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CREATING THE ROLE OF NICIA IN

THE MANDRAKE

by

ROBERT KRUEGER

A THESIS SUBMITTED

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

THEATRE ARTS

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

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ABSTRACT

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This document is a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree in theatre. It is a detailed account of author Robert Krueger's artistic process in creating the role of Nicia in Minnesota State University, Mankato's production of *The Mandrake* in the fall of 2012. The thesis chronicles the actor's artistic process from pre-production through performance in five chapters: a pre-production analysis, a historical and critical perspective, a rehearsal and performance journal, a post-production analysis and a process development analysis. Appendices and works cited are included.

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CHAPTER 1

EARLY PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This early production analysis will focus on the role of Nicia as portrayed by Robb Krueger in *The Mandrake* by Niccolò Machiavelli, translated by Wallace Shawn. The production will be produced by the Minnesota State University, Mankato, Department of Theatre and Dance October 18 through 28, 2012, in the Andreas Theatre. David McCarl will be the costume designer, John Paul will design the set and George Grubb will serve as sound designer. The production is under the direction of Paul J. Hustoles.

Machiavelli's play is an intriguing blend of Roman comedy and the Italian *commedia dell'arte* filtered through the newborn intellectualism of the Renaissance and personal cynicism of its author. While the comedy is lighthearted and jovial, each character in the play participates in machinations of deceit and dishonor that ultimately bring about the reward that each seeks. Furthermore, the play makes clear that, had they instead pursued virtuous ends, no character in the play would have achieved anything but continued frustration with their lot in life.

The character of Nicia was born in Roman comedy as the befuddled old man, usually hard of hearing, who is duped either by the parasite or the young lover as one of their means of achieving their goal. (Machiavelli plays with this stereotype in Act III when Nicia feigns deafness to allow Ligurio to find out whether Brother Timoteo will

cooperate with their scheme.) The character was influenced heavily by the *dottore* character of the *commedia*, who is a learned man with an enormous ego and little common sense that is easily manipulated by the clever servant or *arlecchino*. There is also a great deal of the *pantalone* in Nicia, in his arrogance, in his belief that he is still a great romantic and lover and most notably in his love for a girl many years his junior.

However, to play Nicia one must focus less on the historical predecessors and more on his origins in the Florentine Renaissance. Nicia is unique in his vitality and passion. This is no doddering geezer whose self-deception goads him to pursue a young wife. For Nicia, the pursuit ended six years earlier when he married Lucrezia. Since that time his sole consuming passion has been to produce an heir; indeed, much about his conduct in the play gives the impression that having a child was the principal reason for the marriage. Like every other character in *The Mandrake*, he keeps this end in sight and compromises everything most dear to him for the sake of obtaining his goal. Despite how easily he is duped, cozened and betrayed, his ability to continue to adapt to the changing circumstances created by the other characters in order to achieve his personal success makes him a truly Machiavellian character.

Little is known of Nicia's history prior to the action of the play. He describes travelling in his youth but most of the descriptions of the places he claims to have visited reveal him as an empty boaster with little knowledge of the world around him (I, ii). He is known as a lawyer, and thus must have studied to be one, but has a reputation as a fool (I, i) and has no clients (II, iii). His fortune (I, iii) may have been inherited or may have come in part from lucky investments of the income he accrued in his early days as a

lawyer before he was found to be incompetent. The other characters of the play enjoy making fun of him. He appears to be universally disliked by all the other characters and by most of the populace of Florence; what is more, he considers everyone's bad opinion of him to be the result of jealousy or ignorance (II, iii).

The relationship that reveals the most about Nicia's character is his marriage to Lucrezia. That a man of so poor a reputation and personality should be able to marry a woman so beautiful, wise and virtuous may appear to be a weakness in Machiavelli's plot, but the playwright has given several overt clues. Lucrezia's father is never named, and her mother had the reputation of being a whore in her youth. Lucrezia may very well be illegitimate and, therefore, may have had few prospects for a good marriage. Nicia may have disdained the idea of marrying her at first. However, after searching at length for a suitable wife who would be willing to wed him and seeing his dotage fast approaching, he could very likely have grudgingly seen her merely as an acceptable alternative to dying alone. While there are other possibilities for the origins of their marriage, this scenario makes the most sense when one considers the way Nicia treats Lucrezia throughout the play. While the other characters rave about her beauty, her wisdom, her virtue, her piety and her grace, Nicia discusses her in terms of exasperation, frustration and obstruction. "I'm sick of that bitch," he confides to Siro (whom he has just met), driven to consternation by his wife's reluctance to urinate into a flask for him (II, v). He is driven almost to apoplexy by Lucrezia's unwillingness to consent to sleep with a stranger even after the advice of her mother and her confessor (IV, viii). He sees her as obstinate and stubborn on a daily basis, constantly contrary to his wishes and

childishly petulant. He rants about her bedtime prayers, which may sometimes last for four hours (II, vi). He directs most of his invective at her despite her complete absence from the stage until halfway through the play.

What is learned about Lucrezia from Nicia's ravings gives further insight into the character of the irascible lawyer. It is implied that her long prayer sessions go on until Nicia falls asleep and therefore spare her the unpleasantness of her conjugal duties. Thus Nicia is likely sexually frustrated. In other ways, however, she is devoted to her marriage if not to her husband. She has cut herself off from the outside world, eschewing parties, dinners and social visits. She does not travel, and is more reluctant than her husband to travel to the spa that Ligurio suggests. Despite her dismay at the solution to her infertility that her husband proposes, she consents to his demand that she listen to the questionable council of her mother and of Brother Timoteo. Yet none of these ways of obeying and honoring her husband gain Lucrezia any consideration from Nicia. He expects her complete acquiescence as his dutiful wife, no matter how unreasonable his requests may be, and resents her resistance to his outlandish orders. In short, the conflict between Nicia and Lucrezia may be summed up as the problems of a man stuck in the Middle Ages who is wedded to a true Renaissance woman.

Another relationship in the play that reveals much about Nicia's character is his alignment with Ligurio. Early in the play, Callimaco tells Siro that he has enlisted Ligurio to help him bed Lucrezia. Siro, deeply concerned, expresses his belief that social parasites or "professional gourmets" are utterly faithless and cannot be trusted. Callimaco reassures him that he has made sure that Ligurio knows he will not be

rewarded unless he achieves success for his patron. In contrast, Nicia has fallen completely under Ligurio's spell and believes that the parasite is a true friend. He has no intention of offering any financial or culinary reward but expects Ligurio to help him get his wife pregnant out of friendship. He has no qualms about insulting Ligurio's experiences in other Italian cities and belittles his understanding of life, all the while revealing that his own knowledge of the world does not extend past his immediate surroundings. Ironically, Nicia's friendship with Ligurio is a result of the aging lawyer's hubris, believing that he is still respected in the community, and thus would have men lining up to curry favor with him, when in fact it is his lack of allies that allows Ligurio to take advantage of him.

The contrast between Callimaco and Nicia is made distinct by their interaction with Ligurio as well. The parasite is committed to helping both men achieve their goals. Of the two men, Callimaco has a dishonorable goal and unreasonable expectations, while Nicia's goal is completely honorable and rational. But because Callimaco is likeable, because he is young, good-looking, open-handed and honest about his desires, Ligurio (and the audience) finds him far more sympathetic. In contrast, it is Nicia's miserly, miserable behavior that loses him the empathy of his ally, and Nicia's desire for a son is the means by which Ligurio entraps him. His true character is shown by how quickly he is willing to sacrifice his wife's purity and a stranger's life to get a son.

The most entertaining aspect of Nicia is his ability to consistently deny reality. He is living proof that unless one can admit mistakes, one cannot avoid repeating them or grow in any practical knowledge. He sees his current paucity of clients as having nothing

to do with his own incompetence but rather as evidence of the Florentines' inability to appreciate a man of higher learning. At the same time he vilifies higher education as being a long struggle whose end achieves only a "few turds of knowledge" (II, iii), whose value is uncertain. He manages to compound this contradiction by vaunting his learning when he believes someone will be impressed by it.

Nicia's denial extends to his physique and appearance as well. Throughout the play he reveals himself as a man who looks into the mirror each morning and sees a much younger, more attractive, vital and desirable man than reality would indicate. When Callimaco suggests that Lucrezia's barrenness may be due to her husband's impotence, Nicia is quick to dismiss that possibility with a laugh. "I am like a rod of iron, charged and pulsating with blood—I'm in my springtime, my springtime, Doctor" (II, ii). Certainly the dogged intensity with which he pursues the plot of the mandrake potion is that of a man who has yet to come to a realization that his best years are behind him. He piles rationalization on rationalization to explain his wife's avoidance of their marriage bed. Yet when he dons his disguise to participate in the "kidnapping" of the hapless young man who will draw out the mandrake poison from Lucrezia, he reveals at least a reluctant awareness of the passing years. Observing himself in his costume, he sees himself as "larger, younger, more agile, more active" (IV, viii) and contemplates the possibility of sexual rendezvous while disguised, a hilarious idea in light of his suspected impotence and his true reputation with the Florentines. Of course, he also believes that his disguise completely conceals his identity and is immediately discomfited when the others approach and instantly recognize him.

Nicia's insistence on the denial of reality keeps him from understanding the consequences of his actions. His single-minded pursuit of a son and heir blinds him to the effect that the mandrake potion and the infidelity its use requires will have on his marriage. The enthusiastic and extreme lengths to which Nicia goes to examine Callimaco's body before and after putting him into his wife's bed are evidence of the relentless, almost insane passion with which the aging lawyer pursues his goal. Without a doubt, its effect on his wife is anticipated by Ligurio and Siro as Nicia describes in explicit detail his probing actions of the previous night in Lucrezia's bedroom before leaving her with her young lover.

In the final two scenes the suspected result is shown. These are the only scenes in which Nicia and Lucrezia appear on stage together, and their roles appear reversed from the manner in which the husband had referred to his wife throughout the play. While prior scenes revealed Nicia as domineering, vituperative and spiteful, here he seems completely off balance. He does not know how to react to the changes wrought in his wife by the events of the night before. Her attitude toward him is one of sardonic amusement and flippant superiority, bordering on contempt. He nervously laughs his way through the scene until its final lines. Apparently the established culture of their financial arrangements is that Lucrezia always pays out of her allowance when they appear in public together. Now she refuses, letting the responsibility of paying alms to Brother Timoteo fall on Nicia, who suddenly feels unwell. Whether his sickness is deliberately feigned or a psychosomatic reaction to reality impinging on his dream world, his denial has at last come to an end and with it may come the end of his life.

Nicia's temper is a direct outgrowth from the *dottore* and *pantalone* characters of the *commedia*, but Machiavelli uses it to reveal a deeper psychological insight into his character than the Italian street theatre found needful. This added complexity in Nicia's personality reveals him as a three dimensional character and thus shows him as a true creation of the Renaissance. While the fits of rage that Nicia vents upon Lucrezia are typical of *commedia* characters, they are psychologically motivated and rise naturally from the action of the play, unlike those of stock *commedia* characters whose antics are contrived from tradition but may not be motivated by the goals of the character. At times his tantrums are those of a child raving because his will has been thwarted; like the scenarios of *commedia*, Machiavelli uses this ranting to gain sympathy for the young wife and show that the old man truly deserves his fate. However, the playwright also reveals Nicia's obstinate will to show him trying to reason for perhaps the first time in his life. Despite his exasperating gender bias and unpleasant demeanor, the audience roots for Nicia to achieve his goal because that purpose will unite the young lovers and give him the child for which he so tenderly longs. Likewise during the "deaf" scene with Brother Timoteo, the playwright uses this well-worn routine to reveal Nicia's stinginess while using his vulgar outbursts to shock his audience into laughter. But at other times in the play, particularly during interactions with Ligurio, Siro and Callimaco, Nicia's anger arises from the conflict between reality and his denial. Machiavelli adds dimension to this stock character by showing that he is not merely willing to be led but that he pursues the path down which he is being led, despite some trepidation, with enthusiasm and vigor. This understanding of basic psychology makes Nicia truly a Renaissance

character and shows that Machiavelli clearly understands the Florentine mindset that he hoped so desperately to reform.

For example, examine the scene in IV, ix when Nicia meets the other conspirators in their disguises. He is instantly irritated to be recognized. He then tries to guess the identities of the others, and Ligurio explains that Doctor Callimaco, who is really Brother Timoteo in disguise, has put nuts in his mouth to disguise his voice. Nicia instantly flies into a rage, implying that if Ligurio had told him about disguising his voice with nuts, the others would not have recognized him. Ligurio then manages to mock the pompous lawyer by handing him nuts which he “realizes” too late are actually an evil-tasting laxative. Nicia is by this time sputtering with rage: his disguise is found to be ineffective, his knowledge is less than that of someone of lower social status and he has been humiliated by a device that, because it looks like an innocent mistake, he cannot refute. Other playwrights who base their characters on *commedia* stereotypes sometimes resort to cartoonish scenes which, while intended to be less realistic than Machiavelli’s scenes, still stretch the credibility of the audience. Nicia’s humiliation is drawn directly from his foibles and his anger bursts out of the sneaking suspicion that all denial-ridden people have that the rest of the world is laughing at them. To Nicia’s mindset, the rest of the conspirators should have pretended not to recognize him out of respect for his position in the community. Ligurio ought to have informed him of the finer aspects of disguises including ways of changing the voice, rather than sharing first with the doctor, who may be learned but is still merely a hired consultant. Also, Ligurio ought to have thought about the gravity of handing the wrong item to someone of Nicia’s position; had he

handed the bitter aloes to Siro, the rest of the group could have shared a laugh at the servant's expense, but to make such a mistake with a man of Nicia's status is a grave and serious error, at least to the aging and easily offended litigator.

