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Malvolio: A Study in Audience Relationship

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Malvolio: A Study in Audience Relationship

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Henry Greenberg

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair  
Professor Marco Barricelli  
Professor Stephen Buescher  
Professor Manny Rotenberg

2022

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

University of California San Diego

2022

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Mom, Dad, Lily, Rebecca and Laura.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Malvolio: A Study in Audience Relationship

by

Henry Greenberg

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

Coming to UCSD, I had the idea that a “good actor” ignores their audience, or at the maximum, engages them indirectly—reworking a joke delivery in the dressing room after the curtain falls. The audience was to never know that I saw them, heard them, and most of all, that what I was doing on stage could be changed by their response.

In Act 2 of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio, the servant of the Lady Olivia, finds a letter revealing that his most private fantasy has come true—Olivia is in love with him. Unexpectedly, Malvolio shares this revelation with the audience directly, confiding in them, and welcoming them in on his journey of discovery.

Playing this scene was a technical challenge on all fronts—handling the poetry of the text amidst intense and erratic emotional shifts, finding physical and vocal variety to illuminate these numerous states, and then, finally, sharing it with the audience. It required vulnerability, confidence, and a sense of surrender—that to do justice to this scene, I must let go of my pre-meditated ideas and respond to what the audience is giving me in the moment, so that they are not just observing the experience, they are *included* in the experience. I was not capable of this before graduate school. But with the training of my professors, most notably the character and clowning work of Stephen Buescher, I was able to let the audience in. Now, the words “good actor” mean something different entirely.