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The Rest is Silence

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Dance Theatre)

by

Janet Hayatshahi

Committee in charge:

Professor Yolande Snaith, Chair
Professor Jim Carmody
Professor Anthony Davis
Professor Allyson Green

2012

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Chair

University of California, San Diego
2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Rest is Silence

by

Janet Hayatshahi

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Dance Theatre)

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Yolande Snaith, Chair

The Rest is Silence is an installation, experiential, dance theatre performance piece created for the Mandell Weiss Theatre on the campus of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). It was presented as part of thesisWORKS in the Department of Theatre and Dance. The piece is loosely based on the lives of eight Shakespearean heroines who encounter one another after their individual deaths. Through a blend of classical and modern text and contemporary physical narrative, the site-specific event seeks to actively engage spectators and invite them to explore the performance through their individual imaginative journey.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2011 I presented my thesis proposal to the faculty department heads in the Department of Theatre and Dance at UCSD. At that time the main ideas surrounding my thesis were linked to finding ways of incorporating and engaging in aesthetic values I was interested in examining. Some of the broader ideas I brought to the group were:

- Creating a re-imagining/re-inventing of classical theatre material as a base.
- Creating a multi-media dance theatre event that focuses on ideas of immediacy in performance, and examines spectator/performer relationships.
- Continuing my personal research in how theatre and dance can work hand-in-hand in performance.

By the end of this meeting I knew my thematic journey for the piece would surround Shakespearean heroines and their deaths.

During the past few years I have been drawn to ways of reinterpreting classic text and re-inventing the telling of their stories. In the process of my studies in the dance theatre program at UCSD, I have investigated ways in which it is possible to encounter physical exploration of character/situation while allowing space for text and narrative. Always inspired by the collaborative laboratory, *The Rest is Silence* was a place where the performers and I worked together to find ways to de/re-construct Shakespeare's women and attack known material in an unknown way.

What would happen if eight of Shakespeare's female characters came together in one place? What if this place was a post-death space? What would they share with one another? How would they interact? The richness of these characters transcends their

specific story and allows for the telling of something new. My hope in building this event was to allow the spectator access to seeing something in these women they hadn't known to look for.

Armed with these specific questions, we entered the rehearsal process to discover ways in which we could explore the questions as fully as possible.

REHEARSAL PROCESS

We officially started rehearsals on September 27, 2011. At that point I had gathered the following performers: Julie Burelle, Lily Kelting, and Heather Ramey - all PhD students in the Department of Theatre and Dance. I also knew there was potential for having Regan Linton, a second year MFA Actor, but thought I would only be able to use her on digital media.

The design team was as follows:

Costume Designer - Halei Parker

Scenic Designer – Gaeun Kim

Lighting Designer – Sherrice Kelly

Sound Designer – Blair Nelson

Projections Designer – Kathryn Leiber

Stage Manager – Zach Kennedy

The notes I shared with the group on that first meeting day were as follows:

- This piece will be about Shakespeare's heroines and their death scenes.
- I am interested in investigating the spectator/performer relationship.
- I am looking for ways in which an audience can view performance. These can include, but are not limited to: creating peep holes, seeing through mirrors, incorporating multi-media into the event, and viewing only select parts of the body as opposed to the whole.
- I am interested in combining the use of body and voice, text and dance, together in the same space, as opposed to just having them live side by side.

- I am interested in multiple performance spaces and ways in which an audience can view performance. Some of these ideas about spaces revolve around: using big space vs. little space, having a traveling audience move through the piece, incorporating the La Jolla Playhouse scene shop in some way, use cargo containers, bathtubs, boxes, and household appliances as performance spaces.
- I would like to find ways to use lighting from unexpected sources. These can be a blend of ideas surrounding angles, shapes, ordinary vs. extraordinary lighting, and found lighting.
- It would be wonderful to use sound in interactive ways including the use of headphones (by both performer and spectator), incorporating echo into quality of sound, using surround sound and affecting the entire space.
- I would love a loop of archived footage from famous Shakespeare films to be playing throughout the performance. This would be something the performers could interact with, perhaps even letting the footage feed them with physical material to access, mirror, or confront inside the performance.

In that first rehearsal we spoke about what roles each of the three women would play. Heather was to play Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth*, Julie was Cleopatra from *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Lily was Desdemona from *Othello*. I knew that I wanted Regan to play Ophelia from *Hamlet* so we could see her death projected through video playing inside a bathtub. Regan still had not had auditions for the theatre productions that would be potential conflicts with thesisWORKS, so we didn't know if her schedule would allow her to physically be in the performance as well. At this early stage we assumed she was not going to be a part of the live performances.

I had also spoken to Larissa Lury, a third-year directing graduate student in the department about perhaps embodying a mediatized component in the piece. We chose the character of Hermione from *A Winter's Tale* for Larissa to play. Though Hermione doesn't technically die in *A Winter's Tale*, she is presumed dead for sixteen years, after which time she returns as a statue of herself which comes to life and reunites with her family. My intentions for incorporating the recorded clips of Larissa were based on the idea that she would be a haunting, a ghost, a shaman of sorts trying to help heal the other dead souls. In rehearsal Julie Burelle told us about a dream she had after her grandmother's death in which her grandmother, naked and surrounded by snow, was led away by a polar bear. Hermione was to be the polar bear for the other characters and appear to them in digital form, inhabiting their spaces and helping them overcome their deaths.

