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Shifting Focus

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Cody Sloan

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Eva Barnes
Professor Richard Robichaux
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2021

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The Thesis of Cody Sloan is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2021

DEDICATION

For Lou Sullivan (1951-1991), whose trust and authenticity inspires me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Shifting Focus

by

Cody Sloan

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

When I began my training at UCSD, I always felt that I had to get myself into a “correct” or “best” state before acting. I would cross my fingers that I was in the right place, as if there was some perfect way I had to be thinking or feeling to begin working. I thought coming to grad school would give me clarity about what that perfect state was.

However, during my second year, I began to see that this was an impossible expectation. In class with Marco, he told us that any way we were feeling was exactly correct - to just take what we were feeling, thinking, or struggling with and shift your focus to make it the character’s problem and not yours. We could just act from wherever we were personally at in that moment,

and let it be where the character was at. There was no perfect or correct state you had to reach before working.

The two roles I pushed myself to apply this concept with were Orestes in *Orestes 2.0* and in my solo project of *Richard II*. With the Orestes process, I really struggled with exhaustion, coming to each production and feeling like I wouldn't make it through. Taking what Marco said, I shifted my focus to just let Orestes be exhausted. It seemed that he was, in fact, a character that could carry a lot of exhaustion. I didn't fight that feeling or try to change it. I tried to let the character carry that exhaustion and doubt in the production. With *Richard II*, I struggled with feeling insecure about the project, worrying if the audience would judge it negatively. Again, I tried to flip this thinking - Richard was worried people wouldn't understand him and that he couldn't communicate what he desperately needed to say.

Although it sounds simple, this is a huge tool I've gained from my training at UCSD. I don't need to be in some unachievable "correct" internal state to start working. I can just begin from wherever I'm at. And I can trust that that's enough, and that that ease and authenticity will keep the audience with me.