands for perfection and to accept the reality that I create in my work, despite its flaws. I was most proud that although I struggled throughout the rehearsal process, the director was unaware of my insecurities. I strove to and succeeded in portraying a professional and upbeat persona regardless of my personal frustration.

The problem was solved on the day of our first preview when the director, Terri Kent, decided that another girl would sing the five lines of harmony backstage while I would mouth the words. At first I was humiliated by having to do this. But after several performances I was able to trust that the audience did not know the difference, and I took ownership of the song rather than concentrate on the problem. Not having the stress of singing those harmonies actually enabled me to relax into the role; I finally developed what is referred to in the Chekhov technique as a “feeling of lightness and ease.”
Due to the specific challenges of this role, I was forced to develop a sense of trust in others: the director, the musical director, the sound technicians, the actress who sang my harmonies. I think many actors, though we know we’re part of a whole, believe that we can only really trust ourselves when we’re on stage. This show demanded that I put myself in the hands of others and trust that they will carry me. I learned that by opening myself up in this way I experienced a greater connection to the whole and the success that came from it.

Looking back on this role and the thesis role that preceded it, I’m beginning to discover some patterns in my work. I seek a kinesthetic transformation when creating a character. When I am able to transform my energy center and physicality, I develop a sense of understanding of how the character and I are different. I used to believe that hearing the text spoken in a voice that is not my own was what unlocked that character for me. As I continue to study, I’ve observed that it is not so much the voice as it is the physical sensation that I feel when creating that voice. Next, I respond well to the influence of external factors. Looking at a transformed version of myself in the mirror further solidified my commitment to my character. I am most proud of the complements I received from people who told me that they watched much of the show before they realized that they were watching me; I was so transformed from myself and from any prior roles they had seen me perform. It has become clear at this point in my thesis exploration that I use external means as a path to the inner-life and psychology of a character.
As Michael Chekhov suggests in his book *To the Actor*, I approached the role of Grusha through imagination and archetype. After being cast, I read the play many times imagining my character in each scene and focused on the moments that attracted my attention the most; the engagement scene with Simon in scene two and the chalk circle section in scene six. My imagination awakened my feelings and on many occasions was moved to tears in just the silent reading of the script. Chekhov suggests that this imagination work should continue at home during the actual rehearsal process until one’s intuition suggests that the imagination has served its purpose.

The early rehearsal process consisted of two weeks of table work. The discussions we had were mostly dramaturgical. The Director, Matthew Earnest, asked the cast questions about the play that led to interesting, yet intellectual discussions. Ultimately, whether or not the play is communist propaganda does not affect my acting. One can only focus on playing the moments that are written in the text as truthfully and simply as possible; the implications that they have for the audience are the concern of the director and playwright. I viewed each day spent at the table reading the play as a day that I was not making discoveries to which I could be physically connected. My body was not involved and because movement is so important in my work, all those days spent sitting seemed like lost time.

At the end of the first week, my frustration toward the table work had softened. I attribute this to two factors: One, the director began allowing us to stand in different parts of the room during the readings. This was important for me because I could begin
to physically connect to the role; two, the director began to coach the cast through many of the scenes. It became obvious that many sections of this text were not clearly understood by all of the actors. It was beneficial for the director to be able to clarify these sections at this early stage while scripts were still in hand, rather than at a later time when habits had been formed. Throughout the second week of table work, the story that we are responsible for telling took on an increased level of sense and clarity.

Even in the early stages of rehearsal, it was evident how different this process was from all my past roles. In the past, I would have attempted to approach the role via some kind of vocal or physical adjustment. I have always relied on a kinesthetic transformation without which I felt lost and unsure. This time, I approached the role with my imagination. Even after two weeks, I was still in the process of living imaginatively throughout the play. This led me to the discovery of actions and qualities which I noted in my score nightly. The transformation that I made was psychophysical. This approach demanded that I trust the text to tell the story. By simply telling the story that is on the page and not relying on tricks or gimmicks to give it life, I feel that I crossed into a more organic, truthful level of my work. The character that I created is the most truthful embodiment of what I found on the page, not something that I forced upon the text because it was comfortable and familiar to me. In the past, playing a familiar character informed me how to say the lines. Using the Chekhov technique, I could rely on the Quality for this information. Qualities are infinite and, by incorporating them into my acting, my work becomes limitless. If I had done nothing more with this script beyond playing the Actions and Qualities that I organically discovered through the course of rehearsal, I would have clearly and truthfully told this story. However, having the luxury
of six weeks of rehearsal, I was able to deepen my understanding of certain moments through the use of the Psychological Gesture, Qualities of Movement, and Composition – the arc and journey of the character.

The archetype of this character undergoes an evolution from the beginning to the end of the play. Grusha begins the play as the archetypal “Orphan.” Her parents are no longer living and she has no other family besides a brother who she never sees. Her Superobjective is to belong to someone. For this reason, her dream of marriage to Simon Chachava, a man she hardly knows, drives her throughout the first third of the play. At the end of Scene 2, Grusha’s archetype becomes that of “Rescuer.” The next scene is spent keeping the baby safe, though one of her strategies for keeping it safe is to give it away as she must fulfill her objective and wait for Simon Chachava to return. Finally, Grusha “adopts” the baby and makes him her own. At this point the archetype changes for the third and final time and Grusha becomes “Mother.” The superobjective is fulfilled as she now belongs to someone – the baby. Furthermore, maximum polarity has been achieved as Grusha has evolved from “Orphan” to the “Mother” of an orphan herself.