A few weeks into our process I asked Christine Herde and Emily Aust, two recently-graduated undergraduates with double majors in theatre and dance to join us. My interest in both of these women stemmed from their connection to both dance and theatre, knowing their vocabulary would extend in both directions, and also because I had seen them as performers in dance pieces in the past and was intrigued by what they could bring into the rehearsal room with them. I knew they were strong dancers and improvisers. I had observed both grapple with text inside of dance pieces, and though I could remember their struggles with incorporating text and narrative, I felt they would be great collaborators. My instincts paid off. Christine chose the role of Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet*, and Emily chose Lavinia from *Titus Andronicus*.

In November I spoke to Jane Blount, a friend from the dance community of San Diego, and someone whose physical work I had always admired. I spoke with Jane about serving the piece on an advisory capacity, knowing her expertise in dance could aid the process significantly. I knew she was busy with other projects and that she wouldn't be able to make the commitment to be in the piece and she agreed that the timing and the amount of hours she would have to invest in the project were not things she could currently fit into her life. After Jane and I had our initial conversation about the piece, I invited her to come observe a rehearsal and see how the world was taking shape. Her response to me was that if she was going to know about the world, she would want to be inside of it, and physically be involved in the rehearsal process with us. She asked me to assign a role to her so she could activate the rehearsal process with a character. I immediately knew she should play Tamora from *Titus Andronicus*, knowing she would be able to sink her teeth into the juicy character.

Once Jane joined us in the rehearsal room the piece seemed to settle in a very potent way. There was a severe shift in the energy. Jane is an incredibly invested performer and she brought that into the rehearsal room from the start. She didn't need permission to access the material fully. She didn't wait for the impulses, she created them. I marveled at how quickly her presence in the room seemed to allow the process to settle into itself and how the rehearsal began aiming directly towards accessing something potent. I was very happy to have her join us in this way, and even though at that point I still didn't think she could be in the performance, I was grateful she was in the rehearsal room. It wasn't until mid-December, after a run-thru we had for a few faculty members and designers when Jane actually committed to the performance. The

run-thru felt magical, and Jane's part in it was undeniably crucial. At the end of the run-thru we both felt that as difficult as it would be to have her commit to the rehearsal and performance schedule, Jane needed to make a commitment to be in this piece. She agreed and we talked about ways to make it work for all of us.

It wasn't until January when I knew that Larissa and Regan were also both available to be in the live performances. Though we had already captured both on video (we had gone to Marianne Macdonald's house and dumped Regan into a very cold pool to record her drowning sequence), I knew that having these strong performers in the piece was something I was not going to turn away. Larissa started joining us in rehearsals once school was back in session after the holiday break and Regan joined us on a full-time basis after *The Glass Menagerie* closed on January 28th. With the addition of these two women, I realized that I was now working with eight performers, a larger number than I had in mind, and finding ways of catching everyone up and bringing them to the same place in this world took some time and patience. Ultimately, I was so pleased to have all of these incredible artists be so willing to go on this adventure with me.

In the early stages of the rehearsal process we started our work with some scores and exercises based on those listed in Meg Stuart's book, *Are We Here Yet?* Allyson Green had given me pages of exercises and scores from this book during the past summer. I had taken them into the studio with me at that time, trying them out and feeling the weight and potential they might have inside of the rehearsal room. Though I adapted them to fit our process, the main ideas stayed the same and we loved playing with some of them.

We chose to warm-up to Stuart's "One Hour Shaking" exercise. Here is an outline of the exercise:

In a group, shake for the duration of one hour. Shake with your entire body. Locate the shaking in one body part. Shake internally. Try vibrating, spasming. Let explosions of shaking take over your body, then slow it down again. Let the shaking become rhythmic, working with heaviness and lightness. Shake with closed eyes. Shake uncontrollably – until it moves you through the room. Shake with someone else, exploring different meanings and potential contexts that appear as you shake together. Stop. Walk to another place. Continue shaking. Look at yourself from a distance. What is happening to your physical body? Your emotional body? Your thoughts? Let states pass through you as you shake. Commit to the hour. Work with tiredness. Share and receive the energy of the others. Surrender to the shaking.

Though we never managed to spend an entire hour Shaking, we did often do at least 20-30 minutes as a launching point into the rehearsal. I found that this level of commitment to total body activity was a potent place from which to jump into the work. It helped ignite the explorations we had afterwards.

Another one of Stuart's scores is an "Impossible Task" score. Here is how she outlines this score:

Choose an impossible task and try to succeed at it without being literal or pantomiming.
 Keep finding new translations of the task, insisting, sticking with it for a long time until you're exhausted.
 Examples include: levitate, erase yourself, explode into a million pieces, implode, be your own shelter, swallow the room, stop time, disappear, be in two places at once, be someone else.
 You don't necessarily have to show the effort every moment when working with a task. Experiment with time. See a chosen task as urgent and force your body to come up with fast solutions.

The Impossible Task score ended up being part of the very beginning of the performance piece. We found the connection to the material to be so strong we knew it had to find its way into the piece. It is the very first thing the audience sees the performers engage in when they enter the theatre. Our adaptation of this score was to

find a way to connect it with character. We chose to connect the Impossible Task to the segment of the character's body that caused the death of the women. Each woman chose the body part and then tried to succeed at something impossible connected to that part of their body. Some examples include: Cleopatra trying to rid her blood of the snake venom by attempting to rip into her veins, Tamora trying to rip out the flesh of her children (which she has just consumed) from her guts, and Juliet trying to reach inside her body to heal up the wound where she had stabbed herself.

