

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Leading with Heart:
Building Connection through Unconditional Responsibility

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

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The Thesis of Jessie Medofer is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

DEDICATION

For Gram.
For manifesting grace and unconditional love.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Leading with Heart:
Building Connection through Unconditional Responsibility

by

Jessie Medofer

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Charles Means, Chair

I used to identify solely as the ultimate problem-solver, the person with all the answers. I sought safety in reason by avoiding the messy and uncontained aspects of my work. I engaged within a narrow scope of responsibility, and frequently felt frustrated, working in isolation as I faced adaptive challenges. As the Production Stage Manager of *Vieux Carré*, I expanded my responsibility and invited connection. I shifted my approach by sharing my curiosity and perceptions with an open heart. By prioritizing relationships, being vulnerable, and initiating difficult conversations, I cultivated trust and partnership.

I supported a wholehearted process that expanded my informal authority with the company and allowed my authentic engagement during our production's toughest moments.

In *Vieux Carré*, the character of the Writer moves between participating in scenes to observing them, while continually influencing the action and remaining responsible for the storytelling. He describes the cost of his work as being paid from the heart. In this sense, my work as a stage manager parallels the Writer as I both observe the process and step into the fray. Like the Writer's unwavering commitment to the story, I have an unconditional responsibility for leading a collaborative process that is rooted in trust and authenticity. My choice to be vulnerable leads to genuine connection, which lays the foundation for strong partnerships and collaboration. By taking a wholehearted plunge into the work, I discovered that using my heart is not only nourishing, it is essential to my stage management style.