Dorn’s Buttons

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

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The thesis of Ronald Kirk Washington is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. JUNE MOON Surprise!
File 2. OTHELLOMAN Ambition and humility
File 3. IN THE RED & BROWN WATER Oya seduction
File 4. IN THE RED & BROWN WATER Shango deployment
File 5. TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE Wait your turn
File 6. TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE Longing
File 7. LITTLE CHILDREN DREAM OF GOD Baby Touissant
File 8. LITTLE CHILDREN DREAM OF GOD Voodoo dance
File 9. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Casey and Tom
File 10. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Righteous
File 11. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Goodbye Ma
File 12. A DOLL’S HOUSE Unrequited
File 13. A DOLL’S HOUSE Up in smoke
I am extremely grateful to many individuals who have supported me throughout my training and the thesis process. First, I’d like to thank the acting faculty: Eva Barnes, Maria Carrera, Kyle Donnelly, Ursula Meyer, Jamie Newcomb, Charlie Oates, Linda Vickerman, Greg Wallace, and Jim Winker; department persons Jim Carmody, Liam Clancy, Doug Dutson, Michael Francis, Michael Fullerton, Hedi Jafari, Mark Maltby, Laura Manning, Charles Means, Lisa Porter, Kim Rubenstein, Todd Salovey, Kim Walsh, and Marybest Ward; directors Christopher Ashley, Josh Brody, Kate Jopson, Anthony Lucciano, Michael Moran, Jonathan Silverstein, Gabor Tompa, Sarah Wansley, and Emilie Whelan; stage managers Rachael Albert, Cara Anderson, Sarah Dion, Liz Fiala, Kate Guthrie, Zach Kennedy, Mandy Nussbaum, Megan Sprowls, Laura Zingle, and Morgan Zupanski; the La Jolla Playhouse staff; fellow student-actors Natalie Birriel, Mark Christine, Gabriel Lawrence, Zach Martens, Jenny Putney, Megan Robinson, Dan Rubiano, Taylor Shurte, Ngozi Anyanwu, Sarah Halford, Regan Linton, Katie McGehee, Matt MacNelly, Jack Mikesell, Scott Patteson, Maurice Williams, Kimberly Blank, Hannah Corrigan, Tesiana Elie, Walker Hare, William Hodges, Toby Onwumere, Brian Smolin, Hannah Tamminen, MacGregor Arney, N’Jameh Camara, Luis Carrasquillo, Zakiya Markland, Lorena Martinez, Emily Shain, Michael Turner, and Keith Wallace; and finally, my own beloved, motley (“Tossed Salad”) class of actors: Vi Flaten, Michael Hammond, Chaz Hodges, Gerard Joseph, Tom Patterson, Danvir Singh, and Jasmine StClair.
In Process during spring quarter of first-year, there was a small moment involving an unbuttoned shirt—a small moment involving smaller buttons. Chekhov’s The Seagull: paramours Dorn and Paulina sit together at a table in Sorin’s garden, engaged in Chekhovian chitchat. Prior to there was a dance, a kiss, a caress. Having noticed Dorn’s unbuttoned shirt, Paulina begins to button it. Successful at the sternum, she starts for another. But instead of letting her finish this quiet act, a casual kindness extended a familiar lover, I deemed it dull and reached for what I thought the more exciting choice: Paulina. Before this
touch, the scene is stopped. “That was such a beautiful moment,” said the instructor, “Why not let her finish?”

* * *

Ask not “What am I doing to her?” but rather “How do I want to make her feel?” The former’s a jar filled with marbles and trinkets. The latter’s that same jar filled with marbles, trinkets, and precious sand.

* * *

The difference in severity of a simple head tilt can be the difference between curious and despondent. An external approach is merely an internal one unjustified.

* * *

If the thought is clear trust that the breath needed to convey it will be right-sized, the text audible and truthful. Provided I’ve warmed-up. Consonants and vowels are emotive.

* * *

Who knew singing’s a lot like shooting a jump shot? First, a clean grab, then jump, free and long release in rhythm—don’t overthink it. Got a beautiful jumper. It took me twenty years to develop it.