Ultimately, Machiavelli uses the character of Nicia to reveal his understanding of human nature. Nicia's thought process, world view and *modus operandi* are the least Machiavellian of all the characters in *The Mandrake*. He alone is unable to work the system to achieve his goals. The playwright uses him as a caution against denial, snobbery and obtuseness. All the characters in the play get what they want by the end of the play, but only Nicia loses something as well. That he is only vaguely aware of the irreversible changes to his marriage is immaterial. The age of Machiavelli and all ages since are filled with people like Nicia, and some have acquired great power. Machiavelli demonstrates the ways and means that clever people can go to if they are willing to do what is necessary to get what they want, and also shows methods for undermining those who are ineffective and are unwilling to take the steps toward progress.

In the final analysis, Nicia's fate has been decided before the play has begun. He has rejected Machiavellian principles and, therefore, is completely vulnerable to those who apply them to achieve success. Because he has spent his life creating his own reality, he cannot comprehend the people who surround him and is easily victimized by them. While he is overjoyed by the impending arrival of his baby, he has unwittingly destroyed himself. He has given rooms in his house to a parasite and to his wife's young lover. He has given his wife over to the advice of a corrupt and immoral priest. He has lost control of his house by allowing his wife to come to an understanding of her will and

the means to satisfy it. And in the end, while unspoken in the play, it must be understood that in every community people talk. Thus the remains of what little reputation he has in Florence will be obliterated once the gossips tell of his cuckolding.

This is not to state that Nicia is a tragic character. To be tragic he would need the sympathy of the audience. Rather, Machiavelli uses him to caution the viewer to know themselves and what they truly want. Nicia stands as an example of a man who achieves everything he wants and gains nothing by doing so. He has failed to do what Machiavelli stated was of utmost importance: always keep the final end in sight.

Playing this character presents several challenges to Krueger. The physical attack must reflect both Nicia's origins in *commedia* and his psychological reality. Vocally the character must be animated yet believable. The staging also presents a few challenges. Krueger has worked in the round before in *Twelve Angry Men*, at Theatre in the Round in *The Devil's Disciple* and in Banter Production's *Reviewed to Death*. However, the simple open nature of the set will require the actor to show the audience the character's intentions through variety and movement played in several directions. The role is an intriguing conundrum of broad comedy and *lazzi* combined with realistic human desires and passions. The rehearsal process cannot begin too soon.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

You will find people are so simple-minded and so preoccupied with their immediate concerns, that if you set out to deceive them, you will always find plenty of them who will let themselves be deceived.

The Prince, Chapter 18, translated by David Wootton

The Mandrake, Niccolò Machiavelli's comedic masterpiece, was written at a time in the renowned philosopher's life when he had little to laugh about. In 1518, the year most scholars believe that Machiavelli wrote the play, he was living in exile not from Florence itself but from Florentine politics. Machiavelli had enjoyed great success from 1498 to 1512 as a chancellery secretary and rose to great importance in 1502 upon the election of Piero Soderini as lifetime Standard Bearer of the Republic. Soderini admired Machiavelli's talents. He took his secretary's advice to raise up a home militia and placed Machiavelli at its head. But his stature in the administration aroused jealousy and opponents began to undermine him. Soderini began to ignore his advice. In 1511, the Medicis began a campaign to drive the French out of Italy. Machiavelli advised Soderini to ally himself with the Medicis, but Soderini remained loyal to the French. In retaliation, the Medicis allowed their allies to invade Florence in 1512, and Machiavelli's home militia defended the city-state against them in vain. Soderini was forced into exile and Machiavelli was relieved of his position. He applied for various political positions

with the Medicis, reminding them that he was not their enemy, but remained unemployed. One year later he was mistakenly accused of being involved in an anti-Medici plot. He was arrested, held for 22 days and tortured. He was released in a general amnesty when Giovanni de Medici was elected Pope Leo X (Atkinson 19-22).

Far from broken, Machiavelli was nonetheless quite bitter. He found every door of political opportunity closed to him. Among the Italian political leaders he was viewed very much as he is seen today: an immoral, unethical schemer whose every word was laced with intrigue and menace. With no possibility of work in his chosen field, Machiavelli found himself relying on rich friends who gave him small gifts of money in return for minor services as a negotiator or intercessor in merchant affairs. It was at this point that he turned his great intellect to works of literature (Ridolfi 168-169).

Machiavelli had adapted a play by Terence into *The Woman of Andros* while still working in Florentine politics, which he then revised when he began to write drama. He also had some minor renown as a poet; he had at a point early in his period of disgrace written a letter to a friend expressing mock disappointment that a poet who had included a list of mediocre poets in one of his works had omitted Machiavelli's name (Ridolfi 167). But while he certainly would have seen plays presented at court or by troupes of mimes, he had no real practical experience with dramatic writing when he set out to write *The Mandrake* except for his adaptation of *The Woman of Andros*, which had not been produced. Using only his imagination, his powers of observation and his uniquely powerful, cynical world view, he created one of the first original works for the stage of the Italian Renaissance.

While the play did not restore Machiavelli to his former status, it did achieve enough success to set his fortunes on the rise. His friends read the play and spread word both of its brilliance and outrageousness. There is conjecture that it was performed privately for Lorenzo de Medici and his new French wife in September 1518 (Ridolfi 173). Its first recorded performance, in 1520, was a great success and it was revived constantly. It was presented twice in Venice in 1523 on a double bill with Plautus' *Menaechmi* and was regarded as the better of the two plays (Prezzolini 122). The play also carried favor for him with Pope Leo X, who would not consider employing the greatest political mind in Italy in any government position but did commission him to write a detailed history of the Florentine Republic (Ridolfi 179-182). While this was not the service Machiavelli desired, the honor of the commission restored his reputation as much as the salary restored his solvency.

Machiavelli found his basic source material for *The Mandrake* in Boccaccio's Decameron in the story of Ricciardo Mutolo, a young nobleman of Naples who is hopelessly in love with the beautiful and jealous Catella, the wife of an older man. After a long, frustrating and unsuccessful courtship, Ricciardo deceives Catella by telling her that her husband is having an affair and has arranged a rendezvous with his lover at a local bathhouse. He suggests that she should substitute herself for the lover in the bathhouse that evening. In the dark of the room that night, Catella immediately recognizes that it is not her husband making love to her. She threatens to tell her husband about Ricciardo's deception but he appeals to her better judgment and common sense. Thinking of the damage to her reputation, and thoroughly enjoying the embraces of a

man much younger than her husband, she agrees to become Ricciardo's lover. The story concludes with the narrator's wish that God should grant the audience such pleasures as well (Di Maria 135).

Into the framework of Boccaccio's tale Machiavelli interpolated the characters of *commedia* that were so familiar to himself and to the people of Italy. He reinvented Ricciardo as Callimaco, an *inamorato* who, like many a young lover of the *commedia* scenarios is unable to win the hand of his love without the assistance of a clever servant, represented in *The Mandrake* by Ligurio, the parasite. Catella is completely rewritten as Lucrezia, no longer a jealous wife but a woman so virtuous as to seem virtually incorruptible. Catella's unseen husband is now Nicia, a delicious hybrid of the *dottore*, the loquacious and pompous old learned fool most notable for his understanding of nothing, and the *pantalone*, the foolish old miser who still sees himself to be as attractive as he was in his youth and who desires to marry a young wife despite his inability to satisfy her in any way (Oreglia 84 and 78).

Yet despite the influences of the source tale and the street theatre, little doubt exists that Machiavelli turned these elements into a completely original comedy. The Boccaccio tale is so reinvented that had Machiavelli not stated publicly that the Decameron tale was his inspiration, one might believe the plot to be completely original. Aside from a few literary "winks" at the original story (e.g., the reference to the baths in the first act; the prologue's wish to the audience that "you, too, could somehow be tricked in a similar fashion"; Lucrezia's capitulation to Callimaco once she had experienced the lovemaking of a young man), the essence of the story is completely altered. Likewise,

none of the *commedia*-inspired characters are pure to their origins. Unlike the callow youth that usually exemplifies an *inamorato*, Callimaco is a worldly young man, sexually experienced and entirely self-possessed, who is not so much stymied by love but frustrated by his lust for an unattainable woman. Ligurio the parasite is as much reminiscent of the Roman *maccus* character as he is of the *arlecchino* of *commedia*, yet his characterization is far more complicated. He lives not by pratfalls but by his wits. His obsequiousness to Nicia masks his contempt for the old man, while his willingness to serve Callimaco's interests is motivated not only for his desire for food and shelter but also by his belief (and Machiavelli's belief) that those with wit and the readiness to use it should serve those with power and money who use it for good. To Ligurio, getting Lucrezia a young lover is a good deed when her husband is a man like Nicia. Lucrezia herself is not a traditional *inamorata*. She is married; she is disinterested in Callimaco; she is uninterested in the world or events outside her front door. While at first devout and resistant to the mandrake potion her husband forces upon her, she assents not only to adultery but also to becoming an instrument of murder. Nicia is still the most traditional character but is taken to an extreme in his rages, denial, pride and especially in the verbal abuse he heaps on his wife both onstage and off. Yet at the same time there is a pathetic quality to the aged lawyer as he pursues his solitary goal of an heir. His lust for a child is both his undoing and the source of his joy at the play's conclusion.

The characters that Machiavelli invents in *The Mandrake* not only emphasize the unique nature of the play but also represent the author's own philosophy and personality. This is most evident in Brother Timoteo, Lucrezia's confessor. He discerns the

falsehoods that Ligurio uses to determine his character without many clues, showing himself an astute observer of human character. He seizes the opportunity presented by the selfish plots of the main characters to further his own ends. He rationalizes arguments for Lucrezia that she cannot refute despite her uncomfortable suspicion that she is being led down a path she would rather not pursue. Most importantly, Timoteo knows to keep his own counsel. Ligurio is as wise a plotter as the friar, but he reveals his knowledge to the rest of the characters. In contrast, none of the other characters is ever certain how much Timoteo understands about the action; he reveals his understanding only to the audience in asides, leaving the rest, especially Ligurio, to assume that he is as much a dupe as Nicia.

All of the minor characters serve Machiavelli's purpose both in the play and for his message to society. The servant Siro is the direct opposite to Timoteo. He never understands what is going on, but has served Callimaco long enough to be able to anticipate the schemes in which he is obligated to participate and is wily enough to pretend comprehension. Madame Sostrata is described by the rest of the characters as a woman of poor reputation and loose morals, yet all the advice she gives is out of concern for her daughter Lucrezia's future. She will not allow the artificial morals invented by society to dictate her actions or guide her mother's instincts. She is a personification of the advice Machiavelli often offered to friends, which he also borrowed from Boccaccio: it is better to act and repent than not to act and regret (Viroli 168). The Woman at the Church is representative of Machiavelli's mischievous side. He was fond of off-color humor and had notoriety for turning innocent phrases into double entendres, much to the

delight of his political allies and to the fury of the clergy. The Woman's speech to Timoteo, trembling with sexual energy and laced with metaphor, must have been to Machiavelli a source of impish glee.

A great deal of speculation exists in the academic community regarding Machiavelli's intent for *The Mandrake*. Many scholars have devoted a significant amount of research to find deeper philosophical elements to the play. The names of the characters have been scrutinized, especially Lucrezia. Some believe she is so named after the Lucrece of Rome whose rape was immortalized by Livy and later by Shakespeare (Martinez 214); others believe the Lucrezia alluded to is Lucrezia Borgia. The most intriguing scholarly speculation is that Machiavelli intended the play to be an allegory depicting his frustration at the state of political affairs in Florence. All of the theories have interpretive variations but the basic tenets remain the same. Lucrezia is said to represent Florence in her beauty, virtue and piousness. Nicia is the ineffective administration that controlled the city-state (often said to be modeled after Soderini) and his wife's infertility represents the turpitude and disrepute that Machiavelli observed in Florence. Callimaco represents the good ruler of his controversial book The Prince, a man who will do what is needed to bring prosperity and joy to his country just as Callimaco brings affection, motherhood and passion to the barren life of Lucrezia. Ligurio, Siro and Timoteo represent those who would oust the old administration and place the good ruler in the seat of power in Florence for the sake of the greater good (Lord 811-819).

The discussion appears to arise from speculation that the author of serious work like The Prince, The Art of War and the Discourse on Florentine Affairs After the Death of Lorenzo, as well as bitingly satiric poems like “The Ass,” cannot have intended *The Mandrake* purely for entertainment purposes. Indeed, the second half of the prologue to the play is laced with bitterness and invective that

He has no other recourse, no choice, you see, because all other doors have been repeatedly slammed in his face, and the opportunity to show in more important types of work his more valuable talents has been consistently denied him. . . . The reward he expects this evening is that each one of you will sit in your little seat and sneer at his play. (Machiavelli 11-12)

One can imagine that a man of Machiavelli’s talents, repeatedly frustrated by fortune, fate and the Medicis, might have tried to convey a solution to the citizenry of Florence through an extended metaphor. That most of the characters behave according to Machiavellian principles appears to support this theory.

