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A Director's Approach to I Love You Because

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A DIRECTOR'S APPROACH TO
I LOVE YOU BECAUSE

by
ADAM KARAL SAHLI

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 Adam Karal Sahli's artistic process in directing the musical *I Love You Because* at Minnesota State University, Mankato in the Fall of 2012. The thesis records the artist's process from production selection through performance in five chapters: a preproduction analysis, a historical and critical analysis of the work, a production meeting and performance journals, a post-production analysis and a process development analysis. Appendices, works cited and works consulted follow.

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Personally Sahli also wishes to thank his parents Jeff and Tammy Sahli for their undying support as he continues his development in his art and education. Sahli reserves his greatest thanks for his wife Angela Sahli who has been a constant pillar of support. Without her love Sahli could not have finished Graduate School and would lose the greatest motivation for his art.

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CHAPTER I

PRE/EARLY PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This is the pre/early production analysis of the Minnesota State University, Mankato production of *I Love You Because* by Joshua Salzman and Ryan Cunningham. The director of this production is Adam Karal Sahli, with scenic design by Joel Scheibout, lighting design by Mary Jane Olson, costume design by Kirsten Lerohl, sound design by Anna Alex and technical direction by Eric Charlton. The project will be supervised by Paul J. Hustoles as the Performance Advisor and George Grubb as the Technical Advisor. The performance dates for *I Love You Because* are November 28 through December 1, 2012, in the Andreas Theatre at the Early Center for Performing Arts on the campus of Minnesota State, Mankato.

I Love You Because takes place in 2012 over the span of about 3 months in New York City as Austin Bennett searches for love after he walks in on his girlfriend cheating on him. With the assistance of his brother Jeff, he begins dating a free spirit named Marcy. Jeff begins dating Marcy's best friend Diana as Austin's straight laced lifestyle begins to change once Marcy's free spirit starts to affect his life. After trials and tribulations, all four find that they love their significant other, not in spite of their flaws but because of them. Rounding out the cast are NY Man and NY Woman who play a variety of roles from bartenders to baristas.

The show opens with the song “Another Saturday Night in New York.” It introduces Austin and effectively sets up the location of the play as New York City. The song does little to ignite the story but, rather, establishes the mood of the play. At the end of the scene, Austin walks in on Catherine, his girlfriend, with another guy, beginning the action of the play. “Another Saturday Night in New York” is the most difficult song in the play as a whole. The complex harmonies are traded among the six actors and ultimately ends in a fugue.

Scene two takes place at O’Dennehey’s Bar beginning with a down trodden mood stemming from Austin’s discovery and introduces Jeff, Austin’s brother. This scene shows Jeff as a womanizing, misspoken buffoon that cares deeply for his brother. This buffoonery and genuine nature results in the probable admiration of his character by the audience. In “Oh, What a Difference,” Jeff coaches Austin on how to get over his breakup with Catherine. His belief is that the only way Austin can do this is by dating other women. By the end of the song, Austin has decided to try Jeff’s theory as a means of winning Catherine back.

In scene three the characters of Marcy and Diana are introduced. Marcy has just broken up with her boyfriend of two years, Larry. Diana tells Marcy that Larry was a “dirt bag” and that dating is “a game of numbers.” In “The Actuary Song,” Diana goes on to explain that to find the perfect man, Marcy must work through her rebound time and date someone who is perfectly wrong for her during that period. Through an elaborate equation, Diana figures that Marcy must work through rebound time or “RT”

for a period of six months, and Diana will help Marcy find “Mr. Wrong.” An important point in “The Actuary Song” is its use of harmony. It has a strong use of dissonance which, along with Diana’s line about repeating “the cycle,” informs the audience about her desire to find her own “Mr. Right.” Here Salzman and Cunningham use music theory to affect the psychology of the audience, a technique that is seen several times throughout the play.

The next scene returns to O’Dennehey’s bar, where Austin and Jeff meet with Marcy and Diana for the first time after connecting on “J-Date,” the Jewish online dating service, despite only Marcy being Jewish. During their first encounter it is clear that not only are Austin and Marcy not a match, but neither are Jeff and Diana. Jeff and Diana seem to find joy in their mismatch and have fun together playing “Miss Pac Man.” While the aforementioned couple is having a good time, Marcy and Austin are getting to know each other. Throughout “But I Don’t Want To Talk About Her,” Austin seems to be able to do nothing but talk about his ex, Catherine. This ultimately results in Marcy concluding that Austin will be the perfect “Mr. Wrong.”

Scene five introduces Austin and Jeff’s apartment. The top of the scene has Jeff and Diana engaging in a romantic encounter that goes horribly wrong. As Jeff persuades Diana into the sexual encounter, she leaps into his arms and he throws out his back resulting in Diana taking him to the emergency room. This scene is one of the strictly comedic of the play and there is no song.

In scene six Marcy is waiting in the coffee shop with Diana near the hospital. Diana and Marcy discuss how Marcy has been “stalking” Austin as a means of “accidentally” running into him. Jeff’s injury has served as the perfect opportunity for Austin and Marcy to reconnect. Marcy pretends to be there to support Diana, while Austin is there for his brother. Marcy takes a photo of Austin while he is working on one of his poems, starting the reconnection. She finds that it is for Catherine and begins with “Life is like . . .” for which she ridicules Austin. Austin informs Marcy that this is always how he starts his poetry. This leads into “Coffee” which delves into the systematic entity that is Austin. Austin is worked into a frenzy until he calls Catherine and reads her his poem. After being promptly rejected, Austin asks Marcy for help in wooing Catherine, sparking a friendship and the first true connection between the characters. It is the first moment that the characters connect as people, rather than seeing the other as a tool that will facilitate a means to an end.

The next scene takes place in several locations. It starts in O’Dennehey’s where Austin, Jeff, Marcy and Diana have all met. It is the first time the audience sees Marcy helping Austin, they are working to write a poem that is heartfelt. Jeff and Diana are continuing their “dating” and have found their niche. Diana asks Jeff if he wants to play Miss Pac Man, a reversal from their first meeting. As the first section of the scene ends, NY Man and NY Woman sing the “The Perfect Romance–Part 1.” The scene shifts to the coffee shop where Austin is now drinking coffee that has been prepared by Marcy, showing how he is giving up control. They are still working on creating a

“heartfelt” poem but Austin is struggling to come up with anything that doesn’t begin with “Life is like.” The two decide to see a movie together but playfully argue about whether to decide on the film when they get to the theatre or to check movie phone in advance. NY Man and NY Woman sing “The Perfect Romance–Part 2” as the scene changes to Jeff and Austin’s apartment. As Marcy sits on the couch it is revealed that they have finished the poem. Austin asks what do they do now and Marcy tells him to put it in to an envelope and wait four months to mail it. Austin asks why and Marcy tells him that since it has been two months since Austin and Catherine have broken up, the extra four will make it six. At that point Austin can mail the letter because that’s the rule. Austin throws the envelope on the dresser, ultimately Jeff ends up mailing it, and the scene ends with “The Perfect Romance–Part 3.”

Scene eight returns to the apartment, where Austin has been calling the postal service trying to intercept his letter. Jeff and Diana’s relationship continues to advance despite the fact that they are not “dating,” as Diana is taking Jeff to meet the rest of her friends. Jeff has also given an abacus to Diana as a present since she is “you know, actuary, math, abacus” (Salzman and Cunningham I-47). Diana reveals to Marcy that when Jeff threw his brother’s mail into her purse she found a postcard from Catherine for Austin. The postcard is apparently really harsh, so Marcy decides that she will take the postcard and give it to Austin at the right time. When Austin comes back into the room, Marcy offers to take him for some Chinese food and free wine.

The next scene opens in the Chinese restaurant where Austin and Marcy are enjoying the wine and having a good time. When their food comes, Austin's order is incorrect. Marcy, trying to make Austin's evening as pleasant as possible since she has to give him bad news, insists that the waiter give Austin the right order. The two go on to have a lovely evening enjoying one another's company. Upon receiving the bill Austin sees that Marcy has not only been charged for his correct meal but the incorrect one as well. Austin, in an act of chivalry and drunkenness, confronts the waiter then flees the restaurant while stealing a carafe of wine even though it is free.

"Because of You" opens scene ten. Austin and Marcy come crashing through the door of Marcy's apartment. The song shows the change that Austin is going through as it starts off in a more regimented meter than the audience has heard from him. By the end, when he sings the lyrics "Tonight I felt free" (Salzman and Cunningham I-57), Austin sings with a lyrical freedom that has not yet been heard. The song ends and Austin and Marcy embrace and are about to kiss, when Marcy stops them. She finally gives Austin the postcard from Catherine. Austin gets angry with Marcy for hiding it from him while trying to "feel" for the right time to give it to him. The two begin arguing until they ultimately kiss and fall onto Marcy's bed. The scene transitions to Diana and Jeff singing "We're Just Friends," celebrating the joys of platonic sex. After the song ends, attention is brought back to Austin and Marcy as Austin is awkwardly leaving Marcy's apartment. Diana returns at the same time and questions Marcy about what happened. Marcy explains how she "likes" Austin and

how, in the action of the previous night, he wasn't suave or graceful. In his loss of control, Marcy was given the opportunity to truly see who Austin is and Austin the opportunity to give himself over to another person. As Diana and Marcy talk, the conversation shifts to Diana and Jeff. Marcy points out that Diana is falling in love with Jeff. Diana then gets defensive when Marcy implies that Jeff is simple. When this happens Diana realizes that she is truly falling in love with Jeff and that the "friends with benefits" relationship isn't working.

Scene eleven takes Austin back to his apartment where Jeff is waiting. The two address what happened in the previous scene and Austin tells Jeff that he thinks he may love Marcy. Jeff tells Austin "I've been here before and it's very dangerous. . . . It's called relationship displacement" (Salzman and Cunningham I-67). This candid release by Jeff is the first real glimpse of Jeff's psyche. It hints that the fun loving playboy that the audience has been privy to may be a mask to hide pained relationships from his past. It is also the first moment that the audience sees Jeff's more serious side. As the scene continues, Austin sings "Maybe We Just Made Love." In this ballad, Austin's internal thoughts and fears spill out. The song beautifully displays Austin's desire for love and the fear and hurt that remains from Catherine. The struggle leaves Austin disjointed as he is in an emotional fight with himself.

The final scene of act I begins with Austin putting together a picnic for Marcy. Upon Marcy's arrival, Austin begins to fumble through words as he tries to express his feelings for Marcy and Marcy begins to sing "Just Not Now." Austin finally expresses

that he loves Marcy, as she sings to him “Now’s not the time to be quite where you are” (Salzman and Cunningham I-71). Throughout the song, Marcy also hints that she feels the same way that Austin does. She also feels that it is happening too quickly and if he can wait, she will allow herself to fall in love as well. Austin feels shunned and leaves angrily. When he gets to his apartment, Catherine is there waiting for him.

Act II, scene one opens with Marcy entering O’Dennehey’s bar, singing a reprise of “Just Not Now.” This leads to “Alone” where she is joined by NY Man and NY Woman who discuss, through song, how during Austin and Marcy’s first date, he couldn’t do anything right. As the song progresses, NY Man and NY Woman exit leaving Marcy alone to realize that she loves Austin and finds that she is happier with him than she will ever be alone.

Act II, scene two takes place in Austin and Jeff’s apartment. Diana is on Jeff’s bed massaging his back, while Austin is awaiting delivery from the Chinese restaurant that he and Marcy had visited. As the scene progresses, Diana wants to talk about her and Jeff’s relationship which he is vehemently against. Jeff, Austin and NY Man sing “That’s What’s Gonna Happen,” in which Jeff describes his nightmare of Diana and his relationship advancing until it completely disintegrates and leaves them both miserable. Jeff once again shows that he is so afraid of getting hurt that he won’t risk being happy when he might lose that happiness. Diana ends the relationship and leaves upset. Austin tells Jeff everything that has happened from his telling Marcy that he loves her, her rejection and Catherine’s return. Marcy comes to speak with Austin and sings

“Even Though.” For the first time the cast directly states the theme of the play as Marcy tells Austin why he is wrong for her but that she loves him “Even Though” (Salzman and Cunningham II-14). Marcy’s lack of eloquence in this statement and Austin’s hurt feelings result in him rejecting Marcy and telling her that Catherine took him back and he thanks Marcy for that.