Before I did any of the preceding intellectual analysis, I explored the archetype through the use of Michael Chekhov’s “Psychological Gesture.”(PG) After reading the script several times, I explored organic movements inspired by my understanding of the character. I began with a movement that resembled a “scooping” motion on the floor that flowed into a second movement that resembled “cradling.” Afterwards, I observed that these movements resembled those archetypal gestures of “Lift” and “Embrace.” At that point I put the gesture aside as it was too early to know what or how I would use it.
Later in blocking rehearsals I was given the prop “baby” to use and once I had it in my hand I remembered the Psychological Gesture. When Grusha makes the decision to rescue the baby, I scoop it up off the floor. For the remainder of the time that Grusha embraces the archetype of “Rescuer” the corresponding PG is “Lift.” Throughout this section I held the baby with my hands away from my body as though I’m keeping the baby afloat. After the “Adoption Song,” however, when the archetype changes to “Mother” the PG changes to “Embrace.” I held the baby close to my body wrapping my whole arms around it. Understanding these archetypes and gestures was invaluable in providing a deeper understanding of the journey of my character.

When beginning my work on this role, I decided that I wanted an authentic investigation of my process. I did not want to complicate the work by forcing the technique onto it, rather I wanted to explore how I would use my technique when faced with various challenges. One of those challenges was the monologue in scene six – the courtroom scene. At our first blocking rehearsal, I was blocked to cross downstage to confront Azdak during the speech. Being affected by the sudden movement of the cross, I crafted a speech that could be best described as an outburst. Two days before opening, the director requested that I change the speech to “controlled rage.” To make such a drastic adjustment so close to opening night demanded the use of my technique. I rehearsed the monologue with Qualities of Movement and settled on “molding” as the quality that I would use with the exception of the line “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself when you see me trembling here in front of you?” in which I was “floating.” Once I understood the speech from this point of view, I asked the director if I could begin the monologue behind the table and cross slowly downstage as the speech builds. He
allowed my change and the next night I performed the speech for the first time with the adjustment. The note I received from the director was “Fantastic!” In addition to merely executing the director’s note, the Qualities of Movement enabled me to internalize the speech so that I had a genuine understanding of what I was doing in that moment. I didn’t force Qualities of Movement on any other part of the text, but when I needed to solve a problem quickly, I had a tool on which I could rely that produced immediate, effective results.

Considering vocal resonance provided an additional opportunity for polarity in my character. Vocal resonance travels from head to chest at the character gained strength and power. Over the course of my graduate training, I discovered that I tend to rely on only one area of vocal resonance – the mask. I have often received feedback from directors instructing me to make my speech more varied. I would try changing the pitch of my voice, but never really felt that I had achieved the variety and fullness for which they were asking. Finally I realized that what they really wanted was for me to utilize additional points of vocal resonance such as my chest and the crown of my head. In voice class I began to awaken these areas by simply imagining the sound traveling to different areas of resonance during my vocal warm-ups. I continued to warm up this way each day before rehearsal. I began to discover that different scenes “lived” in different areas of resonance. For example, when I spoke to Simon Chachava, my voice took on a lighter quality and resonated in my head. When I spoke to Azdak, however, in the courtroom scene, my voice was more powerful and resonated in my chest.

Creating this role required the use of every tool in the “toolbox.” In addition to the techniques that I learned in acting class, I also drew on my internship experience at
the Cleveland Play House. While observing rehearsals for *The Chosen*, I sometimes noted that the director, Seth Gordon, would give the actors direction that was clearly “right” but the actors would resist this direction and insist on playing the moment or the scene in a manner for which they had a personal preference. For example, one actor with a very even-tempered disposition refused to become angry in a scene despite the fact that the character he portrayed was unmistakably enraged by his circumstance. I made the mental note that in the future I would trust the director when given a note since actors are sometimes unable to see each and every moment objectively.

This was tested several times throughout the rehearsal process when the director asked for certain adjustments that went against my initial understanding of the moment or scene. Reflecting on my internship experience, I made a point of fully investing in the director’s note instead of arguing about it. Every time I found that I gained new insight that informed, not only that moment, but the character as a whole. For example, one day the director gave me the result-oriented direction, “I like it when Grusha smiles.” At first I was perplexed. How important is smiling in a story in which I’m running for my life and the life of an infant that is later taken away from me? I didn’t see the connection, however, I made it a point to take his note. I searched for more opportunities to smile and found that in between every moment of fear and danger there were moments of levity and calm. This direction enabled me to discover the polarity in the text and in the character. By investing more in those sections rather than skipping over them en route to the more climactic scenes, I discovered the naïve optimism that is at the heart of the character Grusha, and the emotional through line that connected the moments together creating a more dynamic performance.
In undertaking my first thesis role, Darlene, I discovered that I had a solid foundation in listening and moment-to-moment connection as learned in my Meisner training. In addition, I had a strong commitment to making active, playable choices. But ultimately I could only apply these skills to a limited number of roles or characters in which I felt comfortable.

In my second thesis role, Helene, I could go beyond my comfort zone and test my technique in a genre with which I had little experience. By pushing myself in this way I achieved a sense of accomplishment that can only come from taking a true risk. I developed a sense of trust in my director and colleagues, and a greater satisfaction in knowing that the strong foundation I identified in my first thesis role remained with me through these unique challenges.

Finally, in playing Grusha, I applied the newly learned principles of the Michael Chekhov technique to my work. By adding the imagination, archetype, psychological gesture, qualities of movement and quality of action to the foundation I had in action and listening, I achieved a true freedom in this role. After its completion, any limits that I had felt at the beginning of my graduate training were forgotten.