History argues to the contrary, however. There is not one recorded instance that anyone who saw the many productions of *The Mandrake* during the playwright’s lifetime ever interpreted the play as anything more than a salacious and bitingly satirical comedy. In the highly emotional, politically charged climate of Florence one could not have mounted a dramatic allegory advocating overthrow of the current government without attracting notice of the most hostile kind. Machiavelli’s enemies would have seized the opportunity to bury this most distrusted man once and for all had they thought they had evidence of anti-Medici sentiment, yet none of them did. Instead, as noted earlier, the

play began a slow reversal of fortune for Machiavelli. Furthermore, Machiavelli would have exhibited the most careless form of imprudence to have written a play that could be interpreted in this way. At the time of its production, he was in disgrace and at his most destitute. He desperately needed its popular success, not just for remuneration but also to change his public image, as it indeed did. Finally, one must look to Machiavelli for an answer, which he provided in a letter written to his friend Francesco Vittori:

Anybody who saw our letters, honored friend, and saw their diversity, would wonder greatly, because he would suppose now that we were grave men, wholly concerned with important matters. . . . But turning the page he would judge that we, the very same persons, were lightminded, inconstant, lascivious, concerned with empty things. (Prezzolini 141)

One theory about the intent of *The Mandrake* is amusing enough to include in this critical analysis. Throughout his life, though a married man who loved his wife and fathered several children, Machiavelli had many love affairs. His taste in women was many and varied, but as he aged he was subjected to mild ridicule from his friends, who mocked him as the older pedant who chased young girls. One can imagine Machiavelli including several inside jokes in his play to serve as a retort to his friends. The name “Nicia” could very well be a play on “Niccolò,” a self-deprecating joke to depict himself as an old fool with a young wife he cannot please or control. Should this be the case, history may also provide a source for the monologue of the Woman in the Church. In 1510, while Machiavelli was still the Secretary, an anonymous accuser charged him with the crime of sodomy with a courtesan known as La Riccia, with whom he was

sporadically involved for decades. Though the charge was dismissed, the notoriety of the accusation followed him all his life. The panting remonstrations of the Woman: “you know what he did to me a few times. But he never got tired. I have such terrible fears of being impaled by a Turk!” may be Machiavelli’s tongue-in-cheek reference to this episode in his life. It is also interesting to note that the courtesan La Riccia’s given name was Lucrezia (de Grazia 140).

Of course, there is no irrefutable evidence that Machiavelli intended any self-mockery in *The Mandrake*. But the possibility seems more likely in light of his later play *Clizia*, in which an older man vies with a younger man for the affections of a beautiful young woman. At the time he wrote *Clizia*, Machiavelli was engaged in a love affair with the actress Barbera Salutati, more than thirty years his junior, whom he had met when she performed the songs in *The Mandrake* (Atkinson 26). This affair was the butt of many good-natured jokes from Machiavelli’s friends, but it also caused a minor scandal in Florence. The story of the later play concerns the older Nicomaco (whose name is an obvious play on its author’s appellation) who tries to bed the titular heroine by substituting himself for her husband on her wedding night. His wife has learned of his plans in advance, however, and convinces the family servant to take Clizia’s place in the bedchamber. Rather than the night of sexual bliss he anticipates, Nicomaco finds himself roughly handled in the dark and nearly sodomized. The overt nature of Machiavelli’s self-parody in *Clizia* does lend some credence to the theory that he lampoons himself in *The Mandrake*. Machiavelli remained enigmatic on the subject, never publicly stating that either play was in any way autobiographical.

Machiavelli is still misunderstood today. His philosophy and reputation remain tarnished by the rumors created by his enemies during his lifetime. His name is used to evoke thoughts of an evil, almost demonic depravity, and the term “Machiavellian” is used to depict someone who schemes to grasp power at any cost. Yet his biographies paint a portrait of a man who was much loved by his friends, by his wife and children, by his many mistresses who remained affectionate long after their affairs had ended. He returned their love in equal proportion, and had a passionate love for his country that caused him to labor ceaselessly on its behalf every year of his life even after it had rejected him. Much of the negative content and subversive intent that has been attributed to his writings is the result of mistakes in scholarship; for example, as John M. Najemy states in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, the great philosopher and theorist never wrote (as is widely believed) that the end justified the means, but “he did worry a great deal about ends and means: about whether a meaningful correlation between them is possible or even discernible” (11). His letters, both formal and personal, show ample evidence of a man who loved to laugh, loved off-color jokes and loved deflating the egos of the pompous and self-serving politicians and clergymen around him. Most of his writings consist of serious political theory, but *The Mandrake* shows an alternate side to the man: a laughing, sardonic humanist rejoicing in the foibles of the common people.

Ultimately, *The Mandrake* was written for those common people. It is a celebration of the daily life of Florence and the people Machiavelli met on its streets. While based in material from other sources and drawn broadly for great comic impact,

the characters are instantly recognizable. Everyone knows a hormonally crazed Callimaco, a wily Ligurio and a foolish Nicia. Everyone can name a woman who has cut herself off from life by embracing societal norms as Lucrezia has, and just as likely can name a woman who threw off those social stigmas, lived her life as she pleased and now bears a scandalous reputation as Sostrata does. News stories abound of people like Brother Timoteo who have been caught in hypocrisy and attempt the art of plausible denial to escape the traps in which they have been captured. And of course, the world is populated with Siros, who work harder than everyone else and achieve the least reward. The piazza in which *The Mandrake* takes place is a microcosm of every community on the planet, and the picture of humanity that Machiavelli drew five hundred years ago is still fresh and relevant today. Perhaps it is because humanity has rejected and demonized his philosophy and vision, choosing to see itself in a nobler but less honest light, that so little has changed in five centuries. If so, the world is still willing to be deceived by those who would deceive them. Machiavelli, no doubt, is still smiling.

CHAPTER 3

JOURNAL

August 24, 2012

Over the summer of 2012 I have thought long and hard about which role I would focus on for my audition piece. There are three roles in which I believe I might have a chance to be cast: Brother Timoteo, Ligurio and Nicia.

Brother Timoteo is the most attractive of the three roles to me. I know him. I spent my formative years in a conservative church full of clergymen who were more than willing to compromise their declared beliefs when there was money on the table. The churches and the religious schools I attended treated those who came from wealthier families with more deference and leniency than those of us who came from poorer families. The first time I read *The Mandrake* I recognized the pastor who confirmed me, the administrations of the grade school and high school I attended and the board of pastors of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the character of Brother Timoteo. Should I have the chance to play him I would have a treasure trove of money-grubbing hypocrites whose examples would fuel my gleeful portrayal.

Since I know him the best, I have chosen Brother Timoteo's monologue in which he tries to convince Lucrezia that she will remain blameless if she commits adultery and murder by acquiescing to her husband's wishes. The creative rationalization and theological doubletalk in this speech is deliciously full of the phony sanctity that

Machiavelli so loved to skewer in his writing. I have tried other speeches of Ligurio and Nicia but this one appeals most to me.

My intent with this audition is not really to audition for a specific role. I hope rather to demonstrate an understanding not just of the text but also of the intent of the play. I plan to perform the monologue with the sense of humor and mischief that I think Machiavelli meant it to have. I have never played any character like any of the three mentioned above. My hope is to be cast and then to be stretched to discover new abilities in myself.

August 27, 2012

My audition tonight went quite well, which was a bit of a surprise. My audition experience at Minnesota State University, Mankato, has been that the level of success in an audition performance is inversely proportionate to my level of preparation. Previous auditions in which I have memorized the dialogue so well that I could practically recite it backwards have invariably fallen apart once I stand up to take my turn. Conversely, when I have been less prepared my auditions have gone smoothly. This fact first occurred to me as I took my seat with the others tonight. As my turn came closer I began to worry that I was too prepared, that something unexpected was going to happen and I would forget my lines, lose track of the gestures I had rehearsed or, worst of all, break character. But for the first time since arriving in Mankato, a well-rehearsed audition actually went as planned. The lines came out as rehearsed and in the proper order, the gestures all went where they were supposed to and the whole piece structurally had a

beginning, a middle and an end. Likewise, my audition piece from *Glengarry Glen Ross* for *November* went smoothly and professionally. I left the Earley Center for Performing Arts believing that I had presented myself as well as I could have. If I were not cast, so be it; there would be other rounds of auditions coming up soon. If I were, then I had my thesis role.

I received a text message later telling me that I had been cast as Nicia in *The Mandrake*. Now that I have my thesis role, I have to face the challenges that the role brings. I have never played a role like this before. Nicia is a peculiar hybrid; he is an amalgam of the *pantalone* and *dottore* roles of commedia, the standard foolish old man of New Greek and Roman theatre, as well as the blueprint for hundreds of “old man who married a young wife and now can’t control her” roles in the Comedies of Manners in the 17th and 18th centuries. There is an energy and physicality to the character that is as unique as Machiavelli’s world view. As always, this will be new, exciting and challenging.

September 16, 2012

At the first rehearsal tonight the director, Paul J. Hustoles, went over his concept for the show. His vision is quite simple: it is to be a simplified, “cleaned-up Renaissance” production that recreates the spirit of the period. The set is spare, clean and open. There is one costume per character. While acting is the principal driving force in every show, in this production the acting will require a high energy attack that will propel each scene into the next and keep the performance fast-paced. I have worked in shows

with minimal sets and costumes before where the acting needed to drive the production, but always with very small casts of two to four actors. The cast seems very much up to the challenge, if the energy and enthusiasm in the room during the first read-through are any indication of the future.

For reasons I don't completely understand, thinking of Nicia in the light of Hustoles's vision brings Boris Karloff to mind. His comic performances mostly spoofed his image as a horror icon but he brought a distinct energy to them that showed he was capable of far more than the banal material that comprised most of his films. Even his last films, made while he was battling the emphysema that eventually took his life, lack none of the vocal energy that made his voice so distinctive, with its characteristic precise enunciation and the extreme pitch variation. Karloff would have made a wonderful Nicia. It might be fun to model Nicia's voice using his vocal technique.

September 17, 2012

Today Hustoles broached the idea of having Nicia use a cane or walking stick. In our initial meeting, he had described Nicia as vigorous and full of life, with the idea that if Callimaco jumps Nicia might well do the same, but then pull a muscle while trying to keep up with the young man. Using a cane could enhance that aspect of the character and make him appear even more foolish.

I was surprised by the walk that Hustoles described at rehearsal, however. I wasn't expecting Nicia to be so decrepit. He is to walk at a snail's pace, taking long but very slow strides. This is an easy adjustment to make with a little practice but now I

wonder about other aspects of the character. I had assumed from the initial description of Nicia that he was my own age; now he appears to be a great deal older, perhaps in his late sixties or even seventies. I've played characters of that age before. It's very difficult to keep from turning them into a caricature. But due to the energetic nature of this production, a caricature is not necessarily a bad thing.

September 18, 2012

Having taken a day to readjust my thinking about Nicia's age, the rehearsal tonight went very well. There's very little adjustment to make, really, though I notice that my voice keeps falling into the stereotypical quavering "old man" voice that Hustoles said he hated at our initial meeting. As I memorize the lines over the next few days I want to incorporate more of the "Karloff" qualities, especially the way his voice frequently floated over the entire pitch range of his voice, but also the growl he manifested when angry.

I will leave the decision on the cane up to Hustoles and costume designer David McCarl. The character I'm planning would work either way. The cane would bend him over and naturally slow down his walk and it would give me a place to rest my chin when I'm seated at the fountain. I could wave the cane in the air during the abduction scene, and when I'm angry with Callimaco and Ligurio I could brandish it threateningly. Without it I would be unencumbered, and would not have to stick it under my arm while I dig for my money bag, my handkerchief or other props. The slow, careful walk of the man who rarely leaves his house from the first scene is easier without the cane. Because

the costume is padded, there is another possibility for a walk: some obese people walk without bending their knees, shifting their weight from side to side as if on stilts. That sort of walk would only work without a cane and could lend itself to gags about Nicia's indelicate balance as well. There are so many possibilities in my imagination; the decision whether or not to use the cane will narrow them down.

September 19, 2012

I caught myself still slipping into "old man voice" at rehearsal tonight. I am glad to have a few hours each day over the next four days until the next rehearsal to work not only on lines but the vocal quality that I want to use when I say them.

Running the entire show tonight gave me an opportunity to concentrate on Nicia's goal and motivations throughout the play. His single-minded focus on having a male offspring drives his every move but I want to shade his character with other aspects mentioned in the script. If Lucrezia is truly everything that Callimaco describes her as, she is then very much in charge in the house and Nicia's impotence is not only sexual. His ravings in the street could be played as bluster, as if he is trying to show Ligurio, Siro and Callimaco who "wears the pants" in the home while inside the house he actually has been pleading, whining and begging Lucrezia to do what he wants. After all, his denial is so deep it has no bottom. Because Lucrezia never leaves the house and is known only by her reputation, Nicia would have little trouble convincing himself that her absence from public life would allow him to create whatever fictional home life he wished. He needs only to convince himself that everyone else believes him.

September 24, 2012

Continuing my search for an adequate physicalization of Nicia, I decided to try exaggerating one of my facial attributes to externalize his personality. I have a slight under bite, and I can comfortably extend my lower jaw so that my bottom teeth extend past my upper lip. The effect of this distortion is ridiculously comic; it elongates my face and gives it a menacing “mouth breather” aspect. When I tried it at rehearsal tonight I found I could still speak my lines with good diction if I was careful of sibilants and fricatives. If I can maintain precise enunciation with this distortion of my features, I’m going to keep it.