Act II, scene three takes place in no discernible location. All four principals sing “But I Do.” The script indicates that as each sings their first line, a light comes up on them and as they sing their last line, the light goes out. Sahli likes this imagery as it creates the illusion that each character is alone while they sing as a quartet. The lack of a location also creates the imagery that they are revealing their emotional state rather than making commentary on the events that have just happened. This is never more apparent than when Austin sings “she’s only a woman” and Jeff responds with “there will be other women” (Salzman and Cunningham II-16), hitting a high A. This is the highest male note in the production and its placement in the context of the show sounds more like a primal plead for escape from the memory of Diana/Marcy or a cry to convince himself of what he is saying. That A then serves to contradict the lyrics that Austin and Jeff share that nothing is special about the women they love. The fact that this idea is shared between the two of them is also a key element of this song. All four characters seamlessly tell the same story and reveal the loss that they all feel.

As the play progresses, the audience is returned to O’Dennehey’s where Diana and Marcy are drinking away their troubles. NY Man, NY Woman, Marcy and Diana

sing “What Do We Do It For.” The four sing about their past failed relationships and how they have been hurt by them. This continues until Marcy and Diana get to their present relationships where they realize that the “pain” which Austin and Jeff have put them through has made them stronger and happier. They then run out in search of the brothers.

When Marcy and Diana get to Austin and Jeff’s apartment, Marcy finds that Austin is not there and goes out in search of him. Diana and Jeff are left alone to discuss their relationship and Jeff reveals his fear that if he gives over to his feelings for Diana he will be hurt. When Diana says that she loves Jeff, Austin bursts into the room. He tells the pair that he and Catherine were at the coffee shop when she asked Austin, “how I take my coffee”(Salzman and Cunningham II-26). The fact that after five years of dating Catherine knew so little about Austin makes him realize how much Marcy cared for him comparatively. Diana begins “Marcy’s Yours.” She sings how everyone needs someone who stretches who they are as a human being and she puts her heart on the line when she says that Jeff is that for her. Jeff interjects that when he first met Diana all he was looking for was sex but as the relationship progressed he was changed for the positive and fell in love with Diana. This is the first time that he admits or lets anyone, including himself, know he is in love. Jeff and Diana reconcile as Austin realizes Marcy is everything he never knew he wanted.

Jeff and Diana leave and Austin is left alone. As the realization of love sets in Austin sings “Goodbye.” Austin says goodbye to the life he thought he wanted and

hello to his life with Marcy which he can't plan in advance and is unsure of where it will lead. This song beautifully displays Austin giving himself over to a true unpredictable love. More importantly, he selflessly gives up who he was, to become a part of something bigger, if Marcy will take him back. This clearly establishes the climax of the play as Austin's song reaches into the most familiar of musical theatre ballads to express his feelings for Marcy. Simultaneously the audience is, for the first time, given what it has been longing for as Austin and Marcy are finally both at the same point in acknowledging their feelings for one another.

Act II, scene six occurs after what appears to have been Austin's preplanned attempt to reconnect himself and Marcy at the coffee shop, with the help of Jeff and Diana. This reminds the audience of Act I, scene six in which Marcy had attempted the same ploy. When Marcy arrives she and Austin reveal their shared desire to find and be with one another. Jeff interrupts to tell Austin to read Marcy the poem he has written for her, which leads to "I Love You Because." The song is sweet and heartfelt as it adds the other characters to close out the show. This scene neatly, albeit quickly, wraps up both the falling action and the conclusion of the play. Leaving the ultimate outcomes for the characters and their relationships to the audience to decide.

When Salzman and Cunningham began writing *I Love You Because*, they were creating a musical version of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice that had a gender reversal of the original core characters. While the final product differed from this initial goal, audiences are left with a fun and touching musical that shows the lives of six

twenty-somethings searching for love in modern America. It is in this manner that the authors created the theme of the show, which is how people may not create the means by which they find their significant other and it is the unexpected nature of relationships that make humanity fall in love.

I Love You Because touches on the tradition of the shows in the musical theatre canon which celebrate New York City such as *Guys and Dolls*, *On the Town* and *New York, New York*. The orchestration gives the hint of a big band feel playing jazzy interludes throughout, which are indicative of Salzman and Cunningham paying homage to their predecessors. In an interview, Salzman discussed some of the collaborator's mentors, "For me, it's Frank Loesser. (He has) unending inventiveness in (his) melodies while maintaining the 'rules' of the form"(Cunningham).

I Love You Because does not center on complicated themes or difficult concepts. Rather, it centers on the search that consumes many twenty-somethings: the search for shared companionship and love. The title of the piece and its finale of the same name most effectively establish this idea in words as the cast sing the phrase "It's easy to say I love you anyway. But I don't. I love you because" (Salzman and Cunningham II-32). Of course this is at the culmination of the show. It is through the journeys of Austin and Marcy, as well as Jeff and Dianna, that the audience sees that true love isn't developed by changing a person to create an ideal mate. Instead it is by accepting the other's flaws and seeing those flaws as an endearing quality of the person being loved. The piece also addresses how the modern world has separated people from one another.

The characters struggle to find “mister/misses right” as modern technology has separated people from face to face interaction and search for love through “J-Date.” It is through these themes that *I Love You Because* easily connects with audiences as love and the search for love are universal themes. It can also be this “simplicity” that puts the burden on the actors and director to effectively and evocatively portray these characters and their relationships in an earnest manner.

In the direction of this piece, Sahli’s greatest test will come through the work of character development with the actors. The four primary characters of the show can seem two dimensional if not approached correctly. Like many musicals, the plot of *I Love You Because* is light hearted. Additionally, there is little to no background given about the characters. For example, Jeff and Austin, while brothers, have little in common. As a result, Sahli must work with the actors to search and create back stories so the characters are well developed and fully formed. In the case of Jeff and Austin, Sahli has played with the idea of creating the relationship these two have with their parents as a means of understanding the characters. Perhaps the parents were divorced which could have resulted in the fractured approach to relationships, Jeff’s promiscuity and Austin’s codependency.

Additionally, Sahli will use minimal choreography as the show is a musical that calls for few dance numbers. The opening song “Another Saturday Night in New York” requires stronger dance content due to its quicker pace and illusion of a larger cast through its lyrics. Sahli has a minimal dance education, including 2 years of tap

and jazz, along with dance roles in the likes of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Rent*. As a director, Sahli has done little choreography. To help with this, Sahli has asked Austin England, a Senior BFA actor, to serve as the choreographer in this production.

Sahli has also asked Robb Krueger, a third year MFA actor, to join the team as the music director. Krueger has some experience as a composer and has also worked as a conductor. Krueger will lead the orchestra which will consist of three members, two piano/synthesizers and a drum set. This set of three is reduced from the original production's orchestra of five instruments.

The technical areas of the production will have some unique aspects of their own that will need to be tackled by the remainder of the production staff. Trying to portray "the city that never sleeps" will place some interesting demands on Lighting Designer Olson. Olson will need to create the illusion of Austin singing "Maybe" while on the streets of pre-dawn New York. Other locales include multiple bars, diners and apartments that will all need their own unique flair.

The costume designer is settled with the least immediately intimidating task as the show is a modern, in this production set in 2012, musical that doesn't call for any "outside-the-box" concepts. The play still carries a variety of challenges in this area. Despite having only six cast members, the show takes place over a couple of months and, as a result, each character has multiple costume changes. In addition, NY Man and NY Woman play multiple roles. These two roles add another dimension of difficulty for the costume designer as both actors will need individual costumes for each

character. This will help the director and actors differentiate these characters for the audience.

Schiebout, the scenic designer, will run into many of the same issues as Olson. Additionally, the director wants the different locations of “the city” to each have their own feel, truly creating the dual individuality/inclusivity of New York. Another request that Sahli will place upon Schiebout is a means of integrating the orchestra into his set design. A variety of ideas include placing the orchestra behind the patrons at center stage creating the illusion of the city extending, or behind the actors “in the set” adding to the hustle and bustle of New York.

The most difficult production role may fall on the shoulders of first year MFA Sound Designer Alex. The Andreas Theatre, where the play will be performed, is a notoriously difficult auditory venue. Naturally the stakes will be raised with the play being a musical in a “dead space” and increased by the request to connect the orchestra with the world of the play. Alex will also be asked to create an atmosphere of New York in the pre-show music. Sahli would like this to be created through music from other musicals which serve as homage to New York as Salzman and Cunningham intended *I Love You Because* to do.

The greatest artistic growth for Sahli will occur through a different stylistic approach than his earlier graduate works. In his previous directing projects, Sahli has produced two stylistically darker shows in the nonmusical plays *Frozen* and *Endgame*. *I Love You Because* is a stark change from these productions and will give Sahli the

ability to show how well rounded a director he can be or where his growth needs to be concentrated. As has been previously stated, two other struggles may stem from the dance and the text.

As Sahli is incorporating a choreographer into his production team, he will have to learn a means of effective communication with England to maintain a unity of style and message between the show and England's choreography.

The nature of the text gives limited background to the characters. For example, the script dictates that Austin and Jeff are brothers and Austin has recently had a bad ending to a long term relationship. At the same time the audience is never informed about some of the vital character information, such as why Jeff and Austin's views on relationships are so vastly different or what it is that brings Marcy and Diana together and cements their friendship. These things are not necessary to the story to engage the audience but Sahli feels that they are key bits of information that are missing for the actors playing the roles. Sahli intends to spend a fair amount of his time working with the actors individually as well as in a group to develop these back stories.

The play uses the very nature of musical theatre, its inherent blend of realism and fantasy, to mix its story in the same way. While "Another Saturday Night in New York" is unlike any other song within the production, it has the ability to fit into the world that has been created by the authors as a piece of exposition that sets the world of the play. Austin's ballads "Maybe" and "Goodbye" both begin in his living room and escape to a different area of the city as the song progresses. "But I Do" takes the four

principal characters from the physical world where they are separated to the emotional world they are sharing. These examples show another aspect of the homage Salzman and Cunningham were paying to their predecessors.

I Love You Because was originally written to be a celebration of New York, as well as a gender reversal of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. The final result is much more a celebration of love. Austen's work serves only as the basis for the story. As Sahli has interviewed and spoken with Salzman and Cunningham, he has found that they also believe that the end result contains the important aspect of love which should be emphasized in a production. They believed that a person's faults are just a reflection of their endearing qualities. Through its funny, heartfelt story, this play serves as a tribute to the lovers of the world, not just the New Yorkers whose city is being paid homage. In the end, this lovely story should serve as an enjoyable and lasting experience for both the audience and production team.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL/CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Joshua Salzman and Ryan Cunningham first met as students in the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at New York University in 2002. While in the program of twelve composers and twelve lyricists, Salzman and Cunningham were paired together in their first week and had an instant rapport. During their first assignment they wrote a song that they both acknowledge was unequivocally bad, yet the enjoyment they had working together was enough for them to know that they would continue to try and develop a winner.

Both Salzman and Cunningham were attracted to the theatre from a young age. Cunningham grew up in a musical family in Needham, Massachusetts. While learning to play multiple musical instruments at a young age, Cunningham eventually started his theatre career, like many in the industry, as a young performer upon the stage. He eventually began directing before making his first attempt as a writer while an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame. Cunningham's inspiration as a writer came from one of the industry's best, Neil Simon. In reading Simon's Rewrites, Cunningham says that he found the "painful core of comedy" (Cunningham). Still as an undergraduate Cunningham took his first shot at writing a musical, *A Chance at Love*. The show was a hit at Notre Dame, so much so that once the show closed, the cast of A

Chance at Love traveled around the country performing in the hometowns of the cast and anywhere along the way that would give them a viewing.

