

# UC San Diego

## UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Sustaining the Soul

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2hx988wj>

### Author

Penn, Christine Emily

### Publication Date

2020

### Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2hx988wj#supplemental>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Sustaining the Soul

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Christine Emily Penn

Committee in charge:

Richard Robichaux, Chair  
Eva Barnes  
Ursula Meyer

2020

©

Christine Emily Penn, 2020

All rights reserved.

The Thesis of Christine Penn is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

---

---

---

Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

## DEDICATION

To the beautifully, complex humans I had the opportunity to portray here at UCSD:

Angelica/ Rich Girl 3

Darlene

Tess

Lady Macbeth

Paulina

Lauren S.

Hotpur

Eliante

Paulie from O's

Ophelia

Trifle

Denise/Derek/Dana

Tracy

White Barbara

Edna

3

Georgette

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

## LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. Penn\_*Misanthrope*\_ Photo 1.jpg

File 2. Penn\_*Misanthrope*\_ Photo 2.jpg

File 3. Penn\_*Balm in Gilead*\_Photo 3.jpg

File 4. Penn\_*Balm in Gilead*\_Photo 4.jpg

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Garrett Schulte*, for being my twin flame. For being everything I'm not and yet everything I am. For having my back and allowing me to have yours.

My sisters, *Laurili & Meg*, for being my true war buddies.

*Avery Foley* for the deeply seeing me at every stage of life in our 18 years of friendship.

*Nick Stauf* for being the brother I never had.

*Danielle Sappleton*, my sunflower, to whom I wouldn't be an actor without.

*Amandla Bearden* and *Anthony Hernandez* for the unbreakable bond we share.

*Celeste Arias* for your love of this art and your constant acts of kindness.

The *UCSD acting faculty* for not only their mastery and love for their craft, but their time and commitment to mine.

My mentor, *Hugh O'Gorman*, for always being a source of light.

*Marybeth Ward*, aka SuperWonderWoman, for saving me time and time again.

*Kim Rubinstein* for reminding me to be porous and let the work and life to move through me.

*2020 Vision*, my class of incredibly gifted artists who were my mirrors and eventually became my greatest gifts.

The *UCSD Classes of 2018, 2019, 2021, & 2022* for being a part of my metamorphoses.

*Alexa McDonald, Tam Young, Nikki Marino, Hannah Hayes, James Carter, Aubie Merrylees, Morgan Page, Bradley James Tejeda, Rob Yang, Julie Schuldt, Tammy Dezotell, Suzannah Emilia, Wayne Berry* and so many other sweet souls I couldn't imagine life without.  
*Steph Del Rosso* and *Ava Geyer* for their stories and collaboration.

*Alexandra Billings*, for being stardust and reminding me that I am too.



The incredible women who continue to lead this world with velocity and grace: *Hollace Starr, Olivia Trevino, Lindsay Allbaugh, Vannessa Stalling, Jennifer Chang, and Tyne Rafaeli.*

*Yale MFA Classes of 2015-2019*, for allowing me to believe that art can make a difference.

*The women of Yale MFA Class of 2017* for being my inspirations.

*Paulie & D* for letting me in their home and hearts. You have shown me what true love really is.

*Brandon O'Sullivan* for speaking to me through hummingbirds when I needed you the most.

*Anne Bancroft and Heath Ledger*, my forever role models.

*My parents* for their love, support, and continuing to evolve and grow into their best selves.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Sustaining the Soul

by

Christine Emily Penn

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Richard Robichaux, Chair

Theatre requires faith: faith in the mysteries of this universe, in humanity, in imagination, but, above all, in one's self.

It wasn't until the role of Eliante in *The Misanthrope* that I realized how fearful I was to truly believe. In the play, Eliante's contribution to the whole seemed quite simple: she was on stage the majority of the play, only spoke four times, and was hopelessly in love. Due to her lack of content, there was this immediate reaction to make her small. With large amounts of time on stage with not much to do, my eyes opened to the depths of which I could explore a character in order to sustain on stage. By not judging her or her capacities, I found and embodied her grit, density, and hope. She taught me that no matter who you are, on stage or in life, you are always abundant.

From that moment I began to uncover the richness of my characters and infuse technique with that process. I could use my breath, voice, and body to unlock, craft, and shape their behaviors. This became clear with Darlene, a Chicago native with a 20-minute monologue in *Balm in Gilead*, whose impediments controlled me at the start of the process. It doesn't matter if I play a character that is easy to relate to or not, but my job as an actor is to continuously find the soul of that person. That is why being an artist is a lifelong practice that exists both on and off stage.

By having the courage to take in the world with body, mind, and spirit, I can encourage those around me, whether that is in the audience or on a subway car, to do the same. My faith in myself, and all the characters I will portray, is necessary in order to instill change in this world and be a vessel of hope.