I love acting but I hate memorizing lines. Unlike some of my actor friends, I haven’t found aging to affect my ability to learn dialogue; I’ve never had an easy time with it. Translations seem to be the most difficult. No matter how contemporary the translation, word order frequently reflects that of the original language. I try to paraphrase as little as I possibly can, but I find myself rearranging words into modern English. I have the same problems with Shakespeare. Tonight I wanted to try at least my first scene off book but, after stumbling through my first few speeches, I gave up. I will keep studying and try to be fluent by Thursday night.

Tonight was the first night with the *pantalone* stance and I did not find it to be applicable to all the situations that Nicia finds himself in. He is such a hybrid of the *dottore* and the *pantalone* that I don’t think a strict application of either character will work for this play. I’m going to keep the backward-leaning, stomach-thrust-out *pantalone* posture for the moments of the play when he is boastful or overconfident, such

as the scene where he boasts about travelling as a youth or about his desirability while disguised. But the myopic, stooped *dottore* demeanor is really suited to most of the scenes of the play, especially considering the thick glasses that McCarl included in his costume sketch.

September 25, 2012

Tonight I used a slightly different voice for Nicia. I tried to emulate the Karloff musicality but to use mostly my upper range, avoiding the bottom notes of my voice entirely. I've found from other shows that I've done in the Andreas Theatre that the low end of my voice disappears completely into the third row, whereas the high and middle range projects well with the proper support. Keeping my voice from going too low also keeps me from going into an outright Karloff imitation, which is vital for a number of reasons, not the least of which is my tendency to add his dialect on top of his speaking style. I think the voice is very effective and I am pleased with the way it allows me to do an adolescent squeak when I say "the root?" during the discussion of the potion.

Timing is such an issue in this show. I do have a good sense of comic timing already but there is so much business already (and we don't open for three weeks yet) that I will have to stay much attuned to the pace and rhythm of the established scene so that as we add more shtick I can keep up. Right now I am unable to keep the lines and the business straight, but I know that repetition will be the key to making all the *lazzi* work smoothly and will allow me to be able to contain the laughter inspired by the antics of my fellow cast members.

September 26, 2012

Of course we would choreograph the most active scene in the play, the kidnapping scene, on the first night that I wear the fat suit. I do need to get used to the suit, which is actually quite comfortable and snugly warm. But there is a technique to moving with the extra bulk in order to make it appear that I actually am that overweight, and trying to do that while ducking, running and jumping up and down while waving my arms hysterically is not the way to learn that technique. I need to see if I can borrow the fat suit and get some time in front of a mirror to work with it.

The fat suit is a great addition to the character, though, and makes Nicia more grotesque but at the same time more pathetic. It adds several more layers of denial to the already bullet-proof shell that covers his ego. After all, anyone who can look in the mirror with that body and see the physical equivalent of Callimaco is someone who is just looking to be hoisted on his own petard. Nicia can be more winded, more apoplectic and more unsteady on his feet without any stage business to explain it.

September 27, 2012

The first night off book went well for me but I did lose concentration on the character from dwelling on the lines so much. There's an impishness to Nicia that comes out well in Act IV but I want to reveal it earlier in the play and tonight I could not find times to play that. Rather than playing him as angry, I would like him to be more pouty, like a child who got married thinking that a wife would be more like a servant and who now doesn't like having to play by the rules of wedded life. One of the commentaries I

read suggested that Nicia might well be the smartest man on stage: he's aware of what's going on but allows it to happen because he has no other way of getting progeny. I wouldn't enjoy playing the character that way; however, it is fun to imagine him knowing that something is going on behind his back but playing along anyway. I can't help but think that this is the first time in Nicia's life that he's been allowed to "hang out" with the popular people. Everyone who has ever been part of a clique knows that one sacrifices a part of their individuality to be a member of a group of friends. If one reads between the lines of *The Mandrake* it is easy to imagine how lonely Nicia's life has been. At the beginning of the play, Nicia has no friends and the exploits of his youth are all fictional. He is protected from the intrusion of reality (his failure as a lawyer, as a husband and as a man) by an impenetrable armor of denial but, on some level, he recognizes that he will leave no legacy behind unless he has an heir. So what greater delight is there than his, that while finally accomplishing his primary goal he also gets to have a real adventure in the company of men who act as if they are his friends? One can easily imagine that until his dying day Nicia will gather his co-conspirators together to relive this night. Machiavelli would of course reiterate that this is another good thing wrought by the lies and subterfuge of the plotters. For Nicia, ignorance truly is bliss. I think there is happiness for the audience in the joy he takes in the rewards of being deceived. After all, he is the only character onstage at the finale that has no deception to continue perpetrating in the future. Ultimately Nicia, a master only of self-deception, manages to gain what he most desires through the deceit of everyone around him. The only greater irony in the play is that he elects to call his deceivers his friends.

September 28, 2012

In my religious days, one of my pastors asked the question, “if you enjoy going to church, does it count?” The idea has grown for centuries that going to church is something one does out of duty. Duty requires sacrifice and sacrifice is not fun. But if one enjoys that which one does out of duty, is it an appropriate sacrifice?

Tonight’s rehearsal was hilarious fun, almost giddy. The interplay between the *Mandragolas* and the cast sparked an impish glee at the rehearsal. Neither had seen what the other had been working on, so both groups were surprised at the fresh laughter inspired by the work each had done. We ran through the last two acts of the play with a tangible sense of the fun that performing this play for an audience will be. I found myself wondering if this counts. As we enjoy the talents that our fellow actors display (but that we already know they have) and as we revel in the naughty shtick of the play, are we working?

I would answer affirmatively. While a more serious rehearsal environment lends itself to a certain type of learning, the playground of our *Mandrake* rehearsal environment stimulates the actor to let the imagination run free, to try new bits of stage business and to react more to the antics of others. Certainly there will be rehearsals to come where we will work out the stage business in detail, repeat small bits of business until the timing is just right and add in more *lazzi* that will give the participants the feeling that they are starting over. But rehearsals like tonight, in which the magic of a performance is tangible and exciting, act as a foretelling of future fun. The memory of tonight’s run-through will

energize future rehearsals and provide impetus for the entire assemblage to recapture the environment we worked in tonight. So . . . huzzah.

September 30, 2012

One sort of person whose behavior I detest with a white-hot revulsion is the person who is driven by some inner compulsion to grab onto me while talking to me. I have no issues with casual touching and I've built a reputation for giving great hugs. But the person who latches onto my arm or shoulder and presses their face uncomfortably close to mine can bring me to irrationality very quickly. Five minutes with someone like this can bring thoughts of murder to my heart. Invariably either their hands are clammy, their grip feels like a claw or their breath smells like they've been eating cat food for a week. Their utter obliviousness to the offense that they give is maddening, and the offense is multiplied when the Grabber is a total stranger.

Over the weekend, reflecting on Nicia's loneliness and desperation, it occurred to me that he is probably a Grabber. His denial is so complete that he cannot fathom that he would be giving any offense. His need for human contact is almost overwhelming and he cannot understand that his behavior is one of the many things that make his fellow Florentines so distant. Considering the lack of hygiene and cleanliness during the Renaissance, Nicia roams Florence awash in a cloud of his own effluvium. Considering his age, his teeth are a hygienist's nightmare and his breath is certainly noxious as a result. In short, having Nicia become a barnacle on your keel is revolting in the extreme.

Certainly the effect won't be obvious until I am in costume and makeup, but playing with the idea at tonight's rehearsal was great fun, even if I was the only one aware of the joke. Embracing Ligurio, clutching on to Callimaco, even grabbing Siro's arm and shoulder, all took on new layers of emotional and comic impact. I'm developing a clutching motion with my hands hooked into claws, closing and opening, that will telegraph his intentions as he approaches his intended victim. Our Callimaco, Jake Sullivan, visibly blanched when I tried it on him tonight. I think I'll keep it.

October 1, 2012

Tonight was a tough line rehearsal, not so much because the lines aren't learned but because the line-through was an effort to get everyone verbatim, word for word with the script. While there is a certain amount of paraphrasing, the biggest problem is word order. As I complained earlier, this translation has preserved Italian word order in many of the sentences. While the meaning of the lines is clear, the memorization process is far more difficult. One example is a line I say in the final scene, "Lucrezia, this man will be the cause of our having some day soon a cane on which we may lean in our declining years." Translations, argh.

I tried on the costume today and I am excited to wear this in performance. The entire ensemble is outrageous: an enormous red checked jacket that goes almost to my knees, red and black striped tights, a voluminous black coat with huge flowing sleeves and a long train, red shoes with pointed toes and thick-lensed eyeglasses. There will also be a red and black hat that will completely cover my head and an oversized codpiece

(apparently, Nicia's denial isn't all internal). The costume will define his character for the audience with one glance. I'm looking forward to working with the entire costume so I can get used to moving in it and can plan the action so don't trip myself or other cast members.

October 2, 2012

Yesterday, during my costume fitting, McCarl gave me a suggestion for walking in the enormous costume that will allow me to avoid stepping on or tripping over the long coat. It begins with a wide stance, almost bowlegged. Each step lands on the heel first. Then as my weight shifts onto my forward leg the outside of the foot rolls down and finally the entire sole comes into contact with the floor. While moving, I lean back slightly as if counterbalancing my huge stomach. Using this step I'm able to walk much slower than usual and give the impression that I carry more weight. This walk is particularly useful in my first entrance in Act I when I need to navigate the set very slowly. Reginald Haney, who plays Ligurio, has been directed to take two steps to every one of mine, and has been having trouble doing so because I haven't been able to ambulate slowly enough. This new walk hopefully will solve that problem.

I keep losing Nicia's voice. Last night I had it very clearly but tonight I ended up back in stereotypical Little Old Man world again. I know some of the trouble stems from my effort to keep his voice out of my low register, where it doesn't project. I found it again by the time we worked my scenes with Charisse Danker, who plays Lucrezia, but I need to get his voice more cemented in my mind. Tonight there were several versions,

including one that sounded like Mr. Magoo. More Karloff! I will need to go over the lines out loud until the correct vocal quality is consistent.

Right now I feel a little stuck as to where I can take Nicia from here. There are so many details floating around in my head and I'm having trouble sorting it all out. For every point I remember, I forget five. This is the point of the rehearsal process that I always dread: the time of feeling like I'm drowning in the blocking, action, lines and notes. This too will pass, I know, but it can't pass too soon for me.

October 3, 2012

I think the walk for Nicia will work. It allows me to move so slowly that I can free my brain from its need to match my vocal pace with my physical pace. On my initial entrance I'm moving so slowly that Haney could scurry in circles around me if he wanted to. But as soon as I focus my attention on stage business or lines I lose the walk completely. It's such a key component to the character that I want very badly to get it into my body as soon as possible, especially because ever since I added it to the character I lapse into the stereotypical Old Man Voice whenever I'm concentrating on the walk. Trying to think about both of them at the same time is causing me to paraphrase lines that I know verbatim or even forget them completely. I know that constant repetition will make all the pieces come together but the struggle to get to that point is frustrating. Right now, dealing with the physicality, the pace, the voice, the lines and the *lazzi* is like trying to stuff ten pounds of dirt into a five pound bag, and every new piece of shtick we add seems to force one of the old ones out of my memory.

I'm also frustrated by my inability to keep up with the rest of the cast physically. By the end of some of the scenes, particularly the abduction scenes, I'm winded and sweating from the exertion. I know part of this is my age but I also didn't count on the warmth of the fat suit or the extra material of the coat. The whole experience is discouraging right now. I know I'm my own worst critic but I have such high hopes for this role. I want to keep making every part I play a little better than the one before, and at this point in my preparation process I'm not so sure I'm going to succeed.

October 4, 2012

Running through the entire show tonight was just what I needed. Despite the occasional line flub ("Liverpool?" Where did that come from?) and a stumble or two with shtick and blocking, I managed to get reacquainted with the Nicia I want to play. I still struggled with the voice and the physicality, but with a linear timeline his scene objectives and over-arching goals became clearer without so much concentration. I was able to dwell on the physical aspects without losing the other elements that I've worked so hard to put in place. The feeling of play was very much in evidence throughout the night; I've missed that sense of spontaneity and fun in the last few rehearsals when I've been so concerned with particulars.

Adding the rehearsal hat to the costume ensemble gave me a fairly good idea of how warm the final costume will be. I had sweat through the shirt that the padding is sewn to and had soaked the brim of the hat as well. After the abduction scene I was so winded that I couldn't speak. Of course I can't blame it all on the costume; this is

certainly a combination of age, lack of exercise and too much grocery shopping at Pizza Hut. But I do wonder how often I can get the fat suit washed.

October 7, 2012

The first two hours of rehearsal tonight were spent running lines in Room 113. I had no problem remembering my lines but I couldn't find the character at all. I spent most of the first act speaking in my own voice and walking through the blocking and performing all the shtick at the right pace but not in character. As the rehearsal went on I became more and more frustrated at my inability to recapture Nicia as I'd performed him for weeks. Everyone else could see that I was struggling and it put a strain on the run-through.