By January I also knew that most of the scenic design ideas I had spoke to Gaeun about were not going to be realized. We had imagined building a container of sorts for the women and having the audience travel through this container, seeing all of the women in sections of the container. But, this design was too costly and too complicated to create in rep with Kyle's piece. After a wonderfully engaging and stimulating discussion and walk-thru through in the Weiss with Allyson Green, I knew how the theatre was going to become the containers I had originally imagined in the design. We saw the entire Mandell Weiss space as having potential places for the specific segments of the whole to live in. We found nooks and crannies that could feel like contained spaces and decided that the large landscape of the auditorium could engage the audience in the environmental way I had originally imagined. By seeing the space in this way I decided that the auditorium of the theatre was to be a purgatory, an in-between space for these characters, a place they are stuck inside of after their deaths. I was thrilled at the prospect of trying these new scenic elements out and allowing them to find ways into the physical scores we were starting to explore in rehearsal.

As the rehearsal process continued, we slowly put together a series of solos, duets, trios, and group pieces that came from investigations we had about the embodied nature of the characters. We chose to not add language until well into the second month of rehearsal. By exploring physically first, my hope was to allow the embodiment of character to help find the language and connection to spoken material. Once I was able to examine the physical segments we had created, I could imagine what language could potentially exist within them.

We combed through the Shakespeare texts to find ideas and themes that could support our characters and their journeys. I never wanted to get too heavy-handed with the Shakespeare language and often looked for more recognizable phrases in order to help the audience make an easier connection to the information. Alongside the Shakespeare text, I also asked each performer to find a “heart song” for their character. This song was to somehow relate to their character and their life. I thought we could explore ways in which components of the song or lyrics could find their way into the piece. I also asked the group to find modern language they thought could somehow relate to the material as well, hoping to weave the modern text, songs, and classical material into the piece.

PERFORMANCE

Getting to the performance was the hardest part of the process for me. I had imagined the piece and how it would move in the space to such great detail and precision. But, all of this had been in my head until our first staging rehearsal on February 21st. On that evening we had the opportunity to actually see if the segments of the whole would fit into the space. We experimented with finding the right places for some of the solos and duets to live inside the house. Some of this was determined by lighting and whether or not Sherrice was able to focus lights in certain spots in the house. Some of the spacing was determined by furniture. For instance, we had a table in the house mirroring the tables on stage and I knew there would be some moments we could bring the performance world onto the table, but without first seeing the table and its potential stability, I couldn't know for certain whether or not the table would work for the segments I had in mind.

Imagining how the performers would maneuver from the stage to the house and vice versa was also something to be figured out. We knew there would be a railing up at the edge of the stage, placed there for audience safety, but the railing was not in place for our spacing rehearsal. In fact, it did not go in until we were back in the space for our technical rehearsal on Saturday, February 25th.

The final component that needed to be tested and set in the space was the relationship between spectator and performer. Because involving the spectator and having them be collaborators in space with the performers was always part of my original concept, I felt it was vital to test this, to see whether or not this component would work in the ways I had imagined it to work.

I knew that the piece would begin in the lobby with what we called the Primping Room piece, placed in the staircase of the lobby space. I knew this segment would start as part of an intermission overlap after Kyle's piece and into my piece. I also knew that I wanted at the end of the Primping Room piece to have the performers run into the house and somehow carry the audience with them, in order for the rest of the performance to carry on inside the theatre. We had played a lot with ideas surrounding breath as part of this particular Primping Room segment and I hoped that breath could initiate the pull and engagement with the audience in a way that carried them into the theatre. But, we wouldn't know if this would work until we had an audience to engage with. And that audience was not part of our staging rehearsal. So, the staging time was really spent on getting to know the space and discovering all the ways in which it could serve us. It was also a good time to start playing with some of the technical components of sound, lighting, and digital media.

On Saturday's full day of technical rehearsal there were a lot more people from the department watching, walking with, and helping guide the piece. We had the opportunity to play a bit with audience interaction and we realized that although we had a pretty willing group of people to engage with, there might be need for more instructions to help them understand the format of the evening and that they were allowed to move and investigate the space and the performance. I spent the next day thinking of ways to make have this set of instructions find its way into the performance.

By Monday's Dress Rehearsal we had made a few changes that I think really helped illuminate the ways in which the audience could engage with the performance. We printed invitations, on red pieces of paper, for the performers to hand out to the

audience in the lobby of the theatre, prior to them entering the Priming Room segment.

Here is the language we used on the invites:

(on the cover) You are invited...
 (on the inside upper flap) ...to explore
 (on the inside lower flap) Our Dearest Guest,

- If you're stuck, then move.
- If you're too far, come closer.
- If you're curious, then follow.
- If you're overwhelmed, breathe.
- If you're lost, shift your perspective.

Yours,
 (signed by the character)

On the back of the invite was a small map of the space, including the lobby, house, and the stage. There were small arrows drawn on the map, serving as footprints for the audience. There was the word "event" on several sections of the map to mark the places where the audience could watch elements of the piece. I think this map was a great addition, helping serve both the spectator engagement we hoped for and helping us add another layer to the aesthetic of the whole.

Another component we added to engage the audience and motivate them to move through the space was having the performers whisper "Follow me," "Come with me," "Come this way," or other such short phrases as they were heading out of the Priming Room into the theatre and during another couple of segments of the performance when we wanted the audience to move.