Meanwhile, Salzman grew up playing the piano from a young age. Salzman developed into a bit of a virtuoso. By the time he started his graduate work, he had already been an assistant for the music department for the Broadway productions of *All Shook Up* and *Wicked*. From these experiences Salzman learned “what it meant to work in professional theatre in New York” (mdtheatreguide.com). All the while he was able to master his own style of melody while studying his personal inspirations and masters of the genre. Salzman finds inspiration in the form of his two favorite composers, Richard Rogers and George Gershwin, believing that “They both have unending inventiveness in their melodies, while maintaining the ‘rules’ of the form,” a trait that can be heard in Salzman’s own work (Cunningham). Throughout *I Love You Because* there seem to be motifs and interludes paying homage to past musicals. When asked about this Cunningham said,

We very much wanted *I Love You Because* to be a celebration of New York. So you'll discover some classic song forms and styles throughout the show as we try to create the "contemporary song standard." We harken back to those old forms while trying to give them a contemporary spin. (Cunningham)

Once Salzman and Cunningham paired together, they quickly found a common friendship. As a pair, they decided that Pride and Prejudice would be the jumping off

point for their first full length musical, *I Love You Because*. They looked to Jane Austen's novel because of the contemporary themes they found in the 200 year old story. Salzman and Cunningham believed that the story of two people looking for love in a closely controlled society paralleled modern people searching for love. They found that today's society places roles and values upon people similarly to the way that early 1800s English society did. That is not to say the women and men fulfill the same roles but, instead, that people are cast into groups and personality types. These groupings are then expected to flourish and remain restricted, apart from one another.

What they also found was that outside of not wanting to try and write from the women's perspective as men who could not truly understand that point of view. They also wanted to explore the struggles of the dating structure of New York. While the show starts by following Pride and Prejudice, it doesn't maintain that path for long as it quickly takes on a life of its own.

We struggled early on with *I Love You Because*. We were trying so hard to stay true to Pride and Prejudice, and to tell the story of every character in that story—we used to meet some of Austin and Jeff's siblings and their mother and father. [Once these characters were removed] that was when the show really took on a life of its own. (Cunningham)

Salzman and Cunningham felt that the book was only meant to be an inspiration, so they followed their story to where it led them. Throughout the creation of their own story they believe they have maintained the theme of Pride and Prejudice,

“we've been honest to the central themes of Pride and Prejudice—true love is setting aside your expectations and loving the entire person because of everything that makes them who they are” (Cunningham).

As Salzman and Cunningham continued to write their thesis they ran into a variety of struggles along the way. It was the support of their faculty and committee that pulled them through.

I Love You Because was warmly received by our committee once it all came together. The faculty at the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program is wonderful, and they were able to guide us through a lot of the pitfalls that young writers make, and were extremely supportive of the project. (Cunningham)

Once completed, the success of *I Love You Because* really began to come together. After a successful initial run at NYU, the show was one of seventeen selections to be read at the 17th Annual Festival of New Musicals where it was picked up by GFour Production to be produced Off-Broadway at the Village Theatre with direction by Daniel Kutner in New York City. It even attained star power in this production for the character of Diana as it was portrayed by Tony Award nominee Stephanie D'Abruzzo (*Avenue Q*). The Off-Broadway production ran over 100 performances and received a Drama-Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Musical. The show's success came from its ability to draw in a young adult audience, a difficult niche to attract in the play-going community. Salzman and Cunningham believe the

play was able to do this as it was a play for “young audiences, written by young people” (Cunningham). This would certainly seem to be the case as both writers were 22 at the time the play was being picked up for production. The theatre critics seemed to agree as the play has been compared to the likes of hit television shows “Friends” and “How I Meet Your Mother,” a compliment the duo took as high praise. Closing Off-Broadway has done little to impede the success of *I Love You Because* as the play has been performed in six different countries in five languages to date. In addition, it has found its greatest success on the campuses of universities across the United States.

I Love You Because was not the end of Salzman and Cunningham’s collaborations. Since closing *I Love You Because*, the pair have continued to write together, completing the productions *Queen Esther* and *Next Thing You Know*, as well as currently writing their newest musical, *The Last Days of Gotham*, a play about the New York power blackout of 1977. *Next Thing You Know* was invited to perform at the Song Writers Showcase at the 23rd Annual Festival of New Musicals as presented by the National Alliance for Musical Theatre in 2011. *Next Thing You Know* finished recording its original cast recording in August of 2012. Salzman and Cunningham feel that the early success in their careers with *I Love You Because* has opened a world of opportunities for the pair. They also feel that the early work has not placed added pressure upon the two, rather they feel that people are excited to see what they will release next and that the pressure that they feel is the pressure that they have created for themselves.

To best understand *I Love You Because* there must be an understanding of Pride and Prejudice and, to a lesser extent, an understanding of the novel's author, Jane Austen. Austen's arrival on the literary scene matched and was a result of the Age of Enlightenment. This shift in the societal paradigm allowed for Austen's voice, as a woman, to be valued in a way women of the previous generation were not allowed. As a result of a great societal shift away from the structures of faith to those of the mind, women saw a great rise in their importance within society outside of household and nurturing responsibilities. Jane Austen not only took this opportunity to pioneer as a female writer but, more importantly, she wrote female characters from the female perspective. It is in Elizabeth Bennett of Pride and Prejudice that Austen created her most autobiographical character, as well as a mirror to the shifting ideas of the enlightenment (Barker 365). Elizabeth Bennett in many ways parallels Jane Austen as a woman who is discriminating. The old world charms of pomp and circumstance meant nothing to the character without a true development of intellect and reason to back it up. This idea is certainly the ideal basis of modern social decorum. In *I Love You Because* this is still displayed in the role of Marcy as she sees Austin as a love struck idiot until their time together has allowed for her to see past his outward façade to the character underneath it all, with whom she falls in love.

Another strong idea that stems from the Enlightenment in Pride and Prejudice is the importance of self in the act of love. Marriage, at this point in society and as displayed in the text, is no longer an accommodation made between the groom and the

bride's parents, rather the power has in some ways shifted to the bride to accept or deny the proposal of a potential suitor. In spite of this change within the structure of courtship, women still found themselves at a disadvantage to their male counterparts as the effect of age and inability to inherit wealth were factors. This is displayed in the novel through the marriage of Charlotte Lucas to Mr. Collins. Lucas, age 27, marries the dimwitted Collins for fear that she will become a burden upon her family and left destitute upon the passing of her father. While the women in today's society have reached an unparalleled height in rights and social stature, they are sadly still not on equal footing with men of the same status. In *I Love You Because* Salzman and Cunningham cleverly make slight references to this inequality. While the characters of Lucas and Collins have been done away with, Marcy gives a hint of societal views in the song "Alone." "One day I might land a meeting with a man who takes photos in France . . . I won't stay where I don't want to stay" (Salzman and Cunningham II-3). These words are one of those subtle indicators given by the authors that women are expected to make sacrifices in situations where men are not.

Jocelyn Harris says in The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen, "Critics blame Evangelicalism for Austen's apparent disapproval of drama" (Copeland and McMaster 39). This author believes that Austen did not disapprove of drama. In her letters there is nothing that would point to this, nor is there any documented correspondence with a companion that would inform the world of such. Rather it is the singular work of fiction Mansfield Park that leads critics to this conclusion. Even in

this book Austen is not attacking the art of theatre itself but a singular group of practitioners.

On the other hand, Austen's education in the world of theatre is well documented. Austen performed in her family's amateur production of Thomas Franklin's *Matilda* at the age of seven (Baker 599). Austen would go on to perform in ten plays before the age of eighteen. Austen was also well versed in the works of Shakespeare. Shakespearean plots would be used in several of Austen's stories, most notably the parallels of *Much Ado About Nothing* and Pride and Prejudice. This can be seen in both Elizabeth and Beatrice's revelation of love and inability to identify when they fell in love with their respected suitor. When asked why they are in love, neither can answer the question and, rather, teases their suitor.

Similarly, Elizabeth wonders why Darcy has fallen in love with her, "what could set you off in the first place? Was it her beauty, her uncivil behavior, her impertinence?" (Austen 421). In these exchanges the women explore the matters of love and how it is not one specific thing that results in one human being in love with another but a complex combination of stimuli. Salzman and Cunningham explore the same conundrum. Marcy states in "But I Do," "I wanted him 'cause he was wrong. I'm not certain how, but with him now is where I belong. I don't know why I love him but I do" (Salzman and Cunningham I-53). It is Austen's use of theatrical devices that has made her work so compelling for adaptations such as *I Love You Because*.

It is the theatrical devices that Austen learned in her youth and borrowed from Shakespeare that allow for her characters to connect with audiences. In this way Salzman and Cunningham were able to easily shift the character traits in Austen's novel to those of their play. It is the nature of Austen's writing style that has allowed for film and theatre to adapt her novel since its first publication.

So what is it about Pride and Prejudice that has made it rife for sequels and adaptations? According to Darryl Jones in his book Critical Issues: Jane Austen, it is the way in which Austen wrote her book. He claims that Austen's novel resembles a fairy tale more than any other genre of literature. He cites the opening narrative of "It is universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 3). This opening statement resembles "Once upon a time," but it is too simple to take literary narratives and classify a text as a fairy tale. It is the belief of this author that Jones ignores the fact that it is the universal themes in Pride and Prejudice, as well as fairy tales, which make the story translatable across time and cultures.

It is important to note that Pride and Prejudice was first drafted before and submitted for first publication in 1797. Upon its rejection it was reworked and successfully first published in 1813. This certainly lends itself to the thought that ideas are the driving force behind Pride and Prejudice as none of the major themes were changed. The societal norms and ideals would have changed during this sixteen year period. Jane Austen would have also changed during the sixteen years between first

submission and final publication. Yet the story was not discarded and this tells critical historians that the ideas remained intact. As noted in William Baker's Critical Companion to Jane Austen, Austen's novel would develop a following among family and familial friends. First Impressions, as the first draft was titled, would only receive date changes and minor edits.

In *I Love You Because*, Salzman and Cunningham admittedly diverged from Austen's novel. While they were able to maintain the themes of Pride and Prejudice, there are important parallels and omissions that must be observed and discussed. The most important, and glaring, omission comes in the reduction of the number of characters. In an effort to reduce cast size and the length of the show, Salzman and Cunningham eliminated many characters. The primary of these eliminated characters being the remainder of the Bennett family, the Bingley sibling and the Charlotte Lucas character.

It is important to note that in interviews with the authors they have not made reference to the elimination of a Caroline Bingley or Charlotte Lucas from their script, but earlier drafts contained scenes involving the Bennett parents and siblings. These familial characters are an interesting omission when compared to the role they played in the novel. The elimination of the character of Lydia could be a result of the altered views about premarital sex between early 1800s England and post millennium United States.

More importantly are the roles of the Bennett parents. In Pride and Prejudice, Mr. and Mrs. Bennett's personalities had resounding effect upon all of the Bennett children. While *I Love You Because* does not need these characters to tell the story, it becomes an important aspect of the story when the audience realizes that it was once there. The role of Mrs. Bennett seems to be the most impactful. If the play followed the novel's guide of Mrs. Bennett, her sole goal is to see her children married. This paints Austin in a light of being the obedient child trying to find this spouse and Jeff as a rebellious child fighting parental expectations. If viewed in this way it also changes Austin and Jeff's roles as paralleled to Elizabeth and Jane respectively.

This idea progresses to another important observation about how the gender roles may have switched in name but many of the personality traits remained with the respective sex. That is to say that while Austin is supposed to represent Elizabeth, it is actually Marcy who retained many of her personality traits and Austin resembles Darcy. Marcy, as was Elizabeth, is the free spirit, at least in the social context. While Marcy is a modern free spirit with visions of world travel, Elizabeth was the free spirit of her period. Elizabeth Bennett will not be content merely as a wife unless she is valued as an intellectual equal. Jeff is perhaps the truest gender reversal that is witnessed as he represents the Bennett clan's genuinely caring sibling, Jane, and the rebellious/free spirit, Lydia. It is this lack of change that says the most about gender roles in both centuries. In keeping these gender roles unchanged, Salzman and Cunningham were able to keep some of the underlying themes of Pride and Prejudice in their own work.

One of the most effective parallels in both stories is the understanding of who fell in love first. In both stories it is the male lead who is the first to fall in love, with the heroine coming to the realization later. In both stories there is a danger for the woman to fall in love. For Elizabeth there is the risk that upon marriage, Darcy may fall out of love and leave her destitute. For Marcy, she has to fear today's double standard of society. Is Austin using her merely for sex? Or worse, what if the relationship is real but after years, falls apart? Is there a negative connotation placed upon single women of a certain age that is not placed upon men? This idea is perhaps the greatest parallel between the stories. It plays to the idea of love being a selfless act. It means to give oneself over to another person completely and risk the pains that this may entail. Robert M. Polhemus says, in his book Erotic Faith, "*Pride and Prejudice* expresses the passion of modern individualism: the need to be noticed and loved for your own distinctive self" (45). The same can be said for *I Love You Because*.

Another parallel between the two seems to be the shared question of "What is love?" While there may be more, both works identify two forms of love. They additionally separate these aspects of love into the two primary relationships of the play.