Once we moved upstairs into the Andreas Theatre and I got into the fat suit, the coat, the hat and the spectacles, the character returned immediately without any effort. I'd never experienced so great a disconnection between performing a character out of costume and in costume before. I was fascinated when the voice I'd been straining to remember suddenly came to the forefront of my memory as I pulled the fat suit over my head. I slid my cheekers down to the end of my nose and my lower jaw slid out into place along with it. I straightened my back to counterbalance the "weight" of the fat suit, and the walk, stance and attitude that I'd associated with Nicia returned to my memory immediately. The rehearsal upstairs went very well. I think that should we have any more rehearsals outside the Andreas I will request to at least have the fat suit and rehearsal coat available.

October 8, 2012

Captain Paraphrase came to rehearsal with me last night and followed me all around the set. He whispered synonyms for the important words into my ear but I managed to elbow him out of the way most of the time. He composed rephrasing of the more difficult lines that sounded logical but I managed to correct him before he convinced me that his revisions were right. He put all the lines into proper English word order as I attempted to put them back into the clumsy-sounding Italian phrases that are in the script.

All joking aside, learning these lines verbatim is a struggle. I have no knowledge of the Italian language. I am sure that Wallace Shawn, the translator, has used the most fitting English words. But the problem with having a good vocabulary is that one always wants to use it. I look at the number of times Nicia says “really” in this script and I cringe. Of course it makes sense that an educated man who doesn’t know how to use his learning, like Nicia, would use simple words repetitively but the absence of synonyms in the dialogue sends my imagination to peruse the resources of the synonyms stored in my brain. I don’t realize that I substitute new words until I get the line notes after rehearsal. I have thought that having Nicia stop mid-speech and mentally search for the perfect adjective only to have him pounce on “really” as the most applicable word, beaming with pride at his resourcefulness, might be a good bit of funny business to try at a rehearsal. But I haven’t come up with a way to make the joke funny to anyone but myself. Besides, very few people get vocabulary jokes anymore, and this is really more of a “watch Nicia hock the world’s biggest phlegm ball” sort of show.

October 9, 2012

The spirit of impish glee that pervades the rehearsals for this show has inspired me toward many improvisations that I'm happy to have had remain in the performance. The abduction scene in Act IV is especially a source of on-the-spot fun. By the time the scene occurs in the play, it's been very well established that Nicia will say anything nonsensical that occurs to him in his genuine fear and excitement at the situation he has consented to participate in. "Lutes are scary," makes sense coming out of his mouth. The challenge is to find something that is consistently funny, makes sense for the situation and supports the scene without distracting the audience from the point of the action. I have challenged myself to keep coming up with different improvisations each night in hopes that one will work well enough to become permanent.

October 10, 2012

Trying on the full costume tonight gave me a happy little surprise. There's something about the headwear that changes the shape of my face that, when combined with the jutting lower jaw, bushy eyebrows and characteristic glare, bring to mind the late Hugh Griffith, star of "Tom Jones" and "Start the Revolution Without Me" among many other classic films. In the latter film Griffith waddles around the scenes, muttering to himself, exclaiming "Oooh!" at any shocks and generally wandering around in a mental muddle just like Nicia, which is fitting since he plays Louis XVI just days before the French Revolution. I had not connected the two roles before looking in the mirror in the costume. Griffith would have made a wonderful Nicia, and his voice is much closer to

the one I'm using as Nicia than Karloff. I wonder if I've been unconsciously emulating him from the beginning.

I'm going to need direction about moving in the costume. The black robe is longer than the rehearsal robe, which I already step on from time to time. If I make my gestures even more expansive, I can pick the robe up and stretch it to avoid turning into my own personal travelling door mat during most of the movement about the stage. But the hilarious abduction scene presents some difficulties because of my close proximity to the other actors. Jumping up and down while twirling with other actors are moving very close by presents a great opportunity for the robe to be stepped on, either by me or one of the other actors onstage, and possibly trip one of us. I'm glad we have several dress rehearsals so I can work out the times when I should take up as much space as possible and the times when I should compress my body and the costume into a tiny little space.

October 11, 2012

Nicia has begun to fit like a glove. I like to reach a point with a character where I am able to improvise as the character with a degree of complexity: rather than improvising one-liners on stage, I like to be able to think like the character thinks, say what I believe the character would say and act like the character would act off stage. A good script always gives clues to the character's choices on stage and off, but I believe actors need to take the information in the script and use their imagination to develop the character to the point that they would be able to play the character off stage as well as on.

Now that I've sped up Nicia's vocal pace, the energy it takes to play him is almost self-perpetuating. Playing a character who moves at eighty miles an hour from the navel up but at ten miles an hour from the navel down is interesting and rewarding now that I've put a significant amount of practice into making it work and don't feel like I'm overwhelmed by concentrating on technique. Playing Nicia creates its own sense of fun and mischief, which energizes my performance the moment I walk onstage. It's the same energy I felt while playing John Barrymore in *I Hate Hamlet*; I can't wait to put him in front of an audience.

October 12, 2012

Tonight the miracle of the Nicia Effect propelled me through the rehearsal. I'd had almost no sleep over the last few days due to my busy schedule and a bout of insomnia. I walked into rehearsal tonight feeling as if I would be practically sleepwalking through the scenes, but the moment I walked out onto the set I was conscious of the mischievous energy that playing this role brings. It's as if Machiavelli is watching over this show, imbuing it with his spirit. All his biographies talk about his almost manic pursuit of lowbrow humor, his impish spirit of fun and his antic love of a good prank. Whether our production of *The Mandrake* does or doesn't completely summon the spirit of the Renaissance, it certainly recreates the personality of its author, and wherever Machiavelli is now, I believe he's pleased.

I am concerned, though, about dropping the vocal quality I created for Nicia during the scene in Act V when I recount the events inside the house after the abduction

of Callimaco. I'm less concerned with the mistake than I am about not being aware of it. That scene is over five minutes long, and to lose a major component of a character for that length of time could ruin the scene. If the audience spends the entire scene wondering why Nicia doesn't sound like Nicia the comedy of the story and the physical shtick will be lost. To me, losing his voice is breaking character. I will try to be hyper-aware of the vocal quality throughout the performance tomorrow but especially during the final act.

October 13, 2012

Everything in the show feels good. Right now there are pieces of shtick that require a bit of polish, dialogue that needs tightening up and the nightly addition of new *lazzi* to bring even more laughs to the performance. But overall the play seems to be running smoothly. I can't wait to get this in front of an audience.

October 14, 2012

Again I got the note tonight that I lost Nicia's character voice during the long monologue in Act V. I'm very concerned about this because I feel like I'm still in voice during the speech. While the rest of the performance appears to be going well, this monologue is Nicia's final big scene. I will need to stay alert every performance to listen for lapses in the tonal variety so I don't lose the character.

Working in the costume was enjoyable. The costume underlines every aspect of Nicia that I emphasize while playing him. I need to work with the cape to get used to moving in it, because tonight I stepped on the hem several times. When I sat, I often

found the long sleeves pinned underneath me. But it's such a fantastic example of how a costume can help an actor disappear into a role that I am excited to keep working with it.

October 15, 2012

Tonight I got an unexpected addition to the costume. I knew that Nicia would be getting a codpiece but I didn't expect it to be a phallus. I felt very uncomfortable at first but when I put it on with the rest of the costume I realized that it is almost invisible. I hardly felt it at all once I had the rest of the costume on. The effect in the mirror is hilarious, as if the codpiece is Nicia's own little "private" joke.

As usual, the total performance is coming together quite well. The show is running at a decent time, the *lazzi* is working, and best of all, the entire company is a cooperative ensemble that makes a great team.

October 16, 2012

Tonight I arrived early to get into makeup and costume and found that the codpiece had been sewn onto the coat to make it more visible. I experienced an unexpected emotional reaction that felt like a combination of fear and shame. I felt a chill go through me and a knot in my stomach.

I know what this is; I've felt this before. I'm experiencing a flashback to abuse I experienced as a child. I have gotten counseling over the last few decades from time to time; however, occasionally certain odd things trigger strange reactions. I have played other roles with dark, violent and sexual overtones without a problem, and then played

relatively “innocent” roles in which my character was bullied, mocked or threatened in which I completely fell to pieces. Why these reactions occur and why fairly innocuous articles or events cause them is a mystery to me. While none of the other sexual shtick in *The Mandrake* caused me any trouble at all, for some reason this little piece of cloth was causing me an extreme reaction.

During *Wait Until Dark* last year I realized that I was experiencing similar issues. I spent several months getting help in the Counseling Center here on campus. Through the sessions I was able to reacquaint myself with healthy ways to get myself through events like this one. Had I not gotten help last year, I wouldn’t have been able to identify what was bothering me now. But it took me months to work through the issues last year, and as I sat in the dressing room I kept reminding myself that we open in two days.

Luckily McCarl was in the Green Room, and as soon as he saw me he could tell that something was bothering me. Rather than explain my history, I told him I was very uncomfortable with the new codpiece. He was very sympathetic and offered to talk to Hustoles.

I know that I was so preoccupied during rehearsal that my work was poor. But even while I was struggling through the rehearsal I found myself thinking that if I could just get through this night, I’d be able to perform tomorrow night even better.

Hustoles talked with me about my apprehensions after rehearsal, and he asked me to try working with the codpiece. He said that if it becomes an obstacle, it can be removed. But we both acknowledged that Nicia would have no compunctions about the codpiece. To me, that means that I must find a way to work through this no matter what.

October 17, 2012

Since I've dealt with these flashbacks before, I knew that this would preoccupy my thoughts until I resolved the issue. In me, the flashbacks trigger shame, defensiveness, helplessness and self-doubt. I spent this day working through techniques to correct the distorted thinking that the flashbacks initiate; I literally had to tell myself the truth over and over. Before the Majors Preview tonight, I felt like I had made sufficient progress to be able to give a better performance than I had the night before, and for the most part I believe I was right. Last night, whenever one of the cast would glance down at the codpiece during a scene I felt mortified; tonight I refused to let it bother me and pushed the energy harder. Even though I still felt self-conscious and nervous, the fear and shame that bombarded me last night were much more muted.

During intermission Hustoles let me know that I was covering the codpiece with the robe. Before going on for the second act I decided that I wouldn't wrap the robe around me even at the times that I'd done it in rehearsal on purpose. I did feel like the second half of the show was a better performance than the first.

I have spent a lot of time over the last several years making sure that my abuse no longer keeps me from succeeding. Tonight when I walked off the stage I knew that I would be able to continue doing just that.

October 18, 2012

Two days ago I would never have believed that I could walk into the dressing room before the performance with excitement and anticipation. There was of course still

some fear as well, but after getting into the costume and makeup I was able to look at all of Nicia in the mirror and look forward to walking onto the stage. As Haney and I parted the curtain to make our first entrance, I took a deep breath. He gave my arm a squeeze. We looked at each other, grinned, and walked out. The “Nicia energy” immediately took over.

There was a time when I sat in judgment on myself for the problems that I have. I suppose that judgment is borne of people who have ridiculed these fears and who have claimed that coping mechanisms are ridiculous tools used by the mentally fragile. But this is part and parcel of who I am. My own struggles have given me a greater sense of empathy for those with similar problems. Thanks to the support I have received and the tools I learned over years of therapy, overcoming these problems again and again gives me satisfaction and a sense of triumph.

I’ve had a lot of great times onstage here in the Andreas, but this was the most satisfying opening night I’ve had here.

October 19, 2012

Tonight’s audience was more responsive than last night’s. The challenge to wait out the cues until the laughter abates was difficult but the response was rewarding. After two nights of successful performances, I think we’re all excited for the rest of the run.

October 24, 2012

Yesterday in the Dance Improvisation class, Professor Dan Stark praised our production. One of the terms he used to describe it was “risky.” There were a number of

students who needed to see him after class, so I was unable to ask him what he meant by “risky.” I find myself thinking about taking risks in a performance and how that applies to *The Mandrake*.

Certainly in terms of our conservative Mankato audience, the show is risky in that its frank sexual content will certainly irritate and offend some of those who see it; even the audience that enjoys its humor will, for the most part, not be aware of the play’s history and so will not appreciate that this ribald show came as a breath of fresh air to a world just emerging from the darkness of the Middle Ages. There is also an element of risk in the physicality of the show that the physical shtick and *lazzi* could miss the mark due to timing errors, equipment malfunctions, loss of footing or balance or because of forgotten props. The very act of producing the show is risky, since many playgoers forego seeing a “classic” play because they expect it to be loaded with Shakespearean language and structure. In fact, many of the students in my Acting for Everyone class who have seen the play have stated that they weren’t expecting to see a raucous comedy even though I described the show to them in class. When I questioned them why they were so surprised they mostly stated that they didn’t think it would be funny because “it’s so old!”

Comedy is, of course, always riskier than drama because as the old saying says, “what is a good gag to one person may gag the next.” Certainly all the jokes don’t get a laugh every night, but the risk of doing *The Mandrake* is also that the social mores of a bygone century that it lampoons are still very much in evidence today. While the play remains topical, it still draws ire from those who see themselves reflected in the

foolishness, scheming and questionable morality of its characters. Of the few who have walked out at intermission, most would probably say that it's the sexual language, profanity and subject matter that offend them, but I have no doubt that a few have left because they have seen themselves mirrored in the schemes of Ligurio, the sexual ambition of Callimaco, the rationalization of Brother Timoteo, the denial of Nicia and the compromised virtue of Lucrezia. In those cases especially, the play has done its job. Machiavelli would be pleased.