The final element that I think helped break the barrier between spectator and performer was giving Zach, our mobile stage manager, an audible voice through the use of his "god mic" to call the various segments of the show on stage, during the

performance. This had been part of the original intention for the piece from the start, as Zach and I were really interested in examining the potential for having him involved as a moving body in the piece. We had several conversations about how that could happen and whether or not he would feel confident enough to call the show in all the ways a stage manager would ordinarily call a show for lighting/sound/projection cues, but to bring all of those things away from the stage management booth onto the stage, and on top of it all, to also have him call the performers to their specific solo/duet/trio pieces. We had tried this method of him calling the cues out loud in the rehearsal room from the start and it lived in the space with us until a couple of weeks before our tech process began.

One day, a couple of weeks before we moved to the Weiss Theatre, Lisa Porter, head of the Stage Management program, attended a run-thru of the piece we had in the Shank Theatre. Afterwards, her major feedback focused on the idea of whether or not it was a positive choice to engage Zach's voice in such a dominant way in the performance. Because the piece was about eight women who had all had tumultuous relationships with the men in their lives, Lisa thought that to allow Zach's voice, as the sole male in the space, to be so dominant, might send the wrong signal to the audience. Even though neither of us had ever treated the intention of Zach's interaction with the women as something that could be perceived as a threat by them or by any observer (in fact we were very careful to handle the cues as gentle and supportive), we agreed that it might be a good idea to change this to a quiet whisper to the women instead of a vocal command that was heard out loud.

But, at that point in the rehearsal process, the sound design had not quite found its full shape. The components of the male voice that ended up being in the final sound design were not in the piece at all on the day Lisa had attended our rehearsal – they were integrated into the piece during the following week of rehearsal. Once we moved to the theatre, I realized that there was already a pretty dominant male voice in the space with the women inside the sound design and to add Zach’s voice back in was not going to change the perception of the male/female relationship.

We decided to go back to our main intention of having Zach really integrated into the piece and allowing room for the magic backstage components of theatre-making to exist onstage in order for the spectator to have a direct relationship with it. I also believe that once we added the printed invitation and the “follow me” whispering to the world, it was easy to find a way to ground this choice of hearing Zach in the world as well.

On Monday February 27th, our first Dress Rehearsal, we were able to implement all of these choices into the work and with about thirty audience members attending the rehearsal that evening, we were able to gauge whether or not the choices we had made were going to support the piece in the ways in which we had imagined. As incredible as it seemed to me because everything came together so quickly, it all seemed to fall into place and the interaction between spectator and performer seemed to work perfectly. I asked for feedback from several people who were entirely outside of the process and I felt could give me insight into how they processed the components and multiple layers of the journey. Most of what I heard was that they felt supported by the performance, they were engaged, and they never had to struggle for meaning. Here is a direct quote from an

e-mail exchange I had with Professor Dani Bedau from the School of Theatre, Television, and Film at San Diego State University:

I found the audience engagement and use of space to be a highly dynamic element of the piece. I appreciated the time in the lobby and the way I was guided into the theatre. I particularly appreciated being handed an invitation. Very cool!

Once in the space I really valued the ability to decide where I wanted to be for so much of the piece. I felt very free to "maneuver" the space. I enjoyed how the other audience members became part of my experience. Additionally, as I mentioned to you in passing, I found it fascinating that one actress was able to single-handedly bring the entire audience off the stage and into the house near the conclusion of the piece.

I was astounded by the number of monitors, many of them in surprise locations. I enjoyed the edit of the old Shakespeare films, the live feed on the back wall. I particularly enjoyed my time near the bathtub (the salt and projections on it were beautiful!) and hearing the monologue about crying that was given directly to me.

Although in retrospect I am imagining numerous other ways we could have possibly used the space, I am thrilled about what we were able to do in such a short period of time. Even though I know we rehearsed this piece for over five months, it felt like the last week was the creation of the performance. The space and the audience, both major components of our performance piece, had been missing during the entire rehearsal process, and no matter how much we tried to imagine having them, it was impossible to really cement that feeling until both we actually part of the piece. Once the audience and the space came to us, the rest of the components found their places inside the whole.

DESIGN

Conversations about design for *The Rest is Silence* started in September 2011. The two design components that seemed most crucial to have concrete ideas about in these earlier stages were costuming and scenic design. Knowing how the women would move in the space physically and how the space around them was situated were both of utmost importance.

The initial conversation I had with Gaeun about the scenic elements was focused on a broad concept involving the use of containers on the stage. I was imagining the women living in separate rooms inside of large containers placed on the stage. I thought the performers having individual journeys in these separate spaces for a witnessing, traveling audience. Amidst the solos which would take place inside the containers, I thought of building three unifying events that brought everyone (spectators and performers) into a shared space outside of the containers.

Gaeun and I spoke of creating a set consisting of train shipping/cargo containers that were stacked on angles on top of one another, both housing various spaces for the solo sequences of action and allowing room for an audience to travel through to see the action. I thought about the significance of containers in general for these Shakespearean stories: how each woman was born out of a container that was their individual script, how they were each contained in a specific set of circumstances, and how their stories were often about being in a time and space that they could not escape.