My technique is now a multi-layered process which combines both Meisner and Michael Chekhov techniques. The Chekhov work has unlocked many doors for me in the rehearsal process. Regardless of the size or scope of the role, how well I identify with the character, or the vocal or physical adjustments that are required for the role, I can discover specificity and depth for any role using Michael Chekhov’s Psychological
Gesture, Archetype, Action and Quality. But without the foundation in listening and connection that the Meisner work provided, my acting would not feel truthful. Together the techniques provide a means to carefully craft a role, while maintaining a feeling of spontaneity that the audience perceives as improvisation.

I carry this sense of limitless possibility with me as I continue to take on new artistic challenges. I now approach each role without fear. I am confident that I have the tools to solve whatever puzzle the script might hold, and I look forward to each challenge as an opportunity to grow and discover.
ENDNOTES

1 See Appendix A for additional scene breakdowns including beats and actions.


5 Diderot, 51.

6 Leonard, 99.


8 Chekhov, Michael, *On the Technique of Acting*, 98

9 Chekhov, 37.

10 Chekhov, 37.

APPENDIX A
First Week

- Read through, learned music, worked with dialect CD. It’s important for me to find this character’s voice right away because of the dialect and her youth.
- Recorded music and practiced at home.
- I haven’t worked any of my scenes yet, but I’m thinking of some things to try. In the scene where Aunt Norma and I are working on Bible verse, I’m imagining an activity. Maybe I could be transcribing the verses that I’m learning, or maybe Aunt Norma could be braiding my hair – tightly.
- In the scene where Buddy is scaring me with the worms, I’m going to make the adjustment that they’re cockroaches. It’s more meaningful to me.

Tues. March 6

We rehearsed my first scene with CC, Jennie Mae, Melvin and Basil. I made some choices about this scene prior to rehearsal and I was pleased that many of the choices were on the right track. Rehearsal helped clarify the actions, and the blocking and director’s notes gave me even more ideas.

I enter the scene and encounter Showers on my way in. I decided to make my action to “flirt” with him. But since he’s an older man and flirting with him would be exciting for Darlene, I took the adjustment that he’s a rock star. After CC exits, I flirt with two town boys before crossing to Jennie Mae. In flirting with the boys, I was more confident than when I was flirting with CC.

On the line, “I’d be up all night long if that guy lived at my house.” I originally thought that I was pining for CC on this line. The director suggested that I use this as a
way to “get Jennie Mae to stay and gossip with me.” This was a much better choice as it required a stronger connection to my scene partner.

“There’s just something about an older type man.” In this section Jennie Mae and I “play the experts.”

“Not like these boys around here.” The director gave me the blocking to walk along the benches like a railing. As I walk, I’m playing a game with Jennie Mae and “enticing her” to come out with me.

“She just got eyes for the preacher.” In this next beat, the boys enter and I’m “gossiping” with them.

The next section involves drinking hootch. I made the substitution that the hootch is urine.

“What are you talking about Melvin?” until the end of the scene, I’m flirting with Melvin and Dewey.

**Wed. March 7**

Run ACT I through page 53. No notes.

**Thurs. March 8**

Run ACT I. Notes:

- Keep head down while Norma is braiding it.

- “Stroll” between flirting with the boys and seeing Jennie Mae.
Sun. March 11

Run ACT I

My personal fear of being on a wobbly bench is keep me from engaging in the next moment. The director said that he liked my character “flirting with danger.” I think I need to feel safe in order to play that. Darlene might enjoy feeling unstable, but Nicole doesn’t.

Wed. March 14

Notes:

- When I enter during the storm scene, make sure I’m talking to Aunt Norma, even though we’re not standing together.
- In the worm scene, let the words “all the time, Jennie Mae” be “delicious.” I love that note.

Thurs. March 15

Today we ran ACT I again. I’m off book and feeling more comfortable in my scene with Dewey, Melvin and Jennie Mae. The transition is getting smoother.

Wed. March 21

Today I had dialect coaching with Chuck Richie. We worked on the aspect of the dialect that has less inflection. The exuberance I’m finding in the character of Darlene is working in opposition to this aspect of the dialect. We talked about experimenting with an entire line on one pitch and then the next line on a different pitch. We also discovered
that in the worm scene, I imitate the voice of Aunt Norma and, later, the voice of God. We made the great connection that these voices should be the same. For Darlene, Aunt Norma is the voice of God.

We’re running ACT II now and I’m working to clarify my scene on pages 69-71, the worm scene. I enter with Buddy chasing me with a can of worms. Darlene is squeamish about the worms. I am not afraid of worms, but I am deathly afraid of cockroaches. I’ve made the adjustment that he’s holding a can full of cockroaches. Next, Jennie Mae’s line is “Don’t be so prissy Darlene.” This provides the valuable information that Darlene needs to be acting “prissy” when I enter.

“It was me I’d make that preacher dig em himself.” I’m scolding Jennie Mae.

“It wouldn’t bother me so much.” I justify my behavior.

“Worms and snakes both. They could talk too.” Teach them.

“Yeah, I gotta learn the whole thing.” Elicit sympathy.

“All the time Jennie Mae.” Delicious.

“That kind of stuff happens in Europe.” Be the expert.

“Oh there’s lots crazier stuff than that in the Bible.” Shut him up.

“So anyway, this business of bein naked really set God off at the snake.” Gossip

“Later on he gets really mad and floods the whole world out.” Scare Buddy.