October 27, 2012

What a difference an audience makes. The matinee audience this afternoon was a thoroughly engrossed, captivated and responsive audience that showed their enjoyment. The show flew by, and I felt more energized after the performance than I had before it began.

The evening show's audience, on the other hand, was for the most part asleep. During my first scene I couldn't help but notice three people napping in the front row right next to Nicia's arch. Very little response came from the jokes, the *lazzi* or the songs. The second show of the day took far more energy to perform than the first. And that would be life in the theatre.

October 28, 2012

The final performance of *The Mandrake* went smoothly, despite the fountain deciding to malfunction during the second scene of Act I. This show has been an

opportunity to refine my comic timing, attain greater skill in vocal projection, learn more ways of physically defining a character and have a lot of fun on stage. Additionally, the personal challenges I faced in the final days of production have given me confidence, boldness and greater self esteem. Nicia has been a great role to add to my resume, though I won't miss the fat suit or the vocal fatigue.

Striking the set was bittersweet. This was a wonderful cast and crew, and everyone feels mixed feeling about ending the run. I know the young actors will move on to other challenges and will continue to grow, and those of us who are more seasoned will have to leave to make room for the next group to come in. But for this brief five week period, the camaraderie of serious students applying themselves to build as great a production as possible has built friendships that I hope will last for years. I feel fortunate to have had this experience, though it may well be my last here. *Arrivederci, Mandrake.*

CHAPTER 4

POST PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

If you need to injure someone, do it in such a way that you do not have to fear their vengeance.

The Prince, Chapter 3 (translated by David Wootton).

This post production analysis will focus on the role of Nicia as portrayed by Robb Krueger in *The Mandrake* by Niccolò Machiavelli. As expected, the greatest challenge of this role was the physical action required to perform it. Because Nicia is so imbued with denial, his physicality is an expression of the duality of his nature. The first time the audience sees him, they really see Nicia playing a role: that of the confident elder statesman, full of his own dignity and pomp, who is a respected member of the community and is considered a sage and learned counselor. The dialogue of the first scene reveals that Nicia is truly a fool, but his façade remains intact even after Ligurio's monologue immediately following this scene reveals what he and the community really think about the aged lawyer. To present this aspect, it was necessary to experiment with different stances. The most sensible choice of posture was to throw the shoulders back and thrust the chest and stomach forward with the head held high to depict the pride and self-esteem with which he faces the world. Nicia rarely made eye contact with Ligurio while presenting his "nobility" and often stood in profile to him, forcing the parasite to talk to the side of his head until he deigned to favor the lesser man with a glance. His

gestures are slow and fluid. This stance is most reminiscent of the traditional *pantalone* character of the *commedia dell'arte*.

Upon his second appearance Nicia has changed. He now wants something that Ligurio can help him obtain. He makes far more eye contact with Ligurio and listens more actively. Upon the arrival of Callimaco, Nicia becomes obsequious and deferential; he cannot take his eyes off the young, learned doctor who embodies everything he had always wanted to become and hangs on his every word. To physically depict the dropping of Nicia's noble façade and show more of his true character, it was necessary to give a forward tilt to his stance and an eager energy to his actions. As the second act progressed and Nicia fell further into the plot, his entire outward pretense of dignity collapsed as his dream of gaining a child appeared to be possible.

This is the point in the play where Nicia's "grabber" fetish is most prominently displayed. In Act I he accosts Ligurio while he ruminates on the torment that his desire for a child causes him, but he is so lost in his thoughts that the assault seems to be almost an unconscious action. In Act II he shows himself to be one of those people who must cling to those with whom he is speaking by clutching Callimaco, the object of his abject admiration, not once but three times. His proclivity for clutching at those whom he admires is a physical representation of his need for love, affirmation and friendship. Deep beneath the layers of his denial Nicia feels his loneliness keenly. Forcing contact on those with whom he feels an affinity adds another layer of denial to his conceit that he is admired by those who allow him (or cannot act quickly enough to prevent him) to touch them. This penchant for unwanted contact established great opportunity for *lazzi*

not only with Callimaco in Act II but also with Madonna Sostrata and Brother Timoteo in Act III. Both of them avoid the contact through different means. Sostrata has most likely not been gripped since Nicia's wedding to Lucrezia six years earlier, but the occurrence has certainly made an impression on her. As she sees Nicia approach she pushes him off in revulsion. Brother Timoteo has gone even longer without contact with Nicia, but everyday interactions with people like the Widow have kept the memory of that contact alive. Rather than physically repelling him like Sostrata does (and possibly eliminate a source of money), Timoteo deflects him into the church. Another extension of this trait is the crying baby that Nicia imagines holding in Acts I, II and V. Nicia knows subconsciously that his tendency to hold people is unwanted; therefore the baby in his imagination always cries while he holds it because it doesn't want his touch either but cannot do anything to avoid it. It is quite possible that one of the reasons Nicia wants a child is that he hopes to train it to tolerate his embrace.

Nicia's walk progressed through a series of permutations during the rehearsal process. It began as a slow shuffle but that made the character appear too feeble. Long strides at a slow pace were the next attempt. When those did not slow the progress of the character enough with regular footfalls, the steps each landed on the heel first and turned slightly outward to allow the foot to roll down until the toes finally made contact with the floor. This proved to be too complicated and frustrating. A new walk with a wider stance and bent knees was the next attempt. This solved the problem of moving too quickly but became impossible to keep consistent when Nicia needed to run, jump and duck in Act IV. The final solution, which only came into use days before opening night,

was the most eccentric of all. Each step was flat-footed. The toes were curled up tightly inside the shoes. The knees hardly bent at all. Instead of a shuffle, the feet lifted off the floor by rocking the hips from side to side. This walk worked well with both stances of the character and gave the padded belly an undulation that made it look uncomfortably real. This gait was in essence the walk of an overweight person whose knees are failing. Leaning back in the *pantalone* posture slowed the character down as needed for Act I. However, the forward-leaning, squinting, more eager stance of Act II, which somewhat resembles the *dottore* of the *commedia*, allowed for rapid movement when needed throughout the rest of the play while allowing his walk to be consistent throughout.

The most challenging physical aspect of Nicia in this production was the dichotomy between his upper half and lower half. From the navel up, Nicia is a vital and enthusiastic character whose gestures, turns and expressions are full of life. But from there down, he is a physical failure. The script hints that he is impotent and probably has been throughout his marriage; indeed, his wife may very well still be a virgin. His turtle-like pace is an indication that his legs could fail him at any time. To play Nicia in this fashion it was necessary to keep the torso, arms and head energized and engaged every moment while holding the legs and feet locked into position. Visualization was extremely helpful. To keep both halves of the body working independently, it was important to think of walking waist deep in a swamp with an uneven bottom hidden by the murk. Not only did this keep the legs and feet moving at the proper pace while allowing the upper body to use a full, rapid range of motion, but this imagery kept the hands above the waist to avoid dropping into the “water.” There were no issues with

“dead arm” syndrome in the performances because the tendency that Nicia had to rub his belly was a direct outgrowth of this mental picture.

Nicia’s face came as a result of an early direction from Hustoles that he wanted the lawyer to be less pompous and more petulant. Practicing an exaggerated pout in the mirror gave rise to the idea that his jaw would be permanently thrust forward, as if Nicia had simian or Neanderthal features. Once that facial deformity was locked into place, the logical tendency was to point with it like a bird, though no anthropomorphic traits were intended. Talking with the jaw held forward gave Nicia a sibilant speech defect which added to the childlike demeanor. Additionally, this facial pose had two other benefits. The lips could not completely close with the jaw thrust forward, thus making Nicia a “mouth breather.” One of Nicia’s first vocal improvisations was an “ooh” sound that resulted from the shape of his lips. With only one change to the facial structure, Nicia took on physical traits that depicted his psychological makeup very clearly.

Creating Nicia’s voice was a process of experimentation, mimicry and projection issues. The original concept was to imitate Boris Karloff’s musical voice to give Nicia a comically creepy vocal context. By the second week of rehearsals it was obvious that this would not work in the round because the lower tones of the voice only projected to the section of the theatre one was facing at the time. While the middle and high registers projected quite well, it was clear that one could not realize Nicia’s full comic potential with a predictable, stereotypical “old man” voice. Due to the high amount of improvisation utilized in the rehearsal process, Nicia began to have a muttering, half-understood commentary on the action onstage in which he repeated the last thing other

characters said and reacted while actively listening to the dialogue in which he was not himself involved. In time, his thought process became more external as this commentary became a major aspect of the character, and he took on many aspects of the absent-minded professor. Somewhere in this process the Karloff musicality returned to the voice, now imbued with elements of vocal fry and hoarseness. When angry the voice dropped an octave and became harsh. Early in the rehearsal process Hustoles exhorted the cast to explore vocal variety and Nicia became a study in as many forms of vocal variety that would make sense for one character to have. The extremes of his voice and the dominant vocal fry and hoarseness did result in some serious vocal fatigue, but this quickly disappeared once the performances were completed. There was one interesting benefit of the constant exploration of the range of pitch while playing Nicia: in voice lessons after closing, the range of Krueger's singing voice had increased by a major whole step.

As stated earlier, improvisation was used nightly in rehearsal. Frequently these improvisations would result in character insights, stage business and blocking changes that would become permanent. This resulted in a show that took on a fluidic continuity that is rare for any production, student or professional. Every actor came to each rehearsal with something new to contribute and the show became stronger due to everyone's willingness to play. As rehearsals progressed more business was added to existing business. It became a nightly ritual to tinker and play rather than repeat by rote the previous evening. By the time opening night neared, every actor had contributed several bits of *lazzi* to the evening's entertainment.

This improvisation did not give rise only to Nicia's voice. This playful process also gave him character traits such as the finger twitching of his "claws" when he was thinking, his muttering and his non-verbal noises. While other rehearsal techniques have proven successful in the development of specific, detailed character traits in the past, improvisation worked very well for this genre to allow the experimentation to produce inspiration for a consistently funny, credible character.

Rehearsing in the fat suit was crucial both for preparing the role and preparing the body for performance. Nicia's physicality required constant practice to carry the illusion of over one hundred extra pounds. While the suit added extra exertion and sweat to rehearsals (ten pounds of weight disappeared over the five weeks of preparation), using the padding helped to keep the first performance in full costume from being a complete shock. It allowed the rest of the cast to develop their ideas about their relationship with Nicia. Finally and most importantly, the fat suit gave the cast an object around which they could unite and share a laugh, creating a camaraderie that helped to make the environment on the set enjoyable and relaxed.

The costume itself was the final contributing factor to the successful performance of the character. Nicia's costume took his denial to the highest level possible without turning him into a cartoon. Every piece of the costume was a statement that spoke a monologue about Nicia. From the red pointy-toed shoes to the red and black striped tights, the button-trimmed codpiece and the red velvet hat, the checked coat that served as motley for this foolish clown, the ersatz jewelry and finally the long black cloak with its absurdly long train, all combined to supplement and support the character developed in

rehearsal. While all the costumes were wonderful, this one simply *was* Nicia. Once in the costume, it was impossible to walk without his gait, talk without his voice or point without a florid, sweeping gesture. Every actor wants to perform a role so well that they disappear into it, so that their friends forget that they are watching him and think only of the character. Whether that goal was achieved in this role or not is up to the judgment of each individual member of the audience, but this costume allowed the actor to completely disappear into it. Wearing it was an honor and a privilege.

One surprise about the process of developing Nicia for this show is how little the original concept of the character changed in the course of rehearsals. Taking the Period Acting Styles course was an excellent preparation for performing in this play. Hustoles made his concept of all the characters and of his vision for the play very clear at the first rehearsal. Yet there is almost always a division between the initial concept of a character and the end result. While Nicia did end up with a few minor changes to his personality and attitude, the character that the audience saw on opening night was very much the character that began rehearsals back in September. This is to a great extent due to the clarity of Hustoles's vision for Nicia. His concept of Nicia as a vital and energetic man, rejecting the stereotype of feebleness and weakness, gave shape to the character before the first read through. Even with all the improvisation at rehearsals, the basic structure of the character remained constant, and every piece of *lazzi* that was added reinforced the essence of the character. The other factor that kept Nicia on track is the consistency of Machiavelli's writing. Nicia's roots in Greek and Roman comedy, and the influence of Italian street theatre, make him the most iconic character in the play. Machiavelli took a

type that Italian audiences would know clearly and wrote a theme and variations on this stock character that satirized the politicians and influential people of his age. His irascibility, sexism and flagrant denial are offset by his love for the son he dreams of having. Nicia's abject stupidity and gullibility made him a strangely endearing object of ridicule from the first rehearsal; indeed, the concept was never to have the audience hate Nicia, but to laugh with him *and* at him. Ultimately, the audience was to laugh at Nicia's cuckolding while rejoicing that he would see his infant son before he died.