Gaeun drew up some plans in December for the proposed design and presented them to the La Jolla Playhouse. We were promptly rejected and told that the idea was both not feasible because of the scale and changeover between my piece and Kyle's and

that it was also significantly over budget. After going through several other versions for the design, and after Allyson Green and I walked through the Weiss Theatre (as I mentioned in the previous chapter), Gaeun and I decided we would be able to fill the space in the Weiss Theatre with found props from the La Jolla Playhouse prop shop. We then started imagining ways in which we could create individual components of the world as we had thought it would exist inside the containers of the original design concept, but now bringing those spaces out of the smaller containers and into the larger whole of the theatre.

We pulled tables for both the stage and the house and allowed them to mirror one another. These tables would be available for movement scores we had built in rehearsal, but also symbolized a banquet space – a location that existed inside a few of the plays we were working with. We pulled furniture for our Primping Station sequence and knew it would take place in the lobby. We had always envisioned having a bathtub to project Ophelia's recorded drowning sequence into. And, we thought that we needed a pile of furniture to both balance the very large stage and allow for spaces to house television monitors for the Hermione recorded sequences.

In addition to having several duets in the house - located inside an isle of house seats, between the first row of audience seats and the apron of the stage, and on the steps leading into the house - we wanted to have a place for confession. This was a room we were going to build inside the imagined shipping containers when those were part of the original vision for the design. At first we envisioned placing a confession space inside one of the exit alcoves in the house, but the Fire Marshall would not let us block an exit. Instead, we placed the confession area in the Standing Room Only section of the house,

placed a large number of lamps along with a live-feed camera inside the space, and put trellises on either end to both block out the audience and give the ambiance of a church confessional space. The live feed captured in this space was projected onto the back wall of the stage, bringing in one of the concepts I was originally really interested in having in this piece which included examining the use of audience near space and contrasting it with far space. How would an audience member feel about seeing a very large projection of a performer's face in close proximity juxtaposed with watching the performer in person performing the live version of the same event from a far distance? I felt this examination was possible with the placement of the confessional area in the Standing Room Only section.

In the house and in the lobby we also added hanging ropes, white and red in color, to both help bring in the binding theme we had developed in the costume design and to help break up a very large theatrical space, somehow grounding the world.

After all of these scenic design elements were in place, we imagined placing scenes and scores we had been building in the rehearsal room inside the theatre and envisioned how they would be supported by the proposed set.

Halei and I started imagining the costume design in October 2011. She and I had initially thought it might be fun to have period costumes for the women, but there were factors that persuaded us to head in a slightly different route pretty early on. The first factor was budget. With only one thousand dollars allocated towards eight women's costumes, building elaborate period Renaissance costumes was out of the question. And the La Jolla Playhouse did not have enough period costumes we could pull to match our aesthetic sensibilities for the piece. Additionally, Halei felt it was unlikely she could

persuade the Playhouse to loan us costumes knowing the performers would be using such heavy physicality in the costume pieces. So, we decided it would be best to pull garments we felt we could find some sort of uniformity in, and then adorn them in ways that supported the vision of the world.

We both found a big connection to the thought that these women would be bound in some way. Some of the original thoughts surrounded having the women bound to things within the space. We thought that a dress could have, as one very long train, yards and yards of fabric and be attached to a wall, a couch, or another piece of furniture. We imagined ways in which the women could connect or attach to one another. We discussed the slightly damaged nature of the costumes as reflecting the highly damaged women and the ways in which each were fragmented parts of one whole.

Halei started digging through stock to find off-white gowns that could then be adorned with some kind of binding (to bring this theme back in) somehow representing something specific for each character. For instance, Cleopatra's binding was built from red shiny polyester fabric that resembled yards of snakes tied around her since she died from multiple asp bites. Desdemona had dozens of handkerchiefs tied to one another and tied around her representing the missing handkerchief that led to her death. Ophelia's bindings were flowers resembling those that she carried with her to the river where she drowned. All of the women's bindings were red. The only woman that was not bound was Hermione as she represented the person who was not technically dead and just wandered the space, supporting the ones who surrounded her. At the end of the piece Hermione was attached to all of the women through their bindings, helping carry the

burden of the bindings, but also allowing herself to be physically attached to them in this way.

The support that both costume and scenic elements gave to the space and to these women's lives in the space was significant in bringing the entirety of the work to a cohesive place. I enjoyed working on these components and thinking about all the various ways in which we could engage in a unified creation.

CONCLUSION

There has been a lot written about ways to use a specific environment for a theatrical piece. Richard Shechner has written the following in his book,

Environmental Theatre:

Many people, trained in the rigid reaction program of orthodox theater, are embarrassed by what they feel at environmental theater. They think that the in-and-out reaction is "wrong" or an indication that the play "doesn't work." People come up to me and say, "I couldn't keep my attention focused on the play." Or, "I was moved by some of it, but I kept thinking my own thoughts. Sometimes I lost track of what was going on." Or, "Sometimes I felt good, but at other times I felt threatened." Or, "You know, I watched the audience so much I lost part of the play." Or even, "I fell asleep." I think all of these responses are splendid.

In the same book, he goes on to say:

The audience in environmental theater must look to itself, as well as to the performers, for satisfaction of visceral needs. This less sharply delineated division of roles, actions, and spaces leads not to deeper involvement, not to a feeling of being swept away by the action - the bottomless empathy enhanced by darkness, distance, solitude-in-a-crowd, and regressive, cushioned comfort of a proscenium theater - but to a kind of in-and-out experience; a sometimes dizzyingly rapid alternation of empathy and distance.

