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Arney, MacGregor J

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“More Notes to be Played”:
Learning to Inhabit the Body

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

MacGregor Arney

Committee in charge:

Gregory Wallace, Chair
Ursula Meyer
Charles Oates
Manuel Rotenberg

2016

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The thesis of MacGregor Arney is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my Mother and Father.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Supplemental Files.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Abstract of the Thesis.....	viii

LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. *The Venetian Twins*

File 2. *The Venetian Twins*

File 3. *The Venetian Twins*

File 4. *The Venetian Twins*

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I could not have done this without the love and support from my family; My mom and dad, Kathryn and Wayne Arney; and my brother and sister, Garrett and Caitlin. Most of all, I am so grateful for Lily Padilla, whom I love and without whom I could never have finished. Thank you for loving and supporting me through thick and thin.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“More Notes to be Played”:
Learning to Inhabit the Body

by

MacGregor Arney

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Gregory Wallace, Chair

Growing up with cerebral palsy, I continually asked "Why am I like this? Why am I not normal?" I became an actor to be someone else, someone who did not have a disability. When I was onstage, I would pretend as though my left side was the same as my right.

In doing so, I denied the truth of my body. Mask work freed me of my ego and enabled me to look at my body free of judgment. When I put on the mask my attention shifted from mental to physical. When I saw from within, I noticed my left

side had another octave to be played. I found a freedom and versatility, I could now play my entire being as an instrument. I started using my disability as an asset, rather than an obstacle. I found that my left hand wasn't a burden, but a unique tool in telling the stories of my characters.

Doing mask work in *The Venetian Twins* allowed me to construct characters who are incredibly physically specific using my instrument. I didn't shy away from using my left hand and foot. I embraced them as part of my body, built them into the composition of my characters. My three years at UC San Diego have shifted my relationship with my own body. Now I don't go on stage to deny myself, rather I inhabit myself. I allow myself to be seen.