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Let's P.L.A.Y. A Memoir of a Master

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### Author

Hefner, Folami Assata

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Let's P.L.A.Y.  
A Memoir of a Master

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Folami Hefner

Committee in charge:

Richard Robichaux, Chair  
Eva Barnes  
Ursula Meyer

2020

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis statement to my family and friend support group. Those who have remained as a consistent pillar of support through this three-year trying, challenging, and life-changing experience.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the directors, professors, and colleagues who reminded me to breathe, play, and explore in the body. They include Vanessa Stalling, Stephen Buescher, Steve Broadnax, Natalie Robichaux, and India Gurley.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Let's P.L.A.Y.  
A Memoir of a Master

by

Folami Hefner

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Richard Robichaux, Chair

Have you ever wanted to escape the limitations of what your brain thinks you are capable of? Well, lets P.L.A.Y, Performance Living Actively in You! Enter with me into a rehearsal process where perfection is replaced with discovery; where creation need not be tied to rhyme or reason. Leave the critical adult mind behind and jump into the body-your personal vehicle to this imaginary world!

Through my artistic experience acting in *A Beautiful Day in November*, I found that full body expression is where PLAY lives, in the world of a play. Playing with the *body*, and without the critical and intellectual *brain*, allows the actor to expand and discover their character beyond initial ideas or basic pretenses. The utilization of P.L.A.Y., is not only useful in absurdist works, like *A Beautiful Day in November*, but I also found it extremely freeing in the classroom, classical texts, and stage productions.



I was able to apply Checkov's technique onstage in *Man in Love*, and use full body expression as a gateway to tapping into an internal feeling. By tapping into the physical sensation of falling, my body took inventory of the feeling of losing control. I was able to transmute that physical feeling into an emotional fear that was outwardly expressed onstage in my character Darylnn's agoraphobia.

In classical work, such as Shakespeare, I found that heightened text is best understood, for both myself and audiences, when executed with full body expression. By metabolizing words into a physical expression, my body removes language as a barrier to the comprehension of storytelling.

My process to discovery changed once I got my body involved. Before then, I was a captive to the limitations of my mind with no idea of my capacity to be a chameleon of an actress. Through graduate school, I have found that there is no story that my body cannot lead me through.