In conceiving and building the ideas that together would create *The Rest is Silence* I hoped to find the multiple layers that connected both to my creative journey through the MFA Dance Theatre program at UCSD and blend those with my own interests as an theatre artist. This program has continually challenged my ideas and motivated me to create a richer and more deeply-investigated language for theatre and dance. It has also focused specifically on clarifying my artistic aesthetic. Through this intense laboratory of practice I have cultivated my skills as a theatre

artist and combined my strengths in acting and physical theatre with a richer understanding of contemporary theatre-making practices. By continuing to explore my interest in classical theatre material, but finding avenues outside of the traditions of theatrical realism for the classic text, I have increased my vocabulary in performance language. My training at UCSD, while focusing on a component of our art about which I am passionate, builds upon my previous training and experience, and adds to my contributions as a performer, director, and educator of the arts.

The knowledge and ideas gained through the program at UCSD have provided me with such rich artistic material. Inside the process of creating *The Rest is Silence* I have had opportunities to experiment with the newly-found artistic fodder, blended it with my own previously-explored set of ingredients, and managed to bring them all together in very exciting ways. This process has been an amazing step in my artistic journey.

SCRIPT

The Rest is Silence

Conceived and Directed/Choreographed by Janet Hayatshahi, in collaboration with the performers.

As part of thesisWORKS in the UCSD Department of Theatre and Dance

Located in the Mandell Weiss Theatre of the La Jolla Playhouse

Running February 29 - March 3 2012

Performers

Lily Kelting

Heather Ramey

Julie Burelle

Regan Linton

Larissa Lury

Jane Blount

Emily Aust

Christine Herde

Desdemona

Lady Macbeth

Cleopatra

Ophelia

Hermione

Tamora

Lavinia

Juliet

Zach Kennedy

Halei Parker

Gaeun Kim

Sherrice Kelly

Blair Nelson

Kathryn Leiber

Stage Manager

Costume Design

Scenic Design

Lighting Design

Sound Design

Projections Design

Trickling In
Where Am I?

This is pre-pre show. While audience is in Intermission, each woman will make their way into the theatre, weave thru the audience, and go up to lobby balcony awaiting the Priming Room sequence.

The idea for this is that each woman has arrived at this place, not yet knowing how or why.

In Weiss lobby stairs:

Priming Room

Cleopatra, Lavinia, Desdemona, Hermione, Tamora, and Ophelia.

Seeing your reflection and priming.

One at a time in front of mirror.

Specific body part or area gets attention.

Sequence revolves around the ideas of seeing yourself in the mirror, passionate about the task.

Meanwhile, Juliet is in the UL balcony of the lobby.

After the priming station goes for a while, we hear:

Priming Station watches Juliet.

Juliet

Romeo, Romeo...

Exit.

Back to Priming Station

Juliet

Enter and tries again

Priming Station watches Juliet.

There's a place for us...

Exit.

Back to Priming Station

Cleopatra

Soon this space will be too small

And I'll go outside

To the huge hillside

Where the wild winds blow

And the cold stars shine

The I'll die three times

And be born again

In a little box

With a golden key
 And a flying fish
 Will set me free

Juliet enters in the Balcony again. Juliet performs segments of the R & J ballet with more confidence than before.

Juliet enters Primping Room

Hermione

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
 Towards Phoebus' lodging

Juliet

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
 Towards Phoebus' lodging

Hermione

such a wagoner
 As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
 And bring in cloudy night immediately.

Juliet

such a wagoner
 As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
 And bring in cloudy night immediately.

Hermione

Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
 That runaway's eyes may wink

Juliet

Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
 That runaway's eyes may wink

Hermione

and (Romeo)
 Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.

Juliet

and Romeo
 Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.

**Enter Lady M from UR balcony. Tamora exits and goes into the theatre.
 Lady M walks down to primping station.
 All others move aside.**

**She sits. All magnetically pull to her.
She stares at her reflection. For a very long time.
All focus is on Lady M as she looks at her reflection.
Group small, explosive breaths. Lady M long, continuous breath**

Lady M rises and all, with a fierce energy, run down the stairs and run through the lobby doors into the theatre. The audience follows.

Impossible Task Solos

*On the stage, on table is Tamora – Impossible Task Solo.
Ophelia is next to the bathtub, but not lit at this time.*

Tamora

Oh bend me, move me, shake me,
Tempt me, fix me, sex me,
But love me not.

*All others make their way to their next space for their own Impossible Task Solo.
Lights up on the eight women individually in a space in the House or on Stage.
This **Impossible Task** takes place in the smallest physical container possible.
Something involving a lot of very specific, tight, explosive energy, but it's kept very close to the chest.
The intention for the Impossible Task at this moment is to vigorously explore the physical or psychological place where the death occurred in each woman's body. Each one is trying to actually touch the place where the death took place and trying to go inside their body to actually touch it.
Hermione travels in the space and sees the women. She interacts by connecting to their physical language and recognizing the pain in it. We see her weave through the space and watch her watching the women.*

Lady Macbeth

I'll remember it
Every restless night
We were so young then
We thought that everything
We could possibly do was right

Juliet

And you already know
Yeah, you already know how this will end

Desdemona

They eat us hungrily and when they are full they belch us out.

Lavinia

So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then

Hermione

If only, if only, if only

Cleopatra

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Ophelia

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

Table Dance

Around the table on Stage, this involves all the women.

