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Playing Minor:
An exploration of supporting roles, small parts matter too.

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Jalen Myles Davidson

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Marc Alexander Barricelli
Professor Stephen W Buescher
Professor Shahrokh D Yadegari

2024

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University of California San Diego

2024

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VITA

2024 Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting), University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Playing Minor:
An exploration of supporting roles, small parts matter too.

by

Jalen Myles Davidson

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

“There are no small parts just small actors”. When coming to grad school this age old adage isn’t one I assumed I’d still be hearing, or at least not in reference to myself. However, the cookie doesn’t always crumble in your favor. That said, while I may not have been as fortunate as many of my classmates who got to play numerous lead roles. I was fortunate enough to play a smattering of supporting roles, my time here at UCSD. I think one of the most valuable things I have learned that I was able to actualize through my multitude of performance opportunities, is the idea of “playing minor”. Stephen Buescher in his class emphasizes this concept of knowing

who's major and who's minor at any given moment. The idea is to essentially know your role and know how you're serving the story. I think that, for better or for worse, I have had extensive practice in this specific ideology. I would like to think that I have been able to serve my purpose in the plays I was in and honor the stories by providing my perspective and point of view regardless of the number of lines or scenes I have. While yes, of course I would love to know what it feels like to "never leave the stage" and lead a room of my peers, that just simply wasn't my story. My story was one of support, and that's okay. These stories don't exist without **every** character no matter how many words they may or may not have. So back to this phrase, "there are no small parts just small actors," I vehemently disagree, and frankly think whoever coined it probably never had a small part. My reason? The two aren't mutually exclusive. There are small parts, and there are small actors, and sometimes that's exactly what is needed. I think a better phrase perhaps would be "There are small parts, but small parts can still make big impact" and I'd like to think my time at UCSD has been a testament to that notion.