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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

The Journal for a Lifetime

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Jada Alston Owens

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Marc Alexander Baricelli
Professor Stephen W. Buescher
Professor Manuel Rotenburg

2022

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The Thesis of Jada Alston Owens is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

WOW!! To my beautiful Mom and Dad, to Ryan and my California family I love you forever and thank you for always cheering me on, supporting me, and pushing me. Man what an opportunity to experience this season of my life with all my professors and my beautiful war buddies. Ursula Meyer who has been there for me through thick and thin, who has challenged to reach the depths of my voice that I was afraid to experience. Challenged to *really* take the step in believing what was already planted within me was enough. That was because of you Motha and I love you!

To Stephen Buescher who gave me the courage to continue to be curious about movement not just in the studio, but in life; who taught me that the study of being specific and clear is motivated by thought and intention in *any* story I tell. You also taught me the difference between what's "right" and what's *clear*. And I dedicate my craft to becoming more CLEAR!!!

To Marco who taught me how to have more compassion for Shakespeare, to inhale every opportunity Shakespeare provides and exhale my point of view through *my* body and *my* mind. To Eva Barnes for pushing me through speech and text with tenacity, wielding my sword to attack every word with grace and skill. To Richard Robichaux who taught me the practice of excellence and its execution, to continue embracing the world through poetry, joy, and love.

I am so grateful for these past three years that took me in, through, and out even during a pandemic and I would not trade this experience for the world! I will never forget these precepts and hold them where I hold God's word, implementing them always from a place of love. Thank you all so much.

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

- File 1. Owens_LettersfromCuba_Photo1.jpg
- File 2. Owens_LettersfromCuba_Program.jpg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this to my family who sacrificed everything they could to support me. Ryan, Daddy, Mommy, thank you for always lifting my arms when I felt like I couldn't anymore. Thank you for always giving your all in every season I elevate to. This one is for you!

To Conroy, Tiffany, Britt, and Frankie, thank you for being such incredible friends. I feel like when I met you all it was truly divine, and I thank God everyday that He allowed you all to be a part of my life.

To my New Orleans family and the Greater St. Stephen Fellowship. To Bishop Morton Pastor Debra B. Morton, Lady Jay, and Pastor Rob, I love you all so much. Thank you for standing with me.

To my San Antonio family! All Nations San Antonio with the amazing Apostle Kevin Duhart and Pastor Lisa Duhart, thank you for your leadership! I love you both so much and words can't express how grateful I am for your wisdom and your love!!

To My Mission Statement! You and I will be rocking together and changing as we grow. I dedicate my all to ensure that you come to fruition with everyone I encounter, and pass the torch when it's time. This one is for us!!

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Journal for a Lifetime

by

Jada Alston Owens

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

My research at UCSD over the past three years has definitely broken me, stretched me, opened me, and renewed me. I remember all I ever wanted to do was *please*. Please my teachers, my classmates, my family, and I got a huge reality check with myself. In *Letters From Cuba* by Irene Fornes, I stepped into Fran's shoes. She moved to New York because of dance but was conflicted about leaving Cuba and her beloved brother, Luis behind.

Fran then found her voice by channeling her Yemaya, who is the Orisha Goddess in the Afro-Cuban religion called Yoruba. Dancing in this way helped Fran remember the joys of Cuba and Luis, and often comforted her in new and challenging times. I too missed being home when things were new or challenging, and often thought about what I left and am leaving behind.

So I used my point of view through dance to express that. Every kick, every head pop, every spinal undulation, and every time my feet connected with the floor it pushed me to my next place. I cultivated a space for my voice to be loud and to be heard.

It was then that I learned not only to put my training of voice and movement in this medium of zoom, but also how to give myself the permission to creatively speak up. I learned how to turn my one bedroom studio into a theater stage in a matter of weeks. And while learning the skill of manually setting my stage, I realized this is what dreams feel like. There have been countless times that I told myself, “don’t take the risk, it’s not big a deal, you can’t do that, follow the rules,” but my God what RULES because I can’t seem to find them?! I want to do everything that it takes to say what I need to say because it holds me accountable to my craft. And if UCSD has taught me *anything* it’s to continue to make my own of *everything*. To shout, sing, write, to never stop being curious about the possibilities, to keep dreaming even when it’s heavy, to keep stretching when I feel like I can’t go anymore, to keep believing in *me*. I stand before you in awe because if you only knew how I hurt and healed, how I pressed under pressure, how I leaned in love even when it didn’t feel good, it’s an experience I will continue to grow and breathe in this beautiful garden of mine called me.