The first seems to be a "juvenile love" which is formed out of both the physical and the whimsical. This love is almost "love for love's sake." It gives over to the joy of losing oneself in love and the draw of physical attraction. It is represented by Jane and Bingley, then Jeff and Diana. In the case of Jane and Bingley, both are noted for and make note of the other's physical beauty. In the modern *I Love You Because*, Jeff

and Diana bring the physical attraction to another level as fornication is no longer strictly a means of procreation but can simply be characterized as “fun.” In both cases it is important that these lovers are not strictly drawn by physical attraction but genuinely love their significant other. This is what distinguishes their love beyond an animalistic act to the classification of a form of romantic love.

The other form of love is settled in the partnerships of Elizabeth and Darcy, and Austin and Marcy respectively. They represent an “intellectual love.” Between both stories, the courting that occurs between these pairings does not identify physical attraction as what draws the characters together. It is their respective intellects and personalities that bring these relationships to fruition. Once again, in the modern adaptation, this budding romance leads to sex, after a physical or romantic act. Austin equates it to the intellectual in “Maybe We Just Made Love” as he sings, “We just happened to end up doing what two really good friends do. Like a crossword, or a puzzle . . .” (Salzman and Cunningham I-67). When these actions could have been physical they go back to the intellectual.

In both the cases of the “juvenile love” and the “intellectual love” the relationships are tethered to a deeper draw than a physical draw. In creating these separations Austen, as well as Salzman and Cunningham, are exploring the meaning and nature of relationships by dissecting love. While no true relationship is so cut and dried but rather an individual compilation of these traits, the audience is given the ability to see true love beyond its physical makeup.

Many aspects have been changed between Pride and Prejudice and *I Love You Because* but the most important aspects have remained, whether it is the interpretations of love or the characters. The characters of the play speak so truthfully because they are truly the writer's words.

Everyone in the show has a different attitude about love, and they are all attitudes Josh or I have had at one point or another. So it was a blast to take ideas we felt in a soft way, and crank them up to eleven for the sake of the drama. (Cunningham)

It is from these connections to the text that *I Love You Because* is able to serve as a Pride and Prejudice for the modern generation finding its way through the minefield of love. It is also why the musical is engaging beyond being an entertaining evening and actually serves as a meaningful contemporary story.

The relatively short history of *I Love You Because* leaves questions about the production that have not been previously documented. Authors Salzman and Cunningham have been accessible and honest about their process and have answered questions for this writing.

While paying homage to New York, the writing duo were also very successful in creating cohesiveness between the libretto and the composition of the music,

Josh and I always discuss story first. The dramatic moment is all that matters—and that informs all other decisions. Josh and I both are fluent in each other's crafts—but would never venture to try them on our own.

That means that we can both cross into each other's areas a bit and overlap our disciplines, which helps to make the show feel as if it's coming from one voice. (Cunningham)

Because this play has been such a personal work that has given back so much to these writers, it is interesting to know how it has changed for them over the years as their lives have changed as well. Both writers have seen their lives change in significant ways. Salzman and his wife have been blessed with their first child, while Cunningham has married.

As a result they see the piece through different lenses, "We now see *I Love You Because* as a snapshot of how we felt about love and dating at a specific time in our lives. The piece feels like a nice memory of an exciting time in our lives." With the passage of time the pair is well aware of the accomplishments they made with *I Love You Because*. With time they feel their central theme is more poignant than ever, as Cunningham believes, "The idea that you should love a person for the whole person is very important to finding happiness in love and life. That idea is central to the piece, and important to us both" (Cunningham). Because of the love and passion that went into the writing of this piece, Salzman and Cunningham created a musical that sings the praises of non-discriminate love. This author believes that it is this idea, above all else, that has translated the success of the play. It is this theme that is timeless that has carried through the years in the form of Pride and Prejudice, and it is this idea that will keep *I Love You Because* relevant and endearing.

CHAPTER III

JOURNAL

9/6/2012

Today we had our first production meeting, the concept meeting. I started the meeting with having each person state their position within the production. Once that was over I discussed my concept. I explained to the team that I feel that *I Love You Because* is about the acceptance as a whole of the person you love. I added an anecdote about how things that I disagree with Annie, my wife, are part of the reason why I love her. I discussed how the writers of the show saw it as a celebration of New York. I explained how I feel that the two ideas, acceptance in love and New York, have similarities. In my experience with New York, there seems to be a place for everyone, to me this is a combination of both individuality and inclusivity. While the two seem to be different, I feel that they can be related to New York having a niche for everyone. I feel that this may have been a bit incoherent as it was my first day back at the university from having bronchitis and still wasn't feeling great.

The most enjoyable experience of this meeting was working with Paul J. Hustoles. I tend to be a loose director and let the production team question me about my concept. After giving my concept the team had no questions. Luckily, Hustoles was there to help me out. He asked a variety of questions from the perspective of the

team. In the past working with teams that have consisted of the likes of more experienced artists, questions and ideas would arise from the team almost immediately, as these designers liked and flourished with the freedom I give towards design. I worry that without Hustoles asking questions for my young team they may not have come up with their own ideas about the show and I would have had to eventually spoon-feed them design ideas. I additionally am looking forward to working with Hustoles as I believe that he will push me to approach things in a different manner than is my natural instinct. In my past directing projects at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Heather E. Hamilton has been my advisor and she and I have similar approaches towards directing. Working with Hustoles will expand my knowledge base. It will also make me analyze different approaches, and decide when to stick to my instincts and when to learn from the much more experienced director. Either way it will be a great learning experience.

9/13/2012

During today's production meeting I answered any questions the team came up with so that they can continue to move forward with their designs. We also corrected an error on the production calendar. It had the preliminary ground plan scheduled for October 10 and the set design due on September 24. We corrected this so that Joel Scheibout will present the ground plan on September 20 and the set design on the September 27.

9/20/2012

In our third production meeting we saw the preliminary ground plan from Scheibout. It would seem that he missed the general idea for the set as he came in with a concept that clearly separated indoor and outdoor space. This was something that had been discussed in the previous meeting but may have not been stated in a clear enough manner. When addressing this, Scheibout struggled with the idea of using a more amorphous design that could serve all locations in the mind of the audience. Several times I used the term “the mind’s eye” as a means of communicating this ambiguous idea. Once we got past this initial hang-up, Scheibout struggled to think of ways in which he would be able to create items that would serve multiple purposes. In a previous conversation he had asked about the use of “black box cubes” to create these objects. I quickly stated that I didn’t want to go in that direction. I think that quick reaction may have stifled his creativity a bit. He seemed to think that this meant that I didn’t want to use any objects that could serve multiple purposes, which is not the case. My desire would be for visuals that are specific enough to create location without being pulled directly from the real world.

Another issue we faced with the set design was Scheibout’s idea of creating an outline of the city surrounding the audience. This had two major problems. The first, as brought up by Hustoles, was that it would draw attention away from the stage. This issue was tough, because I like the idea. We talked about a variety of ways of eliminating this problem. Ultimately, we discussed emphasizing the upstage area and

fading out from that point using forced perspective to force the audience's attention to the stage. The second issue was what material to make it out of? Scheibout brought in two ideas, cloth and pencil rod. I discussed how I felt neither of these would work. The cloth would have too much movement to it that would, once again, draw the audience's attention. The pencil rod, while better in theory, would be much more expensive and difficult to work with. Sadly, because Technical Director Eric Charlton was not there, we were not able to establish if he felt that he could manipulate this media.

Once we were done discussing the set we moved on to the costume design. Kristen Lerohl was very well prepared as she did not have any drawings due but she had some sketches already drawn. While her sketches effectively communicated the styles she felt for the characters, her manner of drawing is very stylized and doesn't effectively communicate color. As a result, the only way I or anyone else would be able to know what colors she had in mind would have to be told. Hustoles emphasized the point that sketches are the designers means of communicating with a director and that color is one of the most important elements.

9/27/2012

In today's production meeting we came back to the groundplan. Scheibout and I had met the day before to solidify some of the details for the set. During the meeting it became clear that Scheibout is still struggling to grasp some of the ideas that I am going for. I feel that he still wants to be too literal about the spaces. At one point in the

meeting when we were discussing how the bed would work, Scheibout, feeling that any folding unit would be too heavy, asked if I intended to move the bed out into the space. Being frustrated that we weren't making any head way, I said it didn't have to. Luckily, Hustoles instantly questioned me about this, as it would limit movement, so that I made the right decision rather than one out of frustration. Once out of the meeting I was able to relax a bit but I am still very nervous about seeing the design going forward.

We also looked at Lerohl's second renderings. They were much clearer this time around. She also asked about NY Man and NY Woman, specifically if he could wear a polo. I said that he certainly could as these characters should represent an everyman quality. The characters should feel like they are pulled from everyday life and then adapted for each individual role they portray.

10/04/2012

In today's production meeting we opened by looking at Schiebout's model of the set. He had built a one inch scale model. The fact that he made it larger than standard was nice, although probably cumbersome for him. The extra size made it visually easier to judge placement of set pieces as well as how much space that would leave for the actors to move around. We talked about the couch the most because I feel that there needs to be cushions on it. We discussed how do this, whether it be with cushions or some kind of a slip cover. The biggest concern this created is where do we put said cover/cushion when the couch comes apart to serve as chairs? The chairs do

need some sort of a cover as the script calls for Jeff to be shirtless on it a couple of times and I do not want an actor's bare skin on rough metal or wood.

We moved on to costumes and Lerohl presented a scene by scene picture plot that showed where she thought the characters were at that point in the play. The paper work that she brought in was visually confusing for me but it made sense to George Grubb and Hustoles. I asked Lerohl to send me her digital files. When I look through these I can clearly see where she is going. In this format each character is separated individually by scene and is not nearly as visually distracting. David McCarl, Lerohl's advisor, came to me later in the day and asked if everything was going alright with the costuming as he was concerned when she presented the same pictures to him. I told him that we had the digital files and that they were clearer.

We moved on to sound and Anna Alex was wondering if we could keep the sound engineer in the house during the show. I prefer this location as we will get a better mix in the Andreas Theatre. Because there will be rows that do not have seats this should be doable, which is great. I also let Alex know that I had listened to the mix that she presented last week. I like it and only asked that the vocal track be pulled back so that it isn't distracting to the audience. We finished the meeting trying to discuss budget but no one was really ready, so we moved it back to next week so that we can get more realistic numbers.

10/11/2012

Today our production meeting was very short. We have hit a bit of the doldrums as it comes to the production, where everyone has individual responsibilities that they are working on but they require little input from the team. Schiebout presented a paint sample that he admitted did not turn out and will bring in a second attempt next week. Mary Jane Olson brought in several pictures to display the quality of light that she envisioned for the show. We finished the meeting finalizing the budget which came out as:

Set = \$350

Lights = \$150

Costumes = \$150

Sound = \$50

Props/Spillover = \$50

10/18/2012

Today our production meeting was moved to PA 106 to make way for the mainstage production, *And Then There Were None*. We started the meeting addressing any concerns that Olson may have had as she needed to leave to join the other production meeting. We looked at Lerohl's full color renderings, which looked great and showed us everything we needed to see. We got the great news from Charlton that he was able to reduce his budget by \$50 which gave us some extra money for props.

10/22/2012

Tonight we held auditions. Three shows were auditioning at this time. These were *And Then There Were None* directed by Heather E. Hamilton, *Spring Awakening* directed by Hustoles and *I Love You Because*.

My show is exclusive with *Spring Awakening* but not *And Then There Were None*. I started the auditions at 4:00 P.M. with Hamilton in the Andreas Theatre watching the monologues. We saw a lot of actors before the dinner break at 5:00 P.M. but these were also the most developed actors. In the first two audition groups that totaled 22 actors, about 16 of them were the department's most experienced. As the monologues were intended for Hamilton's piece, I was able to get a nice feel for which actors had natural instincts and which did not, but outside of this no one really stood out.

