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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Voice and Authority: “What am I going to do with all this power?”

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

in

Stage Management

by

Gillian Lelchuk

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair
Professor David Barner
Professor Julie Burelle
Professor Lora Powell

2023

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

University of California San Diego

2023

DEDICATION

To Maya, for sitting next to me and listening to me babble on about my struggles with owning my authority, and for making me laugh every single day. I love you now and forever, to the moon and back.

To Amity, my pandemic kitty, for hanging out with me (and distracting me) all through Zoom University, and for cuddling with me at the end of a long night.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS APPROVAL 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. [Lelchuk_DN_Calling_Script.pdf](#)

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Thank you to all of the fellow MFA stage managers I've had the pleasure of sharing my time in grad school with. I have only been able to accomplish what I have because of the support and love of this community.

Thank you to my team on this production, Alina Novotny, Katie Davis, Lauren Guiso, and Tova Petty. This show would not have been what it was without each of you.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Voice and Authority: “What am I going to do with all this power?”

by

Gillian Lechuk

Master of Fine Arts in Stage Management

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair

The play *Dance Nation* explores the ferocity, vulnerability, and discoveries of middle school students on a competitive dance team. After a feral dance under red strobes and a self-aggrandizing monologue where she grew impossibly tall and impossibly loud, one character, Ashlee, asks the audience, “What am I going to do with all this power?”

While Ashlee struggles with how to embrace her beauty, intellect, and confidence, I struggled with how to use my authority as the stage manager of this production. I was afraid to

use my voice, to speak directly and confidently, because I did not trust my collaborators to respect me. My fear of disappointing others prevented me from owning my authority and confidently leading my team.

In order to overcome that fear, I leaned into the discomfort and worked on monitoring my tone of voice, avoiding upspeak, and using direct language. I realized that I had the power and ability to do my job well, regardless of how others felt, and I could do so with kindness to both the company and myself. As I practiced using my voice, I was able to trust my collaborators to listen to and support me. My fear slipped away, and my belief in myself grew.

I prioritized meeting the community with compassion and used my authority with kindness. I confidently led *Dance Nation* to a triumphant run of performances with the knowledge that my use of my power had contributed to the development of a courageous process.