I’ve been directed to intentionally scare Buddy in the last section. At first this did not feel right to me. But after reflecting on it, I’m sure it’s right for the scene. My hesitation probably came from my personal reluctance to appear villainous or mean. The director helped guide me in the direction that best served the play.
Mon. April 2

First rehearsal since spring break. Notes:

- Look at railing on the “oohs.”
- Look at catwalk on “and I looked.”
- React to Basil and Dewey after “and I looked.”
- Wring on “Evenin Pastor Showers.”
- Collapse on “Jesus.”
- Slow down worm scene.

Wed. April 4

Notes:

- On the last “all the time Jennie Mae,” don’t let Buddy hear.

Thurs. April 5

Act II is going well. Since I’ve started scaring Buddy at the end of the worm scene, Darlene is evolving into a brattier, more mischievous character. Notes:

- Catch CC’s eye while picking up the handkerchief.
- “I ain’t scared” then grab flask.
- Have a sidebar with Dewey while Norma is talking to Jennie Mae.

Mon. April 9

Reflections on costume fitting: I am an actor who is greatly influenced by the clothes I wear. I think I developed this ability to be so influenced during the time I spent
doing improv and sketch comedy early in my career. Backstage there were bins filled with glasses, wigs, scarves, etc. and we were able to make split-second decisions to incorporate these into the improv. Because being affected or informed by my costume is a significant part of my process, I have found it especially disappointing that I am one of the last cast members to have a costume fitting or even rehearsal shoes.

When I did have my costume fitting, I saw the dress I wear in the scene where I’ve been on a date with Dewey. It seems to be from another time period. I reflected on where Darlene got this dress. If I hadn’t seen the dress, I would have imagined that Darlene altered one of her Sunday dresses to be tighter and more revealing. However, the dress that I’m actually wearing is quite loose. Now I’m trying to manufacture a justification for why I’m wearing such a garment. I can only imagine that maybe it had been my mother’s dress and I found it in Aunt Norma’s attic.

**Tues. April 10**

Notes:

- Add some “hanky business” after the worm attack.
- Flirt with Dewey during our sidebar.
- “I been up half the night.” Perform for the boys.

**Tues. April 17**

Notes:

- Brush off knees when I stand up in the worm scene. Aunt Norma doesn’t like dirty knees.
- Float “Jesus.”
- Do not let my voice get too high.

**Thurs. April 19**

Last rehearsal! Notes:

- Get up on bench during first “Not like these boys around here.”
- Show Melvin that I emptied the flask on “Hey Melvin.”
- Do not let my voice get “pitchy.”

**Performance Reflection**

Performances went well. Looking back, I’m most pleased that my energy never lagged during the run. I never felt like I had an “off” night. I felt that the work I had done during rehearsal was so solid that it carried me through each show regardless of any personal distractions. I observed other actors becoming distraught when we had audiences that were quiet and didn’t respond the way they were expecting. Often they would either push harder, trying to force a response from the audience, or let their energy drop unable to rise above what they perceive as apathy from the audience. In reflecting on my own reactions to this situation, I observed that I did not alter my performance. I was still confident in my work, even without the audience’s audible approval. I think in the past I would have been more affected by the audience response, or lack thereof. But now I don’t take it personally. Some audiences are just quiet and do not express their enthusiasm auditorily. This does not mean that they are not enjoying the show or that they should receive any less of my energy and attention.
Audition Reflection

I was well prepared for this audition. I had several sessions with pianist and vocal coach, Mel Fucci, prior to the audition. I recorded my accompaniment and practiced it daily. I broke the audition selections into beats and created specific acting choices. I did not have any anxiety about the accompanist, my selections or my singing. I felt more confident than I ever have for a singing audition. However, when I actually began to sing at the audition, I was shocked to find that my voice revealed far more tension and anxiety than I was aware of having. I realized that I hold tension in my throat and that regardless of how I try to trick myself into thinking that I am relaxed, my voice will give away my secret. I am not sure how to address this issue, but it’s something I hope to tackle in my upcoming voice classes. Overall, I was displeased with my audition and did not think it reflected my best work.

Callback Reflection

The only way to prepare for a dance audition is to know how to dance. So in that sense, I’ve been preparing for this callback since I was eight years old. I had been away from dancing for some time, but I took a jazz class this past semester to reacquaint myself with the process of learning a dance combination quickly. This class, taught by Melanie George, provided significant physical challenges, not just for me, but for
younger students and dance majors who also took the class. Being able to meet those challenges bolstered my confidence and helped lead to a strong dance callback for *Sweet Charity*. Next came the singing, and even though I had already sung this song several times by this point, my voice still belied my tension and nervousness. Fortunately the director, Terri Kent, kept me for the last cut to read from the script, despite the fact that my singing callback was not that strong. In the reading, I tried to convey the essence of the character by making some quick but strong characterizations. I realized that in past musical theatre auditions, I would often get cut after the second round of singing and would not get a chance to read from the script which is usually the final component. Sadly, I have missed out on so many opportunities to show my strongest talent. I was so grateful for the opportunity to read and am sure that this was critical in my being cast in the show.

**April 8, 2007**

Fosse lecture with Melanie George, KSU professor of dance.

Coming out of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, there was an emphasis on sensuality especially in the work of Bob Fosse. Bob Fosse was trained in ballet and jazz. He also had a background in magic. Fosse wanted dancers to approach their roles as actors. In his work, dancers were in the foreground in starring roles, not only in the chorus.

Fosse’s style was based on sensuality and sexuality contrasted with humor. (winks, jokes, subtext.) His shows always had subtext and dark subject matter. His dances had an emphasis on precision of undulations and isolations, specifically hips,
shoulders and wrists. Signature elements of his style included turned in knees, snaps, backwards exits, derby hats and white gloves.