Once the monologues were over at about 7:30 P.M., I hurried down to PA 126 to join Hustoles for the start of the singing auditions. Here I was able to eliminate several of the lesser known actors who read well enough but could not sing. Once again we saw some of the more experienced actors in the first few sets and I called many of them back, a fact that may have perturbed Hustoles. As the night went on I called fewer people back as the talent pool thinned out. In the early sections I called back actors that I felt would be right for characters knowing that some of them would not be available due to the priority of the main stage production. I did not want to eliminate them in case I got lucky and some of them would fall to me. When working callbacks, I

anticipated that due to our vast talent of female musical theatre actors, I would statistically have to get some of them, a theory that proved correct. In the case of the males, it is a different situation, as we have a strong upper crust then a steeper drop off then their female counterparts. This issue was also compounded by the fact that I could not use Austin England or Carter Allen, two of the upper echelon males because they are cast in *Cactus Flower*, which also has exclusivity with *I Love You Because*.

Another surprise in the auditions was the weak showing from the graduate students. Of all the graduate students, only two fellow directors, Matt Caron and Rusty Ruth were at both the monologues and the singing auditions. Not a single performance MFA was at both. As a result I didn't consider any of them, as I could choose from any number of undergraduate students who had taken the time and proven that they were capable of delivering worthwhile performances.

Once in callbacks, I quickly found that when it came to casting females I was set as the talent pool was so deep that I could cast for any role. The men were a different issue. A variety of the men would work for the role of Jeff. Jeff's vocal parts are less challenging than Austin's. Jeff's character can also fall back on the charm and humor of the character to endear himself to the audience. Austin, on the other hand, is a true romantic lead and isn't inherently funny enough to grab the audience's attention. Therefore, I feel that the actor that will play him needed to be able to hit the notes of the ballads with power and conviction so that the audience's heartstrings are pulled to follow him. This is where I got very nervous. Of the men I had called back only four

could sing the notes. Sam Stoll could but he struggled with the highest as he is a natural 2nd tenor. To Stoll's benefit though, he has a natural charm and ease about himself. Devin Bassart sang beautifully, although through the nasopharynx, but he physically does not match the ideal of a male lead and is hard to match against the females. Jordan Oxborough seemed as though he was a perfect match. I was nervous as I didn't like my odds of getting any of these actors. Luckily, Patrick Crowley was able to reach Ian Lah. I had called Lah back but he had missed the information and had returned to his dorm room. When Lah returned he was clearly nervous and quiet, but when he sang he had a very nice voice. I asked him to sing it along with me and match my volume, as we did this his voiced sailed.

With the women I was also set for my secondary lead. Marcy, on the other hand, really only came down to four actresses. Kaitlin Dahlquist, Callie Severson, Larrisa Schmitz and Cassie Johnson could all sing both the high and low notes with little trouble. I really didn't know if I was likely to have a shot at any of these actresses either. To my pleasant surprise, when I went to meet with Hustoles to cast the shows, I found that four of my six actors were my first choice. For the role of Austin it was between Oxborough and Lah. I was able to cast Lah. A young non-major named Steven Labine, who was in *A Chorus Line* as well as my Acting For Everyone class, was available and my choice for Jeff. In the roles of NY Man and NY Woman I cast Zach Bolland and Hannah Maslinski respectively. I have been in a show with four of these actors and all are hardworking, positive individuals and my first choices. For the

role of Diana, I cast freshman Rachel Howard who is talented but inexperienced. Marcy was a bit of a scare as I started naming actresses and soon found myself a ways down on my list before Hustoles stopped and asked if I had said Johnson. In what had been miscommunication that had turned suspense thriller, the names Cassie and Callie got mixed up. Once cleared up, I cast Johnson, my number one choice, as Marcy.

As we prepared to leave, Hustoles and I looked over my cast and acknowledged that I have a very young, albeit talented, cast. For me this is the most exciting aspect of my cast. I truly enjoy working with young, professionally minded actors and seeing how they grow. In working with actors like this I find that I have been able to help them find that they can do things that they, myself and occasionally even our faculty didn't know they would be capable of. I hope that I will be able to do this with this cast as well.

10/23/2012

Today was our first rehearsal. We started the rehearsal with a presentation of both the costume and set designs. As Lerohl presented the costumes the cast was impressed by both the visual display of the costumes as well as how many there were. When Schiebout presented the set they were quiet and were clearly aware of how much they will be a part of the set changes.

I then talked with the cast about my concept and how I want this to affect them. I told them that outside of the clear story implications that this entails, I want the cast to

understand that I want them to be cohesive as an ensemble. I told them that I will push them hard but never beyond what I believe they can take. I let them know that if I misread them that it is okay for them to tell me, Robb Krueger or Crowley if I am pushing them beyond their breaking point.

When we started the conventional part of the rehearsal, we simply did a read and sing through. As we went I felt really good about my cast. They all seemed to enjoy each other's company and made some nice choices. One of my greatest concerns was how the three younger, freshman actors would deal with the sexual nature of the script. I was pleased to see that they all took it seriously, understanding that it was comedy, they laughed but there was no snickering or immaturity among any of the cast members.

I finished the rehearsal by telling the cast how excited I was to work with them. I also told them that I do not cast anyone that I do not want to work with which, I believe, speaks to each of their personal characters. I thanked them for their work so far and sent them home at 8:45 P.M. to get some rest, to recoup from the long previous day and to prepare for the week to come.

10/24/2012

In tonight's rehearsal we blocked the entire first act of the script, minus the song blocking. I was a bit worried that we would be able to through the entirety of it, at 72 pages, in one night. But we were able to finish the final scene by 9:45 P.M. Of all of my rehearsals this was the one that I felt may be tight on time so a good start to the

process. Tomorrow night I want to block/choreograph all of the act one songs. This is the other night that will be tight but I think it will be achievable after tonight's process. As we were blocking, I was still able to do some character work with the actors so that was nice. I told the actors that this week would be tedious but once it was over we would be able to have some real fun with the characters.

10/25/2012

Tonight we blocked/choreographed all of the Act 1 songs. I started blocking "The Actuary Song" because England was going to come in when he had breaks in *Cactus Flower*. When England came in I stopped where I was so that he would have as much time with the actors as possible. He made it through half of the song before he had to return to rehearsal. While he was away I rehearsed what had just been taught to the actors. When he was able to come back we finished the remainder of the song then ran it a couple of times.

I continued to block the Act I songs. I saved "Maybe" for the end as only Lah is in that number. After he sang through the piece, I worked on some vocal methods with him. One of the first things that we worked on was creating and singing through a "funnel" of sound. This helped Lah to almost instantly center and control his voice with more precision. Lah has a wonderful voice but little experience. When I asked him how long he had been singing, he said since his junior year which I instantly thought "ok not bad," then I realized that since Lah is a freshman, that meant two years. Lah

will have the opportunity to grow a great deal as he is eager and excited to learn. He also picks up new ideas rather quickly. Once we finished it was 10:00 P.M.

10/26/2012

Tonight I had scheduled for us to block the entirety of Act II. Instead I blocked the act and all of the songs except for "Alone" and "I Love You Because," because I had not choreographed these yet. Even adding all of this to the rehearsal, we were able to get out of rehearsal by 9:00 P.M. so that the actors could enjoy their day off of school.

10/28/2012

Tonight we began the rehearsal after the actors that had participated in the strike for *The Mandrake* had eaten. When we started, I blocked the songs "Alone" and "I Love You Because." We then started a run through of the songs. I had sent Crowley to tape out the ground plan when we started the run through. After about a half hour he had finished and we finished the rehearsal up in the Andreas Theatre. This was very nice as I was able to start working with the actors on how to position themselves so that the audience is able to always see someone's face. This is an idea that we had talked about but they were able to really see once we had moved to the full space. I was also able to move around the space to make sure that the blocking looked good in the space and from all sides.

10/29/2012

Tonight we worked through Act 1, scenes 1, 2 and 3. I had wanted to also get through scene 4. I am not disappointed about this because we were able to get England in to finish the songs that he is choreographing and Robb Krueger, our music director, was in for his first rehearsal since his run in *The Mandrake*. England's choreography looks great and effectively accomplishes what I want the dances to do, which is create a different feel between the men's and the women's pieces. When working with the actors on scenes 2 and 3, I was able to send the actors that I was not working with to work with Krueger on music in PA 156, a practice room. I was able to go through both scenes and do some character work as well as positioning. We then brought everyone into the Andreas to run the opening number. In doing this I really worked on making sure that the spacing looked good. I want this number to be very crisp as it will set the mood for the entire production in the audience's eyes. Once we finished this it was 9:00 P.M. I decided that the best use of the last hour would be concentrating only on the music of "Another Saturday Night in New York." The vocals on this song are very difficult using the most complex harmonies of the musical. It also finishes in a fugue. As it was being worked through, the cast was working very hard. When we finished I talked with Krueger about taking this number slowly during the learning process. I reminded Krueger that the theory of chord structure is more difficult for others to hear, as Krueger has worked as a composer. We had a good laugh and both of us could see that everything will be fine based on how hard the cast works.

10/30/2012

Tonight we worked Act I, scenes 4 through 7. Before rehearsal even started I was glad to see Lah and Johnson running lines in the green room. This motivated me to tell the actors that they could use the Andreas Theatre space before rehearsals, or during the day if it was not being used by a class or the scene shop. I get excited to see this and have found that one of the great things about Minnesota State Mankato is that if you cast the right people, our students will work tirelessly. I believe that the talent we have can be found at a variety of universities but the dedication that is required of our young actors is unparalleled. We started by running each scene in the stop-go manner, stopping, fixing something on the spot, then moving forward. We did this through each of the scenes. This took us until about 8:30 P.M.

While working with the actors I looked at what each of them do habitually and pointed it out to them so they can work on breaking it. I talked with Lah about avoiding an odd habitual of his where he sits with his hands on his knees and his elbows facing backwards. Howard tends to set her hand high on her hip then lean into it. I wanted Johnson to be conscious of how expressive she is with her eyebrows. I talked with her about how this is great for moments of tension, positive or negative, but can come off as aggressive in more intimate moments. With all of the actors I told them that they had to eliminate these habituals for the time being and that once they had made more intrinsic character choices, I would allow them to use their personal ones if they still fit.

While I concentrated on the physical with these three, I had to help Labine to understand his ability. In the character of Jeff, Labine has been able to find the goofy and fun side of the character. He has oddly struggled with the more charming aspect of Jeff's personality. This surprised me because Labine is very charming. It seemed as if in these moments Labine was trying too hard. I told Labine that in these moments he needs to stop acting. I discussed that, I have found, when you have certain traits as an everyday person you do not need to "act" through those moments and that doing so can seem contrived.

When we finished the stop-go, we took a break, then ran all four scenes without stopping. After we finished this I gave notes to the actors and then finished the night running some of the choreography.

10/31/2012

In tonight's rehearsal we finished working through Act 1. I started the rehearsal giving the cast some gummy bears for Halloween. We then spent the first forty-five minutes of the rehearsal working on the music that we would be singing tonight. Prior to tonight's rehearsal I have been a bit nervous about some of my actors being stiff and a bit unsure if they were ready for these roles at their young age. In the second scene we worked on tonight one of the actors is drunk. Playing this idea was all they needed to relax. During and after this scene the actors loosened up and naturalized beyond anything I have seen from them. This was especially effective for Lah who looked like

a completely different actor after the fact. After this I was able to work with the actors on more character based work and less on principles of acting. We finished the work through at about 9:00 P.M. and spent the rest of the night working on music.

While Krueger worked through the notes and pitches with all of the actors, I worked specifically with the men on some of the pedagogical aspects of their singing. With both Lah and Labine I emphasized that while singing in the top of their range they need to relax the throat and sing through an open wind pipe. I also discussed how often, for tenors, trying to control the volume will restrict this. So to counter-act the natural reaction I told them that they do not need to hold back. I encouraged Lah to sing through the beginning of diphthongs as well. This was most prevalent on strong “I” vowels. We discussed how he needed to sing on the /a/ and then before hitting the consonant shifting quickly to and off of the /i/. We also worked with Lah from note to note in his ballads, as he had a tendency to punch from one note to the next. To illustrate, I compared it to a connect the dots. I discussed how if we lift the pen and hit each dot in order we have “followed the rules” but can’t see the whole picture, once we flow from one point to the next, the individual parts complete the whole.

11/01/2012

In tonight’s rehearsal I had originally scheduled for us to work the first half of Act 2. I decided before rehearsal that we would work all of Act 2. I went with this choice based on the fact that I would not have Krueger tonight and that Act 2 is short.