One of the great joys in the theatre is finding a cast that works together toward a common goal, applies themselves to the process and stays focused, all while creating an enjoyable, supportive and friendly atmosphere. The cast of *The Mandrake* was one such example. The cast included some newcomers, some more experienced personnel, some who were more accustomed to musical theatre performance and some who were acclimated more to drama. From the first rehearsal to the last, the cast was remarkable for its absence of divas or idlers. The group attitude was positive and enthusiastic. Certainly the reliance on improvisation to create new stage business put the cast at ease and allowed everyone to feel that they were making a contribution to the show. Each actor brought some new ideas to each rehearsal and, by the time *The Mandrake* opened, there wasn't a person in the cast who hadn't contributed some piece of business to the production. Frequently gags would build on top of gags until the stage business took up more time in some scenes than the dialogue. Particularly in the case of a comedy such as this, in which business must be repeated in rehearsal until the timing is right and the business is consistent, one needs a cast who is patient and understands the needs of the

show as this group of actors did. Some of the business required the cast to step far outside the type of performance in which they were comfortable, especially in the overt sexual situations required either by the script or by the blocking, or as were inspired in rehearsal by the improvisation and imagination that ran rampant through the entire process. Without exception, within a few rehearsals each actor found the means to perform as needed, in part due to the spirit of professionalism that pervaded the cast and in part due to the comfort the group as a whole imparted to each of its members. Of course, each actor brought a share of personal quirks and foibles as well, but the positive aspects far outweighed the negative. In performance, the cast worked admirably well due to this synergy between its members.

Frequently the proof of a successful performance is found in the audience reaction, but the audiences for *The Mandrake* were very hard to read because their reactions were muted and their responses to the jokes and *lazzi* were different at each performance. Ticket sales were brisk, however, and many shows sold out completely. Comments came in from Acting for Everyone students that they hadn't expected the show to be as funny as it was, or that the language would be as accessible, because of the age of the play and its status as a classic of theatre history. Perhaps the greater measure of the merit of this production is the satisfaction that the cast and crew took in the show once it opened. The spirit of impish glee that infused the rehearsals with such a sense of fun carried over into the performances of the show.

Looking back over the entire experience from read through to final performance, the production hardly seems like work even though the performances were exhausting.

Perhaps because comedy of this kind is so energizing, bringing out the child in those on stage, that performing it keeps the actors so in the moment that they don't realize how taxing it is until the show is over. There were many magic moments that played perfectly every night, with timing and pace that propelled the shtick and equally animated the cast. Opportunities to play roles like this are rare, and to have the chance to work with a talented cast and crew made this experience a real celebration. This was truly the chance of a lifetime, and has left this actor very grateful.

CHAPTER 5

PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

As an actor, Robb Krueger's goal is to create theatrical art based in text and script analysis that will inform his choices. He had no real theatrical training in high school and a rather nebulous acting methodology taught in his undergraduate years at Winona State University. Krueger has been encouraged by the training at Minnesota State University, Mankato but at the same time awed by the training and practical experiences of his fellow students. The four years spent working first as an undergraduate and later as a Masters candidate have given him a measureable increase in confidence and a greater belief in his talent. A number of classes have given him the tools that he was previously lacking which helped him create the characters for the roles he has played.

One of the most valuable classes for Krueger was Acting Styles, taught by Paul J. Hustoles. This course covered the major period styles of acting from Ancient Greece through the Absurdist. Five scenes, one from each period, were assigned after lectures covering the philosophy and spirit of the times in which each play was written. Attention was given specifically to walking techniques, bows, mannerisms and stances that had their roots in each specific period of drama. Vocal technique for each period also received particular focus. Because Hustoles required each scene to be fully costumed, Krueger was able to develop ideas for movement in various period costumes. Each scene had two rehearsal periods. After the first period of rehearsal, each scene was critiqued in

workshop in class, with an open discussion regarding the success of the scene according to the dictates of the style as taught during the lectures. This allowed the actors to hone their skills in the style essential to the performance. Then a second period of rehearsal commenced with the students presenting the full scene in class. The class also taught students to self-analyze their work and develop a critical eye for habitual gestures and tics that can hamper the development of an actor's range. Prior to arrival at Minnesota State Mankato, Krueger had performed in many period plays including works by Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Moliere, Goldoni and Shaw, only one of which had the benefit of a dramaturg and none of which paid attention to the period style in which the play was written; with this class Krueger has recognized the gaps in his knowledge while playing those earlier roles and will approach period plays from a very different perspective from this time forward.

Scene Studies, taught by Heather Hamilton, had a profound influence on Krueger's acting style. Hamilton stressed honesty and realism in the performance of scenes and allowed no histrionics or "scenery chewing" in class. Through the performance of four disparate scenes and the written analyses of the technical and imaginative insight into the characters, Hamilton forced the actors to intensely explore the motivations and goals of the characters. In addition, the students gave feedback to the performers regarding their opinion and insight on aspects of the scenes that were successful and those that needed improvement. By doing this critique, all the students developed their critical and observational skills for theatrical performance. This course pushed Krueger to confront habitual behaviors that he had repeatedly brought to most of

his previous performances and eradicate them from his characterizations. It also taught him to strive to bring a greater reality to his acting. In addition, he learned to add more variety and imagination to his portrayals by stretching to find new ways to depict various emotions and conflicts by using posture, vocal inflection, eye contact and silence to increase tension and conflict without giving free rein to melodramatic techniques.

Another valuable course that greatly aided the development of analytical techniques was Theatre Research, also taught by Hamilton. Prior to this course Krueger had never researched any role and was ignorant of the resources available to him. The course required the writing of four research papers with sources from periodicals, books and online databases. With these tools at his fingertips, by following Hamilton's advice for researching topics through the Memorial Library's vast array of databases, Krueger was able to find valuable articles that allowed him to gain insight into the wealth of information to be found in scholarly research, the conclusions of sociological and scientific studies and the vast number of periodicals from around the world. While researching a role may seem like common sense to most actors, this was not a part of Krueger's training prior to entering graduate school, and having access to these resources changed his approach to roles permanently.

Playwriting, taught by guest instructor Bruce Jones, offered Krueger an outlet for his passion for creative writing. Jones began the class with a review of the Aristotelian elements of drama and from there moved on to the specific elements of conflict, action and character development. All students were required to write a ten minute play and a one act play during the semester. Each play was read in class and critiqued by the rest of

the students, but Jones structured the feedback sessions to make certain that all the writers respected each others' style and process. He would not allow critiquing students to try to rewrite the plays in their own style, but required all the students to see their criticism as the same academic exercise as the plays themselves. This forced the fledgling writers to acknowledge that their writing style was one of many options and that their theatrical vision was neither a definitive concept nor the ultimate ideal. Toward the end of the semester, Jones divided the class time into segments during which he met with each writer and frankly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their writing in an encouraging manner, something like a master class, so that each student would have the opportunity to share thoughts, frustrations and triumphs in a private setting with him. Jones's passion for play writing infused Krueger with the enthusiasm to return to work on several theatrical works he had in progress and in the last year one has been completed. In addition, Playwriting has given Krueger new tools to use in analyzing plays in which he is cast, because he has a greater understanding of writers' tools and methodology that gives insight into the purpose behind the choices playwrights make in drawing their characters. Studying creative writing has made Krueger a better actor because of this insight.

Musical Theatre Acting I and II, taught by Paul Finocchiaro and Hustoles respectively, helped Krueger overcome his fears of larger, more presentational types of acting usually found in musical theatre. While Krueger still doesn't consider himself a strong singer, these courses taught him to analyze the text for deeper meaning and search for all the possible interpretations of the text rather than being content with the first

meaning he found. Musical Theatre Acting I taught the skills of in-depth analysis of lyrics and long-term work to develop a song as a true work of performance. Musical Theatre Acting II enforced quick memorization skills, the ability to shift styles from one song to the next and an awareness of different song types and genres of shows. Working with musical theatre songs also gave Krueger a deeper insight into the flow of the beats within longer scenes. From these classes he also gained an appreciation of the effect tempo and pace can have on a scene, as well as a need to develop a heightened sense of pace so one can develop consistency. Because of the nature of musical theatre performance, Krueger developed greater skill in presentational styles of acting and found techniques for eliminating the disconnection that sometimes occurs with actors who act while they speak and then only sing when their songs begin. This is one skill that has been a useful one to pass along to his Acting for Everyone students and actors in the Children's Touring Show.

David McCarl's Stage Combat class was the most beneficial movement class Krueger participated in while at college. Krueger had had no training in movement or dance prior to graduate school, and McCarl's instruction in basic combat techniques was invaluable in helping him overcome his feelings that he was uncoordinated and awkward. McCarl's patience in explanation of stances, techniques and terminology allowed the absorption of the unfamiliar movements and terms while increasing balance and coordination. McCarl's explanation of the history behind quarterstaff, broadsword and rapier combat gave clarity to the reasons and traditions behind the various thrusts and parries. This insight proved to be a valuable supplement to the Acting Styles class and

the Theatre History classes taught by Hustoles and Hamilton. The movement exercises have also given Krueger a reference point from which he has been able to create stances, walks and postures based on the idea that the onstage conflict was similar to physical combat.

Prior to his entrance to graduate school, Krueger's knowledge of Theatre History was limited to biographies of actors and playwrights that he had read for his own amusement, erudition and interest. Some of his coursework at Winona State University had taught the history of the ancient Greek theatre, but in none of the detail and certainly without the philosophical perspective of the theatre history courses taken during graduate school. The combined effect of the two courses is to present not only the major periods of development in theatrical staging, machinery, playwriting and performance, but also to show the contributions theatre has made to the world. From the dawn of time throughout all of history up to the present, theatre has contributed vital elements to all societies, holding up a mirror that reflects man's foibles, indomitable spirit, societal ills and great appetites for love and power. The perspective provided by the two history courses provided foundational understanding for the periods studied in Acting Styles and led Krueger to find plays from these periods to acquaint himself with the language, staging and attitudes reflected in the scripts from these various times.

Advanced Acting Techniques, taught by Hustoles, provided insights into various techniques that can add color to a characterization. During the rehearsal process for each of the plays in which he has been cast, Krueger tried several of the different techniques studied in this class to enrich his characterizations. This was in many ways the most

challenging acting course he faced during his graduate studies, because the scope of this course was vast and covered a wide variety of theatrical theory, some of which fell so far outside the realm of his experience and knowledge that he encountered great difficulties even in basic comprehension of some techniques. Psychological centering, Anthropomorphism, Masking, Inner Flame and Physical Centers were just some of the different performance techniques that were taught and attempted in this class. The class also made the students concentrate on specificity and selectivity of gestures; the discipline acquired in this class taught Krueger to keep florid gestures in control. In addition, this class allowed Krueger his first opportunity to teach fellow actors in a theatrical technique, though he had taught Acting for Everyone to non-theatre majors for all three years of graduate school. He taught Uta Hagen's substitution theory, using her ideas for using practical experience to inform imaginary situations. He made the students "act" like they were searching for their keys and then split the class into two sections, one of which hid the keys and the other that searched for them. Later, when they once again pretended to search for their keys in character, they found their imaginary actions greatly influenced by their real experience earlier in the class.

Hustoles's Theatre Speech II taught various vocal production techniques that have been very useful in performance. Prior to taking the class, Krueger had never identified different vocal qualities and had never learned healthy ways to produce them. Because almost every character he has played since taking the class has required some vocal variation, the knowledge attained in class contributed greatly to the successful vocal production in all those roles. Moreover, this class worked specifically on diction and

enunciation, which were two areas in which Krueger has struggled for years, as well as proper breath support. For years prior to reentering college, the most common feedback Krueger received was that he simply wasn't loud enough on stage. This course has helped Krueger produce more vocal projection on stage.

Acting for Film and Television, taught by Finocchiaro, gave Krueger the unique opportunity to view himself on camera and perform self-critique. This class presented the perfect opportunity to reduce movement to the bare essentials and register on one's face only the subtlest of emotions. In this way the course supported the work he was performing in Scene Studies and forced him to use an economy of gesture that he previously had not attempted. He also learned to refine his blocking down to specifics in order to be able to reliably hit his "mark." At the same time, the class proved to be an excellent way for him to reacquaint himself with the technique of using only his voice to paint verbal pictures for the listener. As an aficionado of old radio programs, Krueger enjoyed this work immensely and continues to draw on this experiences he had in this class in his stage work.

Movement and coordination have always been Krueger's weakest areas as an actor. While he will never dance professionally, the Beginning Tap class taught by Finocchiaro bolstered his confidence and helped him gain a better sense of balance. The concept of shifting one's weight while dancing has been one of the most difficult movement lessons Krueger has encountered while in college. To this day he has to actively think about where his weight is placed. The skills learned in Beginning Tap have changed his approach to movement onstage. He also enrolled in two Beginning

Jazz courses, taught by Morgan Mallory and Dan Stark, which have helped him to a certain extent improve his coordination and stop cerebrally analyzing movement. Prior to taking these dance courses, Krueger would learn movement by observing it repeatedly; these classes have taught him to experience the movement and “get it into” his body, allowing muscle memory to inform the movement.

Dialects I and II, taught by Hustoles, provided methods of pronunciation and enunciation that helped Krueger find the proper sounds to use to reproduce many ethnic dialects that will make him more employable. Using the International Phonetic Alphabet, the student learns to articulate a dialect by spelling the words according their sound. Aside from teaching national dialects, the class trains the student to listen for vocal patterns, inflections and regionalisms that identify the characteristics of a particular nation’s speech. These abilities will prove useful when auditioning for roles that need to be performed in dialect.

Krueger has also enjoyed two years of voice lessons with Christi Smith. Smith has taught him many practical techniques, allowing him to expand his vocal range and develop his voice in skills required for musical theatre performance. She has also encouraged him to research musical theatre roles appropriate for his age and vocal type, and has suggested many shows of which Krueger was unaware that allowed him to find songs that will make unique and valuable audition pieces. Her encouragement has also led Krueger to return to composing music, as he did for the 2012 Minneapolis Fringe Festival show *Robot Lincoln* and the 2013 Children’s Touring Show *Shine*. Smith’s guidance and coaching have given Krueger confidence to audition for musicals as well

as non-musical plays, and the practical application of the principles of vocal production that she has taught him will serve him well in the years to come.