**Week of June 4, 2007**

I know Neil Simon’s work to be straightforward and formulaic – classic comedy writing. Since the character of Helene was originally written for an African American actress, I see that as having defined her character in the past. Of course, I will have to seek out a different way to define my character. I don’t think Helene can be tough and smart like Nickie. And if Charity is played as ditzy, then I don’t think Helene can be the same. I’m going to have to wait until rehearsal begins to see where I fit into the trio. I’m doing some reading on classic comedy and vaudeville to see if I get any ideas.

I also read the book *Razzle Dazzle* this week. It’s about the life and work of Bob Fosse. I find him absolutely fascinating. I didn’t realize that *Sweet Charity* is considered the turning point in his career where he really defined the style that would come to be associated with him in future works. Everyone in the book describes him as a perfectionist endlessly rehearsing the minute details of each dance. I can’t wait to get started on the dances for this show and the choreography for YPC.

**Reflections on First Costume Fitting**

Yesterday I had my first costume fitting with designer Suzi Campbell. It was the most positive experience I’ve ever had with a designer. She seemed genuinely concerned
with how I felt in the costume and whether or not I liked it (which I did). The dress feels
great, and she told me I’ll be in a blonde wig for the show. I love being inspired by
external factors so to have this much information about my costume before rehearsals
even begin will be invaluable to me.

**Week of June 26, 2007**

We began this week by working on music. This is usually a frustrating
experience for me, but I tried to stay positive. One thing I found interesting is that when I
sing in ensemble numbers as Helene, I am often singing in a way that is completely
different from how Helene sings in order to sing the part I’m assigned. This instantly
makes me feel like I’m out of character, but I think this is just the nature of musical
theatre.

Being the dance captain has already presented challenges even in the first week. I
feel that I have the respect of the ensemble members. They sometimes ask me for
clarification or for extra help with a step. But Sandra has been “adjusting” the
choreography for herself. I don’t feel comfortable saying anything to her about it. But
what’s worse is that she decides that we should be doing the same choreography so she
wants me to adjust do the variation that she’s created. This is not something I am
comfortable with, but especially as the dance captain it’s my job to make sure that people
are *not* doing exactly that. It’s been a little awkward for me and I don’t know how to
handle it.

**Week of July 3, 2007**
The major lesson of this week has been one I learned in self-reflection: I seek the positive reinforcement of the director. There have been many days in the past two weeks where Terri hasn’t said anything to me at all. I was starting to feel paranoid and that she must not like the work that I’m doing. But I think I’m just being sensitive about it because of this need I have for positive affirmation. I think instead I should be thinking that if she’s not saying anything to me, then I must be doing okay. Regardless, I need to be able to cultivate a sense of confidence in my self that does not rely on the director’s feedback. I need to know for myself whether or not my work is good. This is something I’m going to be aware of in the future.

Week of July 10, 2007

This week I’ve really been trying to define my character. I spoke with Assistant Director/Choreographer, Sean Morrissey, about it and he offered that he did not think that Nickie and Helene are so different. They’re both the same type of woman and their roles, not individually, but rather collectively, serve to contrast with Charity and illustrate the kind of life she has and why she is so desperate to get out of it. This was a really freeing thought. I’ve been so concerned with being “unique” that I really forgot to think about how my character serves the play as a whole. I went back to the text and looked for clues that would inspire me. Late in Act II, Helene has the line “Don’t look at me, I’ve always been like this.” That was the inspiration I needed. If she’s “always been like this” first I
need to know what “this” is, and I need to be like that throughout the show. I decided that “this” was rough, loud and cynical; that’s where I began.

Notes from *Laughing Matters*:

- Aristotle wrote that comedy “aims at representing men as worse…than in actual life” and is “an imitation of characters of a lower type.” (p.6)
- Comic characters possess some defect or ugliness though they are not “in the full sense of the word bad.” (p.6)
- “Cynacism in general may be seen either as a negative distortion of reality, or as a simple unillusioned acceptance of the world the way it actually is. This ambivalence is also comedy’s.” (p.12)
- The events of comedy must work like dance – with precision and symmetry. (p17)

 Helene has ugly qualities but she is not “bad” because she does truly care about Charity and she is able to share brief moments of emotional truth in “Baby, Dream Your Dream” when she admits that she really would like to have a family and a decent life, though she doesn’t allow herself to believe that it could ever really happen for her. I like the idea that her cynicism is not a negative distortion of reality but simply an acceptance of the world the way it actually is.

**Week of July 17, 2007**

Notes:

- Use a single “grabbing” gesture.
• Get the idea for “grabbing” at the moment that Nickie starts the phrase.

• Sharp turns into and away from the table in Something Better.

• Focus to Oscar and Charity during “doo-wee” section of Rhythm of Life.

• New Big Spender position.

• “Ole” relates to his Italian pants.

• Don’t laugh at Charity until she says “Coney Island” in scene before BDYD.

The major element to consider as I reflect back on this week is the downward spiral my nerves have taken and how, as a result, I’m beginning to self destruct. Eric Van Baars gave me a book entitled Art and Fear. I’ve been reading it and it has been helping me identify this process by which artists prevent themselves from creating art. The book talks about the fear that your art will fail being a normal and healthy part of the artmaking cycle. Making art feels dangerous and revealing and it is dangerous and revealing. (p. 15). This book has been helpful in putting my fears in perspective but I’m frustrated because even though I’m trying to regain confidence, my voice still belies my nervousness. This has become debilitating. I talked to Terri about it today, after having a mini-breakdown and she’s encouraging me to relax and have more fun next week.