Elements of the score: This is my family now. My family at the dinner table. These are the women I am to exist in this time and place with. Fucked up family dynamics.

Evaluating hierarchy – who's in charge? Where do I fit in?

There may be bits of language here, but nothing formal. Just fragments of thoughts.

*Slowly each woman leaves the table at various times to engage in **Finding Ourselves** Dragging sequence.*

Lavinia and Desdemona leave first – UL diagonal drag

Christine and Julie – UL to DL drag

Jane and Regan – UR diagonal drag

Larissa and Heather – SL to SR Downstage drag

Transition to

Finding Ourselves

This piece involves two separate sections

1. Dragging is about the moments after death. “Who touched my body immediately after I died? How was I carried out of the space?”
2. Solos inside the **Finding Ourselves** space (after dragging) – “I had a dream one night. The dream was so...”

Desdemona (*parts of this*)

Oh...

Dead...

Hermione

Is whispering nothing?

Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?

Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career

of laughing with a sigh?

Why, then the world and all that's in it is nothing.

Lady M

I'll remember it

Every restless night

We were so young then

We thought that everything

We could possibly do was right

Then we moved

Zach calls:

Cleopatra/Desdemona Duet

This takes place just below the apron, in the house.

Playing with these ideas:

Cleopatra: Role play - reliving a dominant relationship, like the one she shared with Antony. At first, she is only playing a game with Desdemona, but soon she gets sucked into the ways in which this experience is both the same and different from the ones she shared with Antony. She taps into a spiral of thought, memory, and reflection that she can't easily break free of.

Desdemona: Did she experience this cat and mouse game with Othello? How is this scene with Cleo both a way into the fun she shared with Othello and a danger she felt when these lines were actually spoken to/with Othello? Are the lines as meaningful out of context as they were in the moments before your death? How can you erase their prior meaning? Do you want to?

Desdemona

Who's there? Othello?

Othello (Cleopatra)

Ay, Desdemona.

Desdemona

Will you come to bed, my lord?

Othello (Cleopatra)

Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona?

Desdemona

Ay, my lord.

I would not kill thy soul.

Desdemona

Talk you of killing?

Othello (Cleopatra)

Ay, I do.

Desdemona

Then heaven hve mercy on me!

Othello (Cleopatra)

Amen, with all my heart!

Desdemona

If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

Zach calls:

Lady M/Tamora Duet

Could this be about accepting blame? Accepting your fate? Could it be about reflection? A sharing of sorts between the two.

Lady M

Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate

Tamora

Then must you speak

Of one that loved not wisely but too well

Lady M

Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought

Perplex'd in the extreme

Tamora

Tired with all these, from these I would be gone

Lady M

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry

Zach calls:**Juliet/Lavinia/Ophelia Trio**

This will take place on stage

Score: This is a competition, a comparison, and a relationship to death. These three younger women are talking about and revealing their deaths in a much different way than the older women would. There is mourning in the meaning, but it's not treated in a mournful way. It's merely a re-telling. The fall that Juliet and Lavinia each experience is the way they tap into both the absurdity of their deaths and the deep meaning of the deaths. Ophelia's observing of the physical language engages in her own physical language, in which she is confined to a wheelchair. This is the first time they have come to terms with the way they died, who they were when they died, and what it means to be dead.

Both

The day I died

The day I died

The day ...

Juliet speaks the first part before the slash/Ophelia the second

Lavinia cannot speak because her tongue has been ripped out, so in a way, Ophelia is also speaking for her.

I was 14/16

I was beautiful/ugly

I was strong/weak

I was happy/sad

I was loved/hated

I was supported/tortured

I was clean/dirty

I was rich/poor

Ophelia

Tis present death I beg; and one thing more

That womanhood denies my tongue to tell:

O, keep me from their worse than killing lust,

And tumble me into some loathsome pit,

Where never man's eye may behold my body:

Do this, and be a charitable murderer.

Zach calls:

Hermione/Juliet duet

This duet is about flying, about letting go of the pain, of the torment, and just releasing it all in this beautiful escape from it all. It begins with the two women coming together and engaging in lifts. The both yell:

Hermione and Juliet

Mine own. Mine own. Mine own.

My true. My true.

They maneuver through the space on stage, then they move to the house, and finally go to the table on stage where they play with the table cloth and then end up on top of the table where Hermione lifts Juliet in an airplane lift.

Hermione and Juliet

Up! Up!

Zach calls:

Lady M/Lavinia Duet

This takes place in the House, across an entire isle of the seats.

Playing with these ideas:

Lady M: "This one is weak. I can control her."

Lavinia: "I can be stronger this time. I can hold my ground."

Lady M (and perhaps a few others)

We fail?! Screw your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail.

I dare do all that may become a man

When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And, to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man.

Let every man be master of his time

Are you a man?

What man dare, I dare:

Why, so: being gone,

I am a man again.

laugh to scorn

The power of man

Dispute it like a man.

But I must also feel it as a man:

no man that's born of woman

Shall e'er have power upon thee.

He only lived but till he was a man;

But like a man he died.

Lavinia

singing

Wild, white horses

They will take me away

And the tenderness I feel

Will send the dark underneath

Will I follow?

