Removing the Mask: Revealing Imperfection through Authentic Leadership

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Removing the Mask:
Revealing Imperfection through Authentic Leadership

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Elizabeth Fiala

Committee in charge:

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2016
The thesis of Elizabeth Fiala is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

__________________________________________
Co-Chair

__________________________________________
Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016
DEDICATION

To my family:
Thank you for the unconditional love and support.
This wouldn’t have been possible without you.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Removing the Mask:
Revealing Imperfection through Authentic Leadership

by

Elizabeth Fiala

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

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair
Professor Charles Means, Co-Chair

I have always strived to be perceived as the perfect stage manager. To me, perfection means never making a mistake or appearing vulnerable. Trying to achieve this perfection has meant avoiding moments when I could appear weak, or even worse, risk the possibility of failure. As a result, my attempt toward perfectionism created boundaries that kept me safe, but also kept me from authentically connecting with my collaborators.

In *The Venetian Twins*, the citizens of Verona wear masks to tell the tragic story of Zanetto and Tonino Bisognosi, twins separated at birth. It is not until Zanetto’s death
at the very end of the play that characters unmask themselves, revealing their humanity – their authentic selves. Throughout this process, I have strived to unmask my authenticity and become a leader who values mistakes as moments of growth, unconditionally trusts my collaborators, and cultivates connections amongst my colleagues. Asking for help, having difficult conversations, and embracing the disorder of a complex process has required me to courageously allow others to see my imperfections and abandon my rigid sense of right and wrong. I have challenged myself to take substantial risks by questioning my intentions before having a hard conversation, expressing my artistic opinions and concerns, and trusting my team with increased responsibility while allowing for the possibility of mistakes. In my journey to embody authentic leadership, I have actively made the choice to stay present and in response to the work, leading my fellow collaborators through this multifaceted production process.