**Tech Week**

It seems simple, but just having “permission” from Terri to have fun with the show has really helped me to relax this week. I felt much more at ease throughout the beginning of the week despite the fact that I was still having tremendous difficulty singing the harmonies in “Baby, Dream Your Dream.” Oddly, it seemed to be more frustrating for Sandra than it was for me and she would often cry after we would perform
the song. This should have made me feel horrible as it was my fault that the song wasn’t right, but somehow I maintained my composure. I really felt relaxed throughout the week and did not break down. I thought that by being more confident I would be able to correct my vocal challenges in the song. But what I learned is that, despite my increased confidence, I simply have not had enough experience singing harmonies. It is a skill that I am just learning and I am not that good at it yet. At the last minute, Terry decided to have another girl sing the harmony line backstage while I mouthed the line onstage. At first I was completely humiliated by having to do this. But I understood the need for it as the song was still not right on the afternoon of the preview. I’m still tense about it and hope that I’ll be able to get back to singing my own part on those five lines this week.

Performance Reflection

Because of the backstage singing during “Baby, Dream Your Dream,” I felt uneasy about performances well into the second week. It took that long for me to trust that the audience was unaware of the situation and also for me to develop a level of trust with all the other people on which I had to rely in order for it to work. Finally when I felt confident that it was working, I was able to relax and really start to settle into the character and the role. I was proud of myself in that I never stopped working on the role even after the show opened. I knew that there were sections that could be more specific and as the run progressed, I continued to explore these sections until I found actions that worked for me.
APPENDIX C
**SCENE 2: The Highborn Child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Action / Quality</th>
<th>Spyback</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was all dressed to go, but they needed another goose for the banquet so they sent me. I know geese.</td>
<td>Clarify / honestly / proudly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look! If that’s not a fifteen-pounder stuffed with corn I’ll eat the feathers.</td>
<td>Display / proudly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. To the poultry farm.</td>
<td>Confirm / simply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only go up there to wash the linens.</td>
<td>Clarify / nicely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exactly what?</td>
<td>Question / playfully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should I not wash the linens up by the willows?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand the soldier. What’s good about it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could you know about the willows?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What <em>does</em> happen? Will the soldier please explain what he’s talking about and get it over with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the soldier mean I put my toes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the water when it’s hot? That’s about all that happens.

What? My feet?

Simon Chachava! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Hiding behind a bush and waiting for a girl to lift her skirt. It’s probably a lot of fun for you and your friends.

Nothing. If the worst happens I’ll go to my brother in the mountains. What about you?

But hasn’t the palace guard all deserted?

Won’t it be dangerous to go with her?

Yr not a knife, Simon Chachava. Yr a man. What do you owe that woman?

The soldier is an idiot, putting himself in harm’s way for nothing – nothing at all! I’ve got to go – I’ve got to get these things into the third courtyard.

No. Just one brother.

I have a little pain in my right shoulder from time to time, but I’ve never had to miss any work because of it. Everything seems to be in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Adverb</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realize</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admonish</td>
<td>hurtfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>concernedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>concernedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scold</td>
<td>disappointedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>distractedly, impatiently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
pretty good shape.

Patience? Yes, I am patient. But if a man runs off to war for no reason and then no message comes it would be very, very hard to…

Simon Chachava I’ve got to get to the courtyard now! The answer is Yes!

Kutsk.

Simon Chachava - That would be very good.

Thank you, Simon.

Yes, Simon.

Simon Chachava, I will wait for you. You can go with confidence, soldier, into war:
The cruel and hateful mouth of it that swallows all our hopes And when you return I will be here. I will wait for you under the flowering elm and I will wait for you under the bare elm and I will wait until the last soldier comes back and beyond. And when you come back No boots will stand at my door No other head will have rested on my pillow No mouth will have kissed my mouth. When you come back When you come back you will say to me quiet and sure: (whispers) Everything is as it was.
What’s happened to the Governor?  |  Ask / fearfully
He got left behind.               |  Answer / distractedly
He’s waking up.                  |  Shush / hastily
The governess asked me to hold him for a second.  |  Contradict / matter-of-factly
He doesn’t have the black plague. He’s looking at me like a person. |  Stop them / fearfully

**SCENE 3: The Flight into the Northern Mountains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Action / Quality</th>
<th>Spyback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Four, four generals</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>The direction was given to do this song with a smile. I created the imaginary circumstance that I have just emerged from the forest to a sunny overlook. In this song I’m taking a moment to enjoy my decision to do the right thing by taking the baby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set out for Iran</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The first had never laid a siege</td>
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<tr>
<td>The second had but terribly.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The third fought weather day &amp; night</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The fourth could make no soldier fight</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Four, four generals</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>And none worth a damn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sosso Robakidse</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marched into Iran</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Just a soldier in the siege</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>He bravely won a victory</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The weather served him well enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countless blows the soldier struck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sosso Robakidse</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s our man.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noontime. That’s the time when people eat. Now you just wait here in the grass and the good Grusha will find you some milk.</td>
<td>Instruct / patiently</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could I have a little bit of milk and maybe a corncake sir?</td>
<td>Ask / politely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But you must have a little milk for a baby, sir.</td>
<td>Correct / optimistically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ve got more than a “God bless you,” sir. We’re gonna pay you like princes. Our butt may be in the water, but our head’s in the clouds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And how much for a small bottle?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three piasters? For that?</td>
<td>Question / disbelievingly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel, did you hear that? Three piasters! We can’t afford that. We’ll have to try something else.</td>
<td>Share / matter-of-factly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suck. Think of the three piasters. There’s nothing there but you think you’re drinking and that’s better than nothing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir! Open up! We’ll pay. (I hope lightning strikes you.) I thought you’d say half a piaster for that tiny drop, but I’ve got to feed the baby. Would you take one piaster?</td>
<td>Demand / impatiently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t shut the door again. Here’s two. And it better be fresh – we’ve got a long way to go. This is quite a racket you’re running here. It’s a sin, too.</td>
<td>Scold / begrudgingly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sure is an expensive game. Just a sip, Michel, that’s a whole week’s pay. Around here I guess they think we earn our money on our back! Michel, Michel I’ve really got my hands full</td>
<td>Admonish / impatiently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realize / helplessly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with you. Ha! A brocade coat that cost 1000 piasters, but too broke to buy milk.