**Zach calls:
Death X 6**

*Right now, this involves Lady M, Cleopatra, Desdemona, Lavinia, Tamora, and Juliet
This starts on stage following the Finding Ourselves section, but perhaps it can travel
into the house as well.*

The Score:

- Perform your death as an emotionally charged action, including voice
- Repeat action, taking away vocalization
- Repeat action with neutral facial expression, physical and emotional intensity are in the body only
- Repeat action taking away emotional intensity from body
- Finally, take away physical power so you do movement without any intentions, intensity, or presence – only the ghost of the death exists

This action is repeated by each character once through, after which they can occupy another character's death and perform all or fractions of that other death.

There is overlapping in this with several women experiencing death at once.

The intention in this piece is about first revealing the death and how it felt in your physical and emotional body. Then, it is about how to become detached or absent from the experience of that death.

Finally, it is about embodying other people's deaths, just to try to tap in to what it was that they felt at the time they died.

Does it in any way compare to your death?

What is in it that is either the same or different?

Can you tap in to the qualities of other people's experiences of death?

Is it real?

Absurd?

Is there some element of truth in it for your character?

Do you live it or mock it?

Transition to**When I Cry**

All women involved in this score.

Various locations, both on stage and in the house.

Perhaps layered on top of the Death X 6 section so both can happen simultaneously.

They find an audience member with whom they can share their score.

The Score:

Tell me, describe to me, when you cry, how do you cry?

What do you do when you cry?

What noise do you make?

It's not a matter of pretending.

Don't cry.

Just explain the crying to me.

Zach calls:

Ophelia/Hermione Duet

This duet takes place around the tub on stage. It involves Hermione lifting Ophelia out of her chair and placing her on the floor.

Score: Hermione and Ophelia work at coming to terms with/expressing the magnitude of their own disappointment. Both have dealt with disappointment surrounding the men in their lives and both suffered as a result in the actions of the men in their lives. This is their duet, their chance to share their individual scenarios with one another, to see their own image reflected in the other, and to live in the vastness of their experiences.

Hermione (*Sings*)

Gypsy Rover came over the hill
Down to the valley so shady
He whistled and he sang til the green wood rang
And he won the heart of a lady

At night she slept on a goose feather bed
With silken sheets for her covers
Tonight she'll sleep on the cold cold ground
Beside her Gypsy Rover

Then, while Hermione moves the chair, the women work with/spring-board from the following text, not necessarily in this order.

Hermione

What I expected was...

Ophelia

To be loved.

Hermione

To be trusted.

Ophelia

To be married.

Hermione

Married.

(pause)

What I got was...

Ophelia

He is dead. He is dead.

Hermione

One woe doth tread upon another's heels
 So fast they follow, so fast

Drowned.

Ophelia

Drowned.

Additional possible text for this scene:

He hath [my lord] of late made many tenders
 Of his affection to me.

[My lord] he hath importuned me with love
 In honourable fashion.

He falls to such perusal of my face
 As he would draw it.

I was the more deceived.

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
 Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh –

He is dead and gone, lady,
 He is dead and gone.

We must be patient.

There's fennel for you, and columbines.
 I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died.

Zach calls:

*Lavinia, Juliet, and Tamora **Leaning Into/Out Of** section*

Leaning Into/Out of

This will probably take place in the House so we can bring some of the staging away from the Stage again.

This is about trying to connect, but failing. Looking for a way in and just when you think you may have found it, it's lost.

Slow Walk**Group piece**

This piece starts with Hermione getting the audience to follow her off the stage. Once a majority of the audience is seated in the house, all the performers form a line that spans UL to UR on the stage.

The women start a slow walk spanning the entire length of the stage from US to DS.

They move slowly, in unison, whispering text and incorporate physical movement vocabulary during their travel.

About one third DS, Tamora breaks out and moves US for her solo.

Tamora

I think so. Kill'd!

She I kill'd! I did so: but thou strikest me

The group stops moving, travels backward, and sweeps Tamora into the slow walk once again.

At about center stage, Lavinia breaks away from the group and engages in a solo.

Lavinia

Be called a gentle queen

And with thine own hands kill me in this place.

The group again stops moving, travels backward, and sweeps Lavinia into the slow walk once again.

At just past center, both Tamora and Lavinia engage in a duet on and around the table.

Once the rest of the group catches up to the table, Lavinia and Tamora join the line once again and travel DS with the group until everyone is as far DS as possible.

Group Score:

Something is shifting. There is a pull that is driving all of the women somewhere together. The frantic energy that may have existed before has now settled. There are still questions inside all of the women, but some of these yearnings, expressed through the whispering can be light in content, lifted in thought. Perhaps as if you are resolved to accept whatever the final outcome may be.

The Lavinia, Tamora solos are about trying to come to terms with the above score. The two of you are having trouble accepting your fate and carrying on. Most of this is in direct relationship to the other person. Blame is dominating the scores. Guilt. Sorrow. In the duet perhaps there can be a settling quality. A peace that you can both gain in being face to face, so when you join the group again in the line, there is a change within you.

Finale

At the end of the Slow Walk, all women are DS and still. Slowly, one by one they leave the line and begin to search through the audience for their love. They make eye contact, with audience members, looking to make a connection. They slowly find the connection with Hermione and go to her at the onstage table. They connect components of their costume bindings to her and take those bindings to the house (and onstage in the case of Ophelia who has not left the stage) and sit or lie down in the space, melting into this environment. Hermione has tentacles attached to her from all of the women she has encountered in this place. The music crescendos, we hear a young child's voice say the words:

Child's Recorded Voice

Set me free.

Blackout.