Krueger's biggest obstacle as a performer has been confidence in himself and in his abilities. Since becoming a graduate student he has been teaching Acting for Everyone three days a week. This has forced him to face his fear of failure. By helping other people learn, and by sharing his love of theatre and acting with students who want to learn, he has discovered skills as a teacher that he did not know he possessed. By encouraging these students and helping them succeed, he has gained greater self-confidence and self-esteem in his own abilities as an actor and has, by identifying the areas in which his students need to grow, found areas in his own expertise that need further development. In addition, teaching has allowed him to synthesize the skills acquired from studying with Hustoles, Hamilton, Finocchiaro and the other professors at Minnesota State Mankato, into a method of teaching acting that is his own.

Krueger has performed in eight plays since arriving at Minnesota State Mankato. His first role as an undergraduate was Juror Eight in *Twelve Angry Men*, which introduced him to the Department of Theatre and Dance and to his fellow acting students in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere created by director Finocchiaro. Playing Melchior in *On The Razzle* pushed Krueger to develop an independent approach to character development because of guest director Tom Woldt's policy that the director's concept of each role remain secret. In *42nd Street*, Krueger played Pat Denning, which gave him his first role in a musical since returning to college and allowed him to work with musical theatre acting students for the first time.

George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Krueger's first role as a graduate student, was a chance to play one of his dream roles. Director Hamilton's guidance in the physical attack on the character and in naturalizing the line delivery allowed Krueger to apply techniques learned in acting classes while also forcing him to confront his reliance on habitual behaviors. Playing Ed Devery in *Born Yesterday* allowed him to develop his comic timing in a subtler form of comedy than he had previously experienced. Another dream role, Harry Roat in *Wait Until Dark*, gave Krueger his first chance to play a villain in a contemporary drama and pushed him to develop his vocal technique. His next part, John Barrymore in *I Hate Hamlet*, was a surprise delight. Krueger had no previous knowledge of the play prior to auditions and identified instantly with the role. Playing one of his favorite cinema idols provided Krueger with the chance to develop his physical coordination, vocal projection and gestural style. Each of these roles has given Krueger key ideas, techniques and experiences he can use to grow both as an artist and as a person. They have all presented unique challenges to find ways to improve techniques in which he is less skillful and to search for new ways to use skills with which he has some proficiency. He looks forward to future roles both in Mankato and in other areas of the country which will continue to refine his skills.

Krueger plans to continue to work to develop his craft, to overcome his personal obstacles, to strive for new insights and to act as much as possible in his remaining time in graduate school. He looks forward to exploring other paths that may be shown him and to discovering others on his own. The skills he has acquired at in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Minnesota State Mankato will serve him the rest of his life.

APPENDIX A

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS



Robert Krueger as Nicia



James Ehlenz as Siro, Robert Krueger as Nicia



Top: Ben Stasny as Brother Timoteo

Bottom: James Ehlenz as Siro, Robert Krueger as Nicia, Reginald D. Haney as Ligurio



Charisse Nichole Danker as Lucrezia, Robert Krueger as Nicia,
Reginald D. Haney as Ligurio, Jake Sullivan as Callimaco



The final tableau

APPENDIX B

PROGRAM

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

Department of Theatre & Dance*Presents*

THE
MANDRAKE

By Niccolo Machiavelli,
 translated by Wallace Shawn

Sponsored by the Wynn & Ginnette Kearney Foundation

Oct. 18-21 & 24-28, 2012

Director/lyricist
Paul J. Hustoles

Scene Design
John David Paul

Costume Design
David McCarl

Lighting Design
Steven Smith

Original Music
Peter Bloedel

Production Stage Manager
Mary Jane Olson

*The Mandrake is produced through special arrangement with
 Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
 440 Park Ave.,
 New York, NY 10016.*



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 alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Theatre & Dance at the above numbers. THEA228K 10-12

Cast of Characters

Siro.....	James Ehlenz
Callimaco	Jake Sullivan
Ligurio	Reginald D. Haney
Lord Nicia	Robb Krueger
Madonna Sostrata	Shelley Whitehead
Brother Timoteo	Ben Stasny
The Widow	Kelsey Johannsen
Madonna Lucrezia	Charisse Nichole Danker
The Mandragolas	Kaitlin Dahlquist, Noah J. Files Megan Gilmore, Jake McInerney

Setting

Florence, Italy, in the 16th century.

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APPENDIX C

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

THE MANDRAKE**Rehearsal Schedule**

Sept.	16	Su	6:35 - 9:30	Welcome to Florence
	17	M	6:35 - 9:30	Block Acts 1 & 2
	18	Tu	6:35 - 9:30	Block Acts 3 & 4
	19	W	6:35 - 9:30	Block Act 5 & TBA
	20-21	Th-F	No rehearsal	See <i>November</i>

	23	Su	6:35 - 9:30	Block all songs (in the Andreas)
	24	M	6:35 - 9:30	Work thru Acts 1 & 2
	25	Tu	6:35 - 9:30	Work thru Acts 3 & 4
	26	W	6:35 - 9:30	Work thru Act 5 & TBA
	27	Th	6:35 - 9:30	Work thru "our" Act 1
	28	F	6:35 - 9:30	Work thru "our" Act 2

	30	Su	6:35 - 9:30	TBA
Oct.	1	M	6:35 - 9:30	Run thru "our" Act 1
	2	Tu	6:35 - 9:30	Run thru "our" Act 2
	3	W	6:35 - 9:30	TBA
	4	Th	6:35 - 9:30	Run Thru
	5	F	6:35 - 9:30	Run Thru

	7	Su	6:35	Run Thru (Welcome crew)
	8	M	6:35	Run Thru
	9	Tu	6:35	Run Thru
	10	W	6:00 - 6:30	Publicity Photo Call Dress Tech; followed by Run Thru
	11	Th	6:00	Light Tech Run Thru
	12	F	6:00	Tech Rehearsal
	13	Sa	6:00	Tech Rehearsal
	14	Su	6:00	Dress Rehearsal
	15	M	7:30 go	Dress Rehearsal
	16	Tu		Dress Rehearsal/Major's Preview
	17	W		Corporate Preview
	18	Th		Opening Night Performance
	19	F		Performance; <u>Picture Call</u>
	20	Sa		Performance
	21	Su		Matinee Performance

	24	W		Performance
	25	Th		Performance
	26	F		Performance
	27	Sa		Matinee and Evening Performance
	28	Su		Matinee Closing Performance; Strike!

APPENDIX D

SCRIPT NOTATIONS

Turn back ds in shock, follow left during C's speech

NICIA. What? —Is this possible? —

CALLIMACO. It is, Sir, just as I have said. And Fortune apparently loves you so well that I was able to bring with me from France all of the ingredients that go towards the making of this potion—and you may have this potent beverage at your own convenience. *gasp*

NICIA. But when do you recommend that my wife should take the potion, Doctor?

CALLIMACO. Well—this evening after supper. The moon is well disposed, and the time could not be more appropriate.

rising, trying to think "what the fuck?"

NICIA. My goodness! All right then—this won't be a problem. Prepare the potion, by all means, and I will make my wife drink it.

Go big pick up fast

CALLIMACO. Good. (Pause.) It's also necessary to mention one more point, I would say: it happens to be true that the first man to have intercourse with the woman after she's taken this potion will die within eight days, and nothing in the world can save him.

NICIA. Bloody shit! Is this the vinegar in your sugary little drink? Well then I won't have any—thank you! You're not going to hang me with that rope, my friends! Oh really, really—you've really destroyed me—I'm so upset—

CALLIMACO. Get ahold of yourself. There's a solution to this problem.

Small

NICIA. Really. What is it? Lean in

lean out

CALLIMACO. The solution is to cause another man, whom you have chosen, to have intercourse with your wife immediately after she's taken this potion; staying with her for one night, he will absorb all the infection of the mandrake; and as soon as he's left you can fuck her yourself without the slightest concern.

NICIA. Well, I don't want to use that solution, my friend.

pompous huffy

CALLIMACO. Why not, Professor? NICIA. Because I don't want to make my wife into a prostitute—frankly. And I don't want to be the cause of my own betrayal, Sir, if you really want to know.

CALLIMACO. But what are you saying, Professor? Really, you don't seem to be as sensible as I originally took you to be. Do you really mean that you hesitate to do a thing that the King of France, and many of the greatest lords of that state, have not hesitated to do?

face R

NICIA. But my dear Doctor, who do you want me to find to carry out this madness—eh? If I tell the man, then he won't want to do

Step toward B. Tim. as if to "grab" him

stop, turn to L.
halloa

NICIA. Ha! Ha! You disguise your voice very well!

LIGURIO. All right now, let's set our ambush right here on this corner. But wait—listen—I think I hear a lute. -duck behind Ligurio

NICIA. Good Lord—someone's coming around that corner—what should we do? -hide R of Ligurio behind fountain -duck, rise

LIGURIO. We should send ahead a scout to find out who it is; you go ahead, Siro. You know what to do.

SIRO. Yes—I'm going. (He exits.) -Ben humps me here

NICIA. We can't afford to make a mistake—some dying old man, an invalid! no! —we can't play this game tomorrow night again! -Get off me!!

LIGURIO. Don't worry—this Siro's a very good man. (Siro returns.)

SIRO. He's just perfect, Sir! Not twenty ~~the~~ years old, and he's wandering about alone in a shabby little cloak, just playing a lute.

NICIA. Well he sounds just right, if you're telling the truth. Now be careful, it's on your head if we grab this fellow!

SIRO. The boy is just as I've described him, Sir.

NICIA. All right then, Doctor, you stand ~~there~~; you look the most powerful—oh Lord—here he comes— (Callimaco enters.)

CALLIMACO. (Singing.)

"May the devil come crawling into your bed
Since I am forbidden to lie there—" -RAHR

Ben scares me 3x
I say "SHIT?"
and duck down

LIGURIO. All right, watch out! Give me that lute.

CALLIMACO. Oh, how frightful! What have I done, Sir?

NICIA. You'll soon find out, boy! Cover his head, gag him!

act everything out

LIGURIO. Turn him around. -Now the other way!

NICIA. One more time! Now put him in the house. (Siro and Ligurio take Callimaco away.) Jump up and down

BROTHER TIMOTHY. (To Nicia.) My Lord, I think I'm going in excitement to lie down for a while; I have a shattering head-ache. -what what what

NICIA. That's fine, Doctor—we can easily handle the whole thing ourselves— (Nicia exits.)

Ad lib some self-congratulatory B.S. on exit

what
what
what

ACT FOUR

SCENE 10

BROTHER TIMOTHY. Now they're all inside. And now I'll go home too. You know, it's a principle of drama that if the characters sleep in a play, an intermission is required. But we're not having an

giddy, conspiratorial, he's one of the gang

why don't you and Siro go find Doctor Callimaco and tell him it all went well?

LIGURIO. But what can we tell him, my friend? We don't know a thing. As soon as we got into the house, we went down to the cellar to drink.

NICIA. Yes, well, that's true. Good Lord—and what good things there are to tell you! Yes, indeed! (Pause.) How should I begin? Well, Well, my wife, of course, was in bed, in the dark. My mother-in-law was waiting by the fire. Then I arrived—with the boy. Well, first I led him around into a pantry beside my main hall, I keep a little lamp in there whose oil has been mixed with some water, so it gives off only a very weak light; I took him in there so that I could examine him without his being able to see my face.

low gravelly voice

act out

cross R, pacing

turn back

SUPPER MAN! (Nicio version)

BARK!

squinty

LIGURIO. Hm—very clever—

NICIA. I ordered him to take off his clothes. Well, he hesitated, so I turned in his direction with a sudden quick motion, like an angry dog, like this—and he was so frightened by my gesture—*heh heh*—that as he hurried to remove his clothes I think it seemed to him as if a thousand years were passing. Then, he stood naked in front of me. (Pause.) He had an ugly face—a grotesque nose, a twisted mouth . . . (But when I saw his body—you could never have seen—such beautiful flesh—his skin was so white—it was smooth and soft— And as for certain parts of the boy—you mustn't ask me about those! —)

jiggly laugh

react to ugliness Nicio's not gay, but he's curious...

don't under-play

LIGURIO. Well no, we won't need to discuss them, I don't think that we need to discuss those parts— But tell me—was it really necessary to really see—all of the boy in this way? I mean—

NICIA. Well you're joking now, Sir! I mean, once I've put my hands in the dough, my friend, then I really do like to prepare the cake! I mean, I don't do things half-way! We got ourselves this boy; I wanted to see if he was healthy; if he had happened to have had little boils on his skin—little signs of gonorrhoea, my friend—then where would I have been? Not examine him! You're joking!

he's on the fountain the fountain job

cross around to ds side

LIGURIO. —well yes—a sensible precaution—

NICIA. When I was sure that he was healthy, I took him along behind me and led him to the bedroom, and then I got him into the bed with my wife. But before I left them, I wanted to feel with my own hands how the experiment was going. You see, it's just not my way to assume that if I look out my window and see a light in my

humping

lift "covers"

don't get too soft—articulate!

doors

pace ds

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