

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Swimming in Team Dynamics:  
Collaborative Immersion in *The Cherry Orchard*

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 Amanda Nussbaum is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

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## DEDICATION

To my family for their unwavering support and love.

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File 3. *The Cherry Orchard* Calling Pages 47-51

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to my family for all that they have done and continue to do to support me in every way imaginable. I would be nothing without them and they continue to make all of the hard work worth it.

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A special thanks to Trevor Norton, the man who is the reason that I'm in this business of theatre. Without him, I would be hidden away in a physics lab and instead I am creating art and telling stories to impact the lives of audiences.

Finally, an exceptional thank you to Lisa Porter and Charles Means. They completely took a chance on me when I applied to grad school, I knew almost nothing and they have continued to show me how vast the world of stage management is. I owe all of my success to them and without them I would be truly lost.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Swimming in Team Dynamics:  
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University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair

During my graduate studies, I have grown to understand the complexity of leading an exceptional stage management team. I am departing with a deep curiosity about how to nourish and cultivate future team collaborations. *The Cherry Orchard* team was the highest functioning team that I have cultivated during my time at UC San Diego. Upon reflection, there were many disappointing moments when I craved a higher level of performance from the team. My expectations of teams began to form at a young age through competitive athletics. I was a nationally ranked water polo player and was taught to embody the physical struggle and mental grit required of an emerging professional



athlete. That mental and physical toughness has formed my identity and continues to inform my ideas about discipline, value, and working for a goal that is far larger than what I could accomplish on my own.

While my approach to team dynamics served me well in competitive athletics, some of my ideas have failed me while working on teams outside of the regulated structure of sports. Live performance is the ultimate group collaboration and I have fought to form strong and trusting stage management teams. When I started graduate school, I had a tendency to do everything myself and continued to strive for improbable perfection, performing as an unstoppable one-woman show. My experience on *The Cherry Orchard* illuminated a path to cultivating resilient teams that is informed equally by athletic discipline and the deep curiosity of collaboration.