This will allow for tomorrow's rehearsal to be dedicated to the music and will be beneficial as Labine will not be at rehearsal for the next two days. So once we started rehearsal we worked each scene individually where I concentrated on the cast playing to the entirety of the audience, a note that I will probably be giving throughout the run. I sat in a different position during each of the scenes. The other idea that we are concentrating on is that the actors need to pay attention to one another. As a young cast they are working very hard to remember their blocking and their lines but, as a result, they are not connecting to one another. This is resulting in their portrayal of emotions appearing fake and contrived. Once we finished working through these scenes, we ran the entire act.

I then sat down with Howard, Johnson and Lah individually to talk about their characters and any questions they might have. Howard and I talked about how she felt she was having a hard time grasping Diana. So we discussed how Diana is very systematic and how this is a major part of what attracts her to Jeff. We also talked about how the emotional separation that is attempted by the two makes it difficult for her to function in the relationship because of her ordered and systematic nature.

Johnson and I did not have much to talk about as she has the best grasp of character to this point. What we did discuss was why Marcy backs away from Austin upon his declaration of love only to turn around and try to profess her own love quickly afterwards. I told Johnson that I believe that Marcy is afraid when Austin admits his love so quickly when Larry, Marcy's previous boyfriend, didn't say it to her for two

years. I also stated that I think that Marcy feels the love as well and it is this emotional “trauma” from the previous relationship that frightens her and causes her to back off.

I spoke with Lah last. We talked about how he needs to relax when on stage both intellectually and physically. I told him that he is currently shutting down when making minor mistakes. I told him that he does not have to worry about this and to have fun. I also asked him to trust me in worrying about the mistakes and that I will tell him when they are an issue. We then talked about how he is getting happy feet when he is alone on stage so we then worked on “Maybe” and I told Lah to take off his shoes and that he could not move his feet for the duration of the song. This helped to instantly ground him. I then told him to try the song again, he still could not move but rather than concentrating on the notes that he should lose himself in the music and have fun. Once he did, Lah’s voice sounded incredibly relaxed and the best it had since auditions.

11/02/2012

Tonight’s rehearsal had originally been scheduled to be the second half of Act 2. Since we were able to get through the entirety of the act the night before, we worked only music. The rehearsal was productive and we were able to work through all of the music, hammering out parts and balances. While Krueger worked on the notes, I concentrated on pedagogy with Lah and Johnson. Lah and I talked about releasing the tension in his shoulders and throat especially when singing the higher notes in his range. I also made him use a music stand so that he wasn’t tipping his neck straight down

when reading as he had. I worked with Johnson on softening her attacks, these are most pronounced when she switches from her chest voice to her head. She told me this was a criticism that she has often received. I discussed that she needs to learn to release air from the diaphragm slowly when changing positions as the volume that is produced is what is causing the sudden “attack.” As we worked through this we were able to reduce the sudden glissandos and volume separation between the voices.

11/04/2012

Tonight we ran the first act off-book. Overall, it went pretty well from this stand point. The song “Maybe” fell apart a bit. From a performance standpoint it was rather frustrating as the actors seemed to forget everything we had worked on while they were trying to go off-book. As far as playing to one section of the audience, this was the worst night we had had since the first rehearsal. Once the run through finished, I gave the actors a break while I talked with Crowley and Krueger about my notes for them.

At this point Krueger made a statement about how he hates first rehearsals off-book. For me this was nice to hear. As a director I forget how stressful these types of rehearsals can be for actors, even those as experienced as Krueger, let alone a cast as young as ours. When the break was over I gave the cast their notes emphasizing playing to the entire audience. I also talked specifically to Lah and Howard about not overplaying facial expressions. I told them that in an intimate space like the Andreas,

they do not need their faces to play from hundreds of feet. I told them that unlike traditional proscenium stages, they can actually communicate in more conventional ways. I emphasized with the whole cast how important it is to not worry about calling line. They all seemed so scared to call line during the rehearsal that the rest of their character work was falling apart. I told them that it is not a sin to call line at this point and that I need them to work on character and relationships. I also told them to let Krueger and myself worry about if they are behind where they should be on music and memorization of the script.

I ended the rehearsal telling them that they need to not be anxious about when we open, or when technical rehearsals start. I said that tech starting a week from Thursday sounds a lot closer than it actually is, that I will make sure that we stay on track, and all that I want them to do is continue to work hard and have fun.

11/05/2012

In tonight's rehearsal we worked scenes 1 through 9 of Act 1. Some things went well, others did not. We worked on the positioning of "Another Saturday Night in New York" then were able to move on. In scene 2, I worked with Labine and Lah on improving their pace and comedic timing. In the next scene I worked to break one of Howard's bad habits. She has moments when she does not look at the person she is talking to. She said that this is something that has been brought up to her that she does in her everyday life as well. I told her we were going to do an exercise to help break

this habit. I emphasized that this is something that commonly happens to actors and she is not odd in this trait. To help her realize when she is doing this I said that we were going to run the scene again and this time she would have to make eye contact with Johnson the entire time, including if Johnson had turned away, Howard would need to look where Johnson's eyes would be in the back of her head. To make sure that she was doing this anytime Johnson or I saw Howard break eye contact we would stop the scene back it up a few lines and then begin again. To my joy we only needed to stop five times and each time that we did Howard said she knew she had broken eye contact.

We ran the rest of the rehearsal working on a few things in each scene. Sadly, the negative aspect of the night is the continued concern that Krueger and I have had that Bolland may not be able to learn his pitches before we open. Bolland's audition was good and he got the notes on the released song. At this point this is the best we have heard him sing. We have worked with him on notes and he can get them in the moment but the next night we are back to square one. At this rate, I fear, he will not have the notes by the time we open. This means he is either not putting the work in or he is not a strong enough musician for the role. Where concern with other actors have been the rate with which they learn, Bolland isn't progressing and that won't work. Krueger and I talked after rehearsal and decided that we would wait until tomorrow to see if any progress is made. I said, if not, I would talk to Hustoles during our weekly meeting on Wednesday and we would make a decision at that point.

11/06/2012

We started rehearsal at 8:00 P.M. since it was election night. We ran through Act 2 off-book for the first time tonight. As we worked through the first act I took notes, but I also focused a lot of attention listening for Bolland in the music. He often struggled with the notes and had numerous times that he dropped out completely. After the run I gave notes, then ran several of the songs that Bolland sings at the piano.

We moved on and I worked several of the scenes from Act 1. I worked with Lah and Johnson as well as Labine and Howard on their respective character relationships. I let the cast go at 10:40 P.M.

Krueger and I decided that we would need to replace Bolland as he would not be able to sing his parts of the songs without someone else doubling his part and this would eliminate harmonies.

11/07/2012

Today was probably the worst day I have ever had as a director. I removed Bolland from *I Love You Because*. When I meet with Hustoles earlier in the day for my weekly meeting, we discussed the struggles and finalized that it would be best for all involved to make the move. We then discussed options for casting and settled on James Ehlenz. Ehlenz had been one of the actors that I had strongly considered for the role of Jeff before deciding on Labine. I started the rehearsal at 6:00 P.M. and meet alone with Bolland to talk to him. Ehlenz and Maslinski came at 6:35 P.M., I let Maslinski know

about the change while Crowley started to give Ehlenz the blocking. I then sent the two of them with Krueger to work on the music. When the rest of the cast came in at 7:00 P.M., I let them know about the changes. We worked through the remainder of Act 1, then brought Krueger, Maslinski and Ehlenz back in to work through Act 2. As we worked through the act, Ehlenz worked his way through the blocking and sang along. When we worked at the piano, Ehlenz really affirmed the casting change as we heard harmonies that had not been heard to this point in the process. While most of the cast was not terribly affected by the change, Maslinski was clearly more comfortable with Ehlenz.

11/08/2012

We ran the entire show for the designers and Hustoles first. The performance that was given was not a strong one in my opinion. We ran into a variety of issues that have both been worked on in the past as well as issues that had not arisen before. One of the biggest issues that we had was that the piano was too loud so that Krueger could not hear the actors and the actors could not hear themselves singing. To fix this I spoke with Crowley and Krueger about getting an electric piano for the remainder of rehearsals so that we will be able to control this until we begin using the mics. A continuing issue that we had tonight that I have been trying to stress is closing the gaps between lines. I have emphasized how important it is for the pace of this show to be quick and not drag. Also along these lines the actors have had a problem continuing to

act through both pauses in dialogue and musical rests. After the rehearsal finished I told them that they need to remain connected at all times in the scenes, otherwise their characters lose credibility.

Perhaps the biggest issue of the night had to do with lack of motivation behind blocking movements. This is something I have been working on with all of the actors but has been most needed with Lah. I have approached this from a number of directions with little desired improvement. I have tried letting Lah control more of his blocking so he may connect more with the movements but this has also yielded little result. This is something Hustoles and I talked about at the end of the night and I will go into further detail about later.

Another issue that I have been having with Lah is that he lacks energy almost every night until we reach Act 1 scene 9 when Austin becomes “drunk.” Each night, once this happens, Lah energizes and it is not an issue through the remainder of the show. I told Lah and Johnsen that I want them to start running this scene every night before rehearsal begins as a means of warming up.

Lah has also struggled with a great deal of tension while performing. He carries most of this tension in his shoulders and I have tried a number of ways to combat it. While Austin is a tense character, this has caused strain in Lah’s voice as well as taking his body out of the alignment for proper singing technique, most notably pushing his head in front of his shoulders and straining his neck.

After I gave notes to the cast, I went to see Hustoles to receive my notes. None of his notes really surprised me as they were things that I had been working on with the actors or saw as a struggle in my work. The biggest thing that he focused on was the combination of the actors ability to make and break connection as well as the expansiveness of my blocking. These issues caused each other to be more pronounced. I feel that I will be able to easily fix this by taking most of the same blocking that I have and reducing the individual footprints of a scene and keeping the actors in a closer proximity to one another. Several of the actors added quite a bit of additional movement to their blocking and wandered the stage in ways that they had never done before. This tells me that I need to work with the actors on consistency and settling their nerves when we have an audience.

One of my greatest struggles with the blocking has had to do with the scenic design. Scheibout's design has a very open floor plan, additionally he has provided set pieces but not locations. Earlier in the process I should have requested that he look at setting the locations rather than doing this alone. In blocking the actors setting anchor points for characters has been a struggle and this may have helped. Additionally, Hustoles felt that we needed to change Schiebout's paint treatment design to a more suggested setting than the literal one that he had decided on, which I agree with. I have felt from the beginning that Scheibout's idea for the show has been too literal and have not pushed that idea as much as I should have.

11/09/2012

We began working through the show for the last time before we begin runs. We adjusted some of the blocking and made some of the alterations as suggested by Hustoles. The things that I used worked with some of the actors and not with others. As we moved forward I concentrated mostly on shrinking the playing spaces in scenes. I also reduced the blocking that some of the actors had to help them to motivate movement.

We also added a few bits in several scenes. The best that worked was in the initial scene where the principal actors meet one another. I had re-blocked Labine to sit on the top of his chair, once he got to the line about mistaking an actuary for an ornithologist. I realized that he was perched like a bird so I asked him to try and “caa” at the actors during the awkward pause in between. This stopped the rehearsal for a minute, so I decided it was a good one to keep.

We finished the rehearsal after Lah sang through “Maybe.” Before he began I told him that I wanted him to forget about the blocking and move only when he felt he had to and to concentrate on singing. After the first run I told him that he did not need to act in this song the same way he did in other songs. I told him that the instrumentation playing under him will help express what the character is going through in a way that other songs can’t.

11/11/2012

We finished working through Act 1 then moved on to Act 2. We continued to work on the same issues as the night before. Once we had finished the work through I worked several scenes that needed some extra attention. The one that I spent the most time with was the love scene between Labine and Howard when Jeff hurts his back. I am having a hard time getting a credible reaction out of Labine. He is young and has never really hurt himself let alone something as essential as the back. After weeks of trying to talk through it, I brought in my own back brace to try and limit his movement. This did little to help as he bent through it but it didn't last once the brace came off. I will have him continue to use it for a few days hoping that some muscle memory might help, in the mean time I intend to talk with Hustoles, Hamilton and Paul Finnochiaro to see if they have other ideas and suggestions. We then spent the final thirty minutes working some music.

11/12/2012

We timed the show for the first time. It went well as the actors retained almost all of what we have worked on and they have continued to improve vocally and in their character work. I spent a lot of my time working scene transitions in my head. I worked between each scene where and what the crew will move. This will help to reduce what Maslinski, Ehlenz and the rest of the cast need to move. I have isolated the upstage third of the playing space as the area that the crew will strike, help set and

sweep to help the actors and draw less of the audience's attention. I also had the actors not cross through the house for the first time to get to their entrances.