Look there. It looks like a coach with some rich people in it. We’ve got to get over there!

Er, are you ladies looking for a room, too? It’s terrible how crowded it is everywhere, not a carriage in sight! My coachman decided to turn back. I’ve just walked half a mile. Barefoot! My Persian shoes just, well, you know how it is in heels. Why is no one coming out to help us?

Yes, I’m afraid my son will catch cold.

Sort of. I’m looking for a room too.

O. Yes. But you see, I had to leave in such a hurry the adjutant forgot to hand me my purse.

Of course.

I suppose I can do it.

Maybe it’ll make them want to help us. They have a carriage, you know!

I was taken completely by surprise. “Dear Anastasia Katarinowska” by husband said to me one day before lunch. “Lie down for a bit. You know how easily you get your migrains.” “Georgi,” I said to the Governor. “With 60 guests coming for dinner I can’t just waste the day napping. You can’t depend on the servants, and I have to feed Michel Georgivich.”
| See Michel, everything will be just as I told you it would. | Congratulate myself / excitedly |
| Here we are! I doubled these over for some extra cushion. So we won’t be on the hard floor. | Offer / helpfully |
| What? | Caught off guard |
| I’m not up to anything. I thought we might go along a ways in your coach with you. Please don’t shout. I’ll go by myself. | Defend / desperately |
| But I was just trying to give you the 60 piasters! I promise you I have it. Look: here are four tens and a five. No that’s a ten, and this makes 60! All I want is to get the baby onto the carriage. That’s the truth. | Plead / desperately |
| Ma’am, I’ll be honest with you. I’m from a poor family. But the baby isn’t. He’s of noble birth. Look at the linen. He’s just traveling, like you. | Admit / honestly |
| Stop screaming! Don’t you have a heart? | Sell / desperately |
| You bitches! You don’t know it but they’re already nailing your heads to the wall! | Plead / angrily |
| I thought if I was like them they’d help me. | Warn / disgustedly |
| Better not. I should go before the innkeeper gets here. If I can get through the night I’ll be out of danger I think. | Realize / sincerely |
| You’ve wet yourself again and you know I don’t have another diaper for | Thank / simply |
| | Decide / optimistically |
| | Scold / exasperatedly |
you. Michel, we’ve got to split up here. It’s far enough from the city: they can’t want your dirty little butt enough to trek all the way up here for it. Farmer’s wives are friendly and kind and they smell like milk.

So long Michel. I’ll forget about how you kicked me all night to make me run faster. And don’t worry about paying me anything. I did it because I wanted to.

I’d like to have kept you because your nose is so little, but I can’t. I would’ve shown you your first rabbit and – how to not wet your pants anymore, but I’ve got to get back. My fiancé the soldier might be back soon, and what if I’m not there to meet him? You can’t ask me to do that Michel.

I fasten them tight in case I need to pull out of a place quick.

To meet my fiancé. A soldier. Mr. Simon Chachava of the palace guard in Nukha. And when I tell him about this he’ll break all your bones.

No. I haven’t heard anything.

Hide him quick. The ironshirts are coming. I laid him on your doorstep but he’s not mine. He’s from a rich family.

Don’t ask questions. The ironshirts, they’re looking for him.

Take those linens off of him. They’ll give us away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Break the news/ matter-of-factly</th>
<th>Sell / enthusiastically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgive / easily</td>
<td>Admit / warmly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate / excitedly</td>
<td>Decide / coldly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffuse / quickly</td>
<td>Threaten / forcefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie / convincingly</td>
<td>Demand / desperately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Look, they’re coming from behind those trees! I shouldn’t have run away. Now they’re angry. What should I do?

They’re after the baby.
You can’t give him to them. Say he’s yours.
If you give him to them they’ll run him through with a lance.
If you give him to them they’ll run him through with a lance right here in this room. You’ve got to say he’s yours.
If you say it firmly…
That’s why you have to say he’s yours. His name is Michel. I shouldn’t have told you that!
Don’t nod your head like that. And stop shaking, they’ll see it.
And stop saying “yes.” I can’t listen to that anymore.
Do you have children of your own?
Then he’s probably an ironshirt himself. Would you let him kill babies with a lance? No, you’d scream at the top of your lungs, “Now you listen to me! Get those weapons out of this house! Is that what I raised you for? And by the way, wash your neck before you speak to your mother!”
Then promise me that you will say he’s yours.
Here they are.
I left some milk on the stove and I suddenly remembered it.
I didn’t see it.

He’s mine officer. He’s not the one you’re looking for.

He’s mine. He’s mine.

---

*Since no one will take you then*
You my own shall be
*(Dark day in a barren year)*
You must since no other will
Deign to stay with me.