Act 1 ran at 1:16, this included two major stoppages where Johnson didn't know where the backstage cross was and another where Howard didn't realize that the back hallway of the green room lead to another staircase that brought her to the other side of the stage. I had forgotten that these were things that the actors might not be privy to as Ehlenz is the only actor to have performed in the Andreas Theatre before. With these pauses counted and the time that will be cut once the crew is helping and the couch is actually a single casted unit instead of four individual chairs, I think this act will be running 0:55 to 1:00 in length.

Act 2 ran 0:40 in length without any major stoppage. Once the crew is assisting the transitions I think we may be able to run between 30 and 35 minutes. At the end of rehearsal I talked with the actors about keeping themselves healthy. I recommended using a humidifier with distilled water in the living spaces, scarves whenever they are outside or in cold areas and avoiding soda and replacing it with fruit juices with a citric acid if they need an energy boost. I also recommended natural supplements like vitamin C and Echinacea. To my surprise none of the actors had heard of Echinacea. I explained that it is a natural immunity booster and if they use it they need to take it at the opposite time of the day as any pharmaceuticals as it can nullify their effects and that it should only be taken for up to a week as the body can develop a short term immunity.

11/13/2012

Tonight we ran the show for the second night in a row. Olson, Alex and Robert Andersen, our sound board operator, watched the show as well. We ran both acts of the show without stopping. The total time came in at 1:56, very close to what we had run the night before. We had some issues with the scene transitions. Crowley and Ryan Strelow had delegated who would do what among the crew. They had Strelow taking care of the “easier” changes with our production crew doing the rest. I told them that I wanted Strelow doing the more difficult stuff as he will be here from this point to open. This way the more difficult changes will be taken care of by our most qualified team member.

At the end of the night I decided that tomorrow we would work through individual scenes and run the transitions. This way we will work on what needs the most attention prior to technical rehearsals beginning. This will also give the actors who need some vocal rest a more relaxed rehearsal before we go into six straight nights of full runs.

11/14/2012

Tonight was a quick rehearsal. We started at the top of the show and transitioned through each scene trying to tighten up all of the changeovers. It helped a little but until we get all of our crew members, it is going to continue being too much for the number of people we currently have. We also ran a couple of scenes but several

of the actors are vocally tired and not at their best.

At the end of the rehearsal I talked with the actors about sound tech. I told them that tomorrow, if they are still feeling vocally tired, we need them to sing at full voice once, but after the first run of a song they could mark. I then released the women and talked with the men about what it means to vocally spin tones. The women had heard of this term but the men had not, so I talked about what it means in terms of placement and vibrato control. I emphasized to Lah and Labine how helpful this can be with higher and softer notes. I also talked with them about how it reduces strain on the voice.

11/15/2012

Tonight was first Light and Sound Tech. Everything looked pretty good on their end. Sadly, the biggest issue had to do with the state that the set was in. Only two of the four wall units were up or even made, the pieces that had not been connected were lying on the downstage area of the set. We also had only the base coat down for the floor treatment, none of the paint around the set was done, several of the set units were still wet with paint, and the all of the set units still needed paint touch-ups.

This created a struggle to really get a grasp of Olson's lights because I wasn't sure what I could look at to get a true feel for what the set would look like. She had done a nice job separating areas, all I needed to ask her for was to expand a few of the locales and add some more face light. My favorite aspect of her design is the LED strip

lights that color wash the concrete rear wall. They create a nice ambient glow that really gives the feel of a city.

Alex had a very nice balance worked out between the very different voices. Not only are the women of this cast vocally more powerful than the men, Howard and Johnson have more classical training. Alex has done a very nice job adjusting individual EQ's so that all of the voices share the same world.

From the actor's stand point, we are still getting stronger every day. This is most apparent in Lah who is getting continually more comfortable with his character and vocally has grown at a rate that I had not expected. Tonight, when he sang his solos, it was evident the amount of work he has put in even from the previous night. The idea of spinning the tone that I had talked with him about had been received. Both in the soft opening of the pieces and the soaring middle verses, Lah's voice reverberated beautifully and added the needed character that had been missing. For tomorrow's rehearsal I am hoping that we will see a significant progression in the set.

11/16/2012

When I arrived tonight I was disappointed to see that there has not been any great advancement with the set. Charlton had hung the other two wall sections, which was nice to see, and he has now finished building all of the set's components. There will still need to be alterations made as the couch still does not have brakes and needs something to prevent it from rolling. He may also need to find some way of anchoring

the wall units, as they swing for quite awhile if they get touched even slightly.

Scheibout, on the other hand, has only added a texture speckling to the paint treatment and has not gotten any further. In addition, he speckled over scratches in the paint and lines from other painting projects that are now showing through the texture in a way that is not hiding the flaws. We are also still waiting for some of the props that we have not seen and I am guessing that I will not see a majority of the production props tomorrow night for first tech rehearsal. I am both frustrated and worried as there are a lot of projects to be done and, at the current rate of progress, they will not be finished, especially with the designers leaving over the Thanksgiving break. To add to this frustration I have been told by other graduate students who work in the scene shop that they had let students leave today from the shop because Scheibout had told them that he did not have work for them to do.

Tonight the actors made quite a few mental errors, most notably with lyrics. I emphasized to them that this is no longer acceptable, especially now that the stage managers are busy backstage and calling cues. Once I had said this I told them that, outside of this issue, they are doing a good job and we are in good shape as long as they keep working and retaining what we have worked on. Lah once again took a step up vocally tonight. I don't know if he is finally truly getting comfortable and relaxing, or if the work I have done with him has really connected intellectually or physiologically. Of course it is a combination of all of the above but when everything is "clicking," his voice sounds beautiful and soars.

11/17/2012

Tonight was first tech along with Hustoles's second viewing of the production. Before we even started there were a few issues. Krueger would not be here tonight, which we had known in advance. Then we also had one of our production crew members not show up, so we moved our light board operator to that position.

Once we began the show, the actors ran into a couple of problems. The first was one that has been a recurring issue: the actors are struggling to find their light. The second was that the actors were pushing and forgetting some of the basic issues and principles that we had been working on. The largest of these was they are not playing out and to the largest section of the house at all times.

This was the largest note that I received from Hustoles and spent thirty minutes after notes showing examples and working through this issue with the actors. This is an issue that seems like it is solved, but I am a bit worried what will happen when we get an audience as there are several issues that we have fixed that resurface once we get new audience members. This is a problem that I have not had in the past with more mature actors so I asked Hustoles how to handle these issues. He recommended that I just tell the actors outright that if they turn upstage and walk out of light the audience won't be able to see their faces and will lose interest. I had simply been saying "we can't see you" in these situations. While the difference in these ways of saying this idea is similar, Hustoles is more audience driven and I think will have a greater impact on the actors.

I also spent a great deal of time talking with the designers about what still needs to be done. I had a long list of things for Schiebout and Charlton. I then talked with Olson about needing more face light and bringing up the intensity of the lights in all scenes as well.

11/18/2012

Tonight's rehearsal went better than the previous nights. On top of our backstage crew getting a second shot at the transitions, Natavia Lewis joined the backstage crew. She has worked with Crowley and I before in this capacity, as she was backstage last year during my production of *Endgame*. This was very helpful as she was prepared and needed very few instructions to run the transitions.

The actors also had a better run and concentration, resulting in them following their blocking and paying attention to where they were playing. They still had a problem stepping out of light. To finally fix this I told Olson to give me a chart of her light pools and I would set what areas I want open for each scene. She can then make her shifts for the music as needed. I also told the actors that Olson and I would be doing this and if they step out of their light any more during rehearsal I would be yelling to them from the house to get back in light. I hope that this will make the actors stick to their blocking and help Olson be sure of the difference between where the actors should be and where they have been incorrectly going.

I was also upset to see that Schiebout had not gotten any further with the painting. This lack of progress makes me nervous that I will not see the full paint treatment before we open.

11/19/2012

Tonight we finally saw some progress on the painting of the set but sadly it caused more problems. Scheibout had taken the afternoon to finally paint the outside of the stage black. When he did this, the measurement ended up off somehow. I am not sure how this happened but the difference between the black sections on the outside of the stage was one foot ten inches, a visually obvious discrepancy. In addition to being visually unacceptable, it threw off Olson's entire lighting plot which has to be refocused.

Sadly, despite Scheibout having half of the shop staff to help him this afternoon, only this mistake occurred, and other painting projects were not advanced. At this point I am worried that we will need to begin pulling elements from the design. When I brought this up, Scheibout said that this would not be needed. I am also concerned about the wax coat that is supposed to go down. I believe that it will make the floor slick and dangerous for the actors. John Paul viewed the last 30 minutes of the show tonight and when I brought up this concern to Scheibout, Paul said that it should actually make the floor tackier.

During the run of the show the actors are continuing to progress and will be fine. What I worry about most for their sake at this point is the still constant changing of the setting around them and how this will affect this young cast.

At the end of the rehearsal I sat down with Schiebout and Olson to figure out how we can fix the stage paint in a way that is quick enough that Olson can refocus her lights. Ultimately, we decided that we would re-paint the sections so they line up correctly. Ideally, Scheibout would have done this tonight so Olson could refocus tomorrow but he had to leave at 10:15 P.M. so this didn't happen. Instead he put down tape where the paint will be and Olson began focusing to the tape lines. Crowley and I will need to reset and spike out the furniture tomorrow once Scheibout has repainted the floor.

Olson was still focusing as I left the building at 11:00 P.M. after finishing my notes with the actors, Krueger and Crowley. I will talk with George Grubb tomorrow morning about whether he believes Scheibout can accomplish everything he needs to get done at this rate. I am extremely upset over the fact that we have been waiting to make progress and this delay has caused Scheibout to rush and wreck work that has already been accomplished. I am unsure how I could have avoided this, without crossing a line and being too pre-emptive. I have tried to look at where we were and trust that the designers could accurately gauge their progress level and feel out where they should be.

11/20/2012

Today I feel like we have finally made some progress on the painting of the set. Grubb sent me up to the Andreas during shop hours to work with the crew, which was nice. While we were up there, Scheibout said that he didn't need the extra help. I disagreed so Grubb gave us 3 extra people to help and I started to delegate painting jobs out to the people we got.

Tonight we finished our last technical rehearsal. After getting a good deal of the painting done we were finally able to see what the set should look like. Olson also got her refocus done. So this was a nice change of pace.

11/25/2012

Tonight was a very busy evening as it was first dress, as well as our first night with the full band. It was nice to see that a majority of the painting that needed to happen was done when I arrived. So we are almost done with the set going into tomorrow's second dress.

I was a bit worried about how the dress would go as Lerohl did not arrive until 7:00 P.M. and the actors had a variety of questions. Luckily, the run went quite well with only two costume changes that we needed to stop for. Each of these was quickly talked through and should run fine tomorrow.

The biggest problem of the night was that the amp for the bass was causing the entire room to act as a subwoofer as it was sitting on concrete. This caused us to have

to push up the volume on the rest of the orchestra and increase the treble from the actors' vocals. All of this combined to cause the whole sound of the rehearsal to come off as canned. Alex and I talked about the problem during the intermission so we had some time to think about solutions. Once the second act had started and I had heard some of the songs and was specifically listening for a solution, I talked with Alex about trying to not cover the bass and instead leave it alone and try to bring everything in line with it. The next song that we heard was "But I Do" which sounded great in this new balance, so I thought this might work. The next song was "That's What We Do It For" which sounded awful. At the end of the night I talked with Alex again and asked if we put the bass's amp on top of a piece of industrial foam to reduce vibration transfer into the concrete and then surrounding the area with curtains might work. We both thought this was a good idea so we decided to try that tomorrow, as well as covering the amp with some of the additional velour fabric that we have to also dampen the output.

At the end of the rehearsal I gave notes to all of the designers, finishing with Lerohl. During the rehearsal I had talked to her about thoughts I had, so to finish the night we just went over these to see if she had any questions. All of the notes should be possible, as most were about minor adjustments. I asked to change a couple of articles of clothing that I felt did not fit but Lerohl did not feel that these would be hard to replace so all should be fine. The biggest issue that we came across was that several of the costumes just didn't fit. This was most noticeable on Johnson who Lerohl had put in shirts that don't fit but used belts to try and cover this issue.