*As I carried you along*
My back almost gave in
*As you drank the dearest milk you became my love*
*(I won’t lose you again.)*

*Throw your silken clothes away in some rags I’ll wrap you*
Wash you then, and christening
*With this glacier water*
*(And you will make it through.)*

---

But I have to take my baby to my brother’s house. It’s east of here.
The bridge isn’t completely rotted. I think I’ll try to get across.

Don’t shout! Tell him not to shout.
Alright, I’ll tell you. Some ironshirts are after me. I knocked one of them down.

Get out of my way. I have to get over that bridge.
Get out of my way!

---

Remembering to invest in all the moments of peace between the sections of fear and danger, I chose to smile during this song. The act of smiling led me to create the imaginary circumstance that it is the baby’s first birthday party that we’re celebrating and I’m singing him a birthday song.
But those men are worse.

I won’t. We belong together. For better or for worse.

*Deep is the chasm son
Bridge torn apart
But we have chosen son
Never to part.*

*The road that you tread
I’ve lead you to
You eat the bread
That I bake for you.*

*I’ll share everything I have with you
As you belong to me
But I can’t predict son
How much it will be.*

I’ve got to try it.

I’m begging you toss that stick away. Otherwise they’ll be able to get that rope and come after me.

The note was given
to do this song as an anthem sung before battle to rally the troops. My action was to empower importantly.

You should never be afraid of the wind. He’s poor like us. He just gets cold sometimes, pushing all the clouds along. And the snow, Michel. He’s not so bad. He has to cover all the little fir trees so they don’t die in the winter. And now I’ll sing a song for you. Listen!

*Your father is a bandit
Your mother is a whore
Yet lowly at your feet will bow
Honorable men.
The son of the tiger
will feed the baby horses
The child of the snake
Brings milk to the mothers.*

Deny / decidedly

Decide / daringly

Demand / pleadingly

Reassure / warmly

Present him / wondrously

I never really got this song until I did it with the snow. It immediately put me in a mystical atmosphere. I understood that I had redefined him and he was reborn.
**SCENE 4: In the Northern Mountains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Action / Quality</th>
<th>Spyback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I came over the Junga-Tau pass Lavrenti.</td>
<td>Answer / weakly</td>
<td>The note was given to imagine that I have a pencil attached to the top of my head and I’m drawing circles on the ceiling to show Grusha’s weak condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I was.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The governor was brought down.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I need to lie down somewhere, Lavrenti.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s a soldier.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, he’s in the war.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, he’s got a farm.</td>
<td>Ask / weakly</td>
<td>The direction was given “to play” with this song, but also “to teach” him at the same time. One day Kai brought his toys on stage and I improvised the story of the song using the toys as the characters. The director loved it and that’s how we did it from then on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take him.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Then the beloved turned to go*
*Then his fiancé pleaded with him*
*Pleaded and cried, cried and told him:*
*My love, my love*
*If you must go to war*
*If you must fight an enemy*
*Don’t place yourself on the frontline*
*And don’t go along at the rear*
*On the front there is red fire*
*Behind is red smoke.*
*Keep near the center of the war*
*Keep near the man who carries the flag. The first always die.*
*The last are killed too.*
*Those in the center come home.*
Michel, we’ve got to be crafty. If we make ourselves small like the cockroaches, sister-in-law will forget we’re in the house. Then we can stay til the snow melts. And don’t let the cold make you cry. If you’re poor and cold, you’re pretty unpopular.

It’s not cold, Lavrenti.

He asked but I didn’t say anything.

Must be a barrel leaking.

Yes.

But I can’t get married. I have to wait for Simon Chachava.

I’d like to have papers with stamps for Michel.

How much does the woman want?

Where will you get it?

No one will know us there.
I’ll do it.

Michel, you sure do make lots of trouble. I got you the way the pear tree gets the sparrow. The way a Christian bends down to pick up a breadcrust so it won’t go to waste. I should have run as fast as I could Michel, on that Easter Sunday in Nukha. I’m a sucker.

Send Simon Chachava to me when he gets here.

Yes.

I’ll do it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Emotion/Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat this cake, Michel and be nice and quiet. We’re respectable people now.</td>
<td>Instruct / optimistically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did someone say the soldiers are back?</td>
<td>Question / disbelievingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That can’t be.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are back.</td>
<td>Realize / horrifiedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are still two holes in it. You stay here and fix them.</td>
<td>Teach / warmly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t the farmer do that himself?</td>
<td>Challenge / coldly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me get it.</td>
<td>Escape / hastily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child wasn’t conceived in love if that’s what the farmer means.</td>
<td>Challenge / coldly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Respond / robotically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. It’s wrong of me to cheat you.</td>
<td>Instruct / amusedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can play with them Michel, but don’t let them boss you around just because you’re the littlest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They say the duckling already knows how to swim.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning to the soldier and thank God he’s come back safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luck, said the hero.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courage said the kitchen boy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The winter was a little rough. The</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
neighbor just like always.
The answer is ‘no’ because there are eyes in the bushes.
Doesn’t that pay 20 piasters?
Behind the barracks. Under the date trees.
Someone has.
Simon Chachava, I can never go back to Nukha. Something has happened.
What happened was I knocked out one of the ironshirts.
Simon Chachava, I am not called anymore what I used to be called.
When do women change their names Simon? Let me just tell you: nothing stands between us. Everything is the same between us. You must believe that.
How can I explain it to you so quickly and with this river between us. Can’t you come over that bridge?
It is very necessary. Come over here Simon, quickly!
There is Simon. How could I hide it? But don’t be upset – it’s not mine.
Simon Chachava, please don’t go. He’s not mine. He’s not mine.
Yes. Simon!
Don’t take him, please! He’s mine.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