It was nice to see that the actors clearly continued to work during their break as they did not take a step backwards. The designers are all close to being done so we should be fine for the student preview on Tuesday.

11/26/2012

We had our final official dress as tomorrow is Student Preview. While tomorrow will still be a rehearsal I tried to emphasize that everything should be done from the technical standpoint. To me this is not important for the students who are coming to see it, as it is free for them. I prefer this so that the cast gets at least one rehearsal that is at performance level. Luckily I had very little notes for the technicians, so we should be in a good position.

The actors are also in a good place. The biggest struggle of the night came when Johnson lost her lyric on "Even Though." She has had a struggle with this song the last two nights which is new and now seems to be getting to her. Later in the night during notes, I told her to relax and let it go if she needs to ignore the blocking in the song that's fine, and that the biggest thing is that she looks over the piece but not to let it become a fear.

I feel that we are in a position that we will be fine for tomorrow and an actual audience. I feel that there are things I could have done better or that I have been trying to get the actors to do differently. In spite of these issues I am incredibly proud of the growth I have been seeing from a very young cast and while this will not be my best

production at Minnesota State Mankato, I do know that I have also grown as a director through this process and am confident in my abilities as such.

11/27/2012

Our student preview went well. Everything from the technical side was done, by the end of the run I had given each of the designers a couple of notes. For the actors it was nice to finally have an audience. The audience certainly seemed to enjoy the show and it was good for the actors to get laughs.

With student previews it is always a struggle figuring out what will be genuine laughs from a paying audience and what is happening as support from fellow students. While we certainly got the latter, we had a surprisingly small student contingency. Of the fifty or so in the audience no more than twenty were theatre majors, the majority of the audience was either part of the ASL group or elderly from the nursing homes that come to our previews. We also had a nice number of laughs from these groups as well.

During the rehearsals leading up to tonight, I was worried that the cast had been lacking energy and they had been getting notes to pick up said energy at the top. I forgot how large an effect an audience can have on such a young cast. As the show started the cast was incredibly “amped up.” For the first three scenes they were a bit off from their regular rehearsal performances, after this they “naturalized” but they still were over energized. This lasted through the entire first act. Once the second act started they were great. They had “leveled off” the energy they had added to their

performances. I have never been so happy to have a preview audience at Minnesota State Mankato; this young cast needed this rehearsal with an audience to balance their nerves.

At the end of the night I had them run the first number so that they could remember what it should feel like when it is more balanced. I talked with them about finding this balance and how important this is, especially when singing. They need to be conscious of what they are doing vocally and not push outside of their comfort zone and “blow out” their voices in doing so. I also talked about how much I have enjoyed working with them during this show and how proud I am of what we have put together. During the rehearsal process I have emphasized that what we do for a living, or education, is fun and that when it stops being so we are doing something wrong and it is no longer worth the effort. I re-emphasized this point, said that all the hard work we have put in is for this purpose. Now more than ever they need to enjoy what they are doing and that this will show through to the audience.

11/28/2012

I had hoped that last night’s student preview would help to relax the cast for tonight’s opening performance. This wasn’t quite the case as the cast came out a little over-excited. It took them until half way through the first act to level out and the second act was great. Hopefully with each performance they will get better about this. To try and help them to remember to stay level, I put together a list of mantras for them

to remind themselves of nightly. These emphasize: Do what we rehearsed, no more no less; Stay natural, don't push for laughs; and the unofficial motto of the production, Don't upstage yourself. I then finished this with my favorite quote from the world of acting: "Dream as if you'll live forever. Live as though you'll die today" (James Dean).

11/30/2012

I filmed the performance tonight. It was nice to be back in the audience after not being there the previous night. I was still in my office during the previous performance, so I still struggle to fully relinquish control, as we had photos later that night.

By the time the house closed we had filled about 90 percent of the audience. This resulted in what I believe was the actors' best performances and the audiences' best response. I had been right that with each night the cast would get more comfortable with the audience and tonight I got the performance that I had been looking for from them. During the filming I had a couple of issues. First the camera was oddly unbalanced and caused the stage to appear to be tipping. The tripod was leveled so I couldn't figure out what was going wrong and couldn't fix the issue until intermission when I set the tripod out of level. The second is a recurring issue when I film, where my benign essential tremors cause me to have moments where I shake the camera a bit. Stage directing is probably a good place for me. All in all the recording was very good

and the performance could hardly be better so I won't record a second time.

Another odd thing that happened during the recording was that it brought me back to my days of playing football. While watching through the LCD screen I remembered how helpful watching game footage was in football and realized how beneficial I could have made it during the rehearsal process. My biggest problem during the rehearsal process was that the actors struggled with upstaging themselves and, outside of when I would literally stop them in motion so they could see where they were looking, they didn't remember doing so. This brought me back to football where coaches showed us game and practice film to show us where and when we were making mistakes. In general doing this with actors would be overkill but in this case where 2/3 of my actors were young, teenagers, it may have made a difference seeing themselves make the mistake.

12/02/2012

Tonight we had about 1/8 of the audience walkout by the fifth scene, I was just floored. I thought the cast was doing a good job, not their best performance but good none the less. My heart just sank. Not only did this throw the cast off, it threw the audience off as well as the laughs became very tenuous for a bit. The group that had left had apparently been a church group who felt the themes of the show were too "mature" and that there should have been a content warning. The remaining audience finally came back to life a couple scenes later. Sadly, I felt the cast was a little bit off

the rest of the night as they seemed to be pushing a little bit for laughs and fell back into some of their bad habits. Luckily, the pushing was only apparent to me as Hustoles spoke with me in passing after the show and said that the cast held together well.

During the remainder of the Act, I felt sick to my stomach not knowing why the group had left. My thoughts instantly began to question the quality of the show, which caused me to race through a range of emotions. I tried to see if I looked at the show through rose colored glasses. I don't believe that I romanticize the quality of the show. I am aware that this will not be the best work of my graduate school education. That being said I feel it is still a good show and am very proud of my actors. This brought me to my second emotion, I got very upset that someone would walk out on my actors. I am very protective of these young artists as I have seen them grow. I have also seen that the biggest issue that each of these actors struggle with is confidence. Seeing people leave made me worry that the actors would question themselves. To my joy they didn't, perhaps that is the most telling fact of their growth during this production. During the intermission I was told why the group had left and this eased my mind considerably. I was able to enjoy the second act and the end of the run. This rush of emotion may show that not only is my cast young, I am still relatively young and can let my emotions affect my psyche in the heat of the moment. This is something that I know will balance with age, I also doubt anyone would ever describe my outward demeanor as irrational, out of control, or impulsive.

With the show now over I can look at it with pride. As I have said I know that this is not my best work, I would still judge that to be *Endgame*. But this is not a declaration of surrender. While my composition and blocking could have been stronger, I also should have turned over all of the dance numbers to England. I do know my vocal coaching was strong as I saw growth in each of the actors and I take greatest pride in the actor coaching of this production. While working with the actors each became better at their craft, not only in their technical skill but in their comfort with their own abilities and personalities. The actors functioned as an ensemble unlike any I have worked with before. Ultimately, this show left me with the assurance of knowing that I want to teach for the rest of my life, because seeing these six artists grow makes me feel better than anything else I have ever done.

CHAPTER IV

POST-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This is the Post-Production Analysis for *I Love You Because* by Joshua Salzman and Ryan Cunningham as directed by Adam Karal Sahli. The production of *I Love You Because* ran between November 28 and December 1, 2012. This chapter will analyze the Pre-Production Analysis, the Historical/Critical Analysis, the documentation of the rehearsal process and the process itself, and the performance and growth of both the director and the actors. The analysis will look at both the successes and the failures of each area.

The Pre-Production Analysis goes into depth about the plot of the script. This is its biggest fault. Throughout this ten page declaration Sahli doesn't spend enough time really pulling the script and score apart. As Sahli wrote this section, there are some really strong moments where he looks at the script and analyzes it in a way that is beneficial to all in the production. Some of the musical analysis also shows the director's understanding of this artistic mode. A prime example of this occurs on pages 8 and 9 where Sahli analyzes the importance of a high A in Jeff's part during "But I Do." Sadly, there is an underutilization of this sort of analysis. While it shows that Sahli has knowledge of these art forms, the lack of depth leaves the reader feeling that Sahli had not spent enough time analyzing the material or, at least, did not do a strong

enough job documenting the work he had done.

Sahli then looks at the original intent of the authors to create a musical version of Pride and Prejudice, the musical influences of the Salzman and Cunningham, and aspects of modern society upon the story. While all of these areas would be discussed in the following chapter, Sahli missed an opportunity to delve into these in this chapter. Sahli also looked at some of the character work and actor coaching that he would have to do with the actors. He then described some of the issues that he would address with the actors playing the roles of Austin and Jeff. He once again shorts himself as there is no mention of the four other characters and struggles that may be encountered during the rehearsal process. This common theme of short sighted writing indicates an avoidance on Sahli's part to go into great depth on any one subject.

Later in the chapter Sahli goes on to talk about the two artists that he brought in to help with the choreography and music direction. Between these two very important areas Sahli dedicated only a half a page. In addition to lacking documentation of what Sahli expected from his collaborators in these areas, he also fails to document his own knowledge and experience in these areas. In the case of his work alongside Austin England, the choreographer, Sahli brought in the artist to work with the actors on "Another Saturday in New York" and "That's What's Going to Happen." Sahli had very specific movements and motifs that he wanted incorporated into these numbers, these were not documented in either Chapters 1 or 3. Sahli and England meet both prior to the days dedicated to blocking these numbers and collaborated during the

choreography itself. In the writing of this paper the reader is not informed of Sahli's fingerprint on the dance numbers, nor Sahli's dance experience of two years of both tap and jazz training at the undergraduate level, an additional three years of private jazz training and one year private tap, along with various dance heavy roles.

Similarly, the reader is uninformed of Sahli's work with the actors from a musical standpoint. Throughout the production of *I Love You Because*, Sahli was very involved in the vocal development of the actors. While Robb Krueger served as the music director, working on rhythms and note placement with the actors, Sahli worked as vocal coach emphasizing vocal placement, pedagogy, sound shaping and range stabilization. Sahli talks little of this in the third chapter and almost not at all in the first. Sahli's undergraduate work in Musical Theatre Performance emphasized music theory, conducting, choral diction, class voice and voice lessons giving him a strong knowledge base to work from.

The remainder of the first chapter discussed the technical areas. This is an area Sahli feels that he should have gone to greater depth with: first making very strong choices about what he wanted to see from each of the designers; and, second, putting more pressure upon the designers to collaborate with the director. The second issue will be discussed in detail when addressing chapter three. The issue of not making strong choices came from Sahli's previous experience with designers. In the past Sahli had been able to create his concept and then allow the designers to create their own designs influenced by this concept. In this production, Sahli's team consisted of either first time

designers or designers who had not worked with the production rigors of Minnesota State Mankato. The fact that Sahli didn't look at his team's experiences ended up becoming a problem when paired with his "hands off" approach to the design process.

Sahli follows this with a discussion of how he intended to work with choreographer England. In this discussion, Sahli addresses how he intended to put his finger prints upon the choreography. In retrospect, this is a bit humorous for several reasons. England is as or more experienced as the design team in their respective areas. England has also worked with Sahli, as an actor, in the past and came into the production with the best sense of Sahli's artistic style. The collaboration between England and Sahli seems to have produced the best results, as Sahli had clear movements in mind then would bring them to England who put them together in a beautifully cohesive manner.

Sahli's main goal of working on character development and actor coaching was very successful in this production. In this way the goal of this chapter was accomplished. On the other hand it may be fair to say that this was a weak goal. In past productions it would seem that Sahli's greatest strength may be in actor coaching, as he has been able to get performances out of actors that have been unexpected. Based on his past productions, it may have been better for Sahli to create a goal that would force him to further develop less accomplished skills.

Sahli's Chapter Two brings some new information and analysis of source material for *I Love You Because*. Sahli took the opportunity, during some of his early

work for the production, to interview Salzman and Cunningham several times via email and phone conversations. In these interviews, the authors offered candid and frank discussion about their process in developing the show as well as support for Sahli's own interpretation of the piece and his own project. Sahli was able to find information about the authors and the original production through reviews of the show's original Off Broadway production. Through the interviews, Sahli was able to obtain previously undocumented information on the authors' inspirations, stumbles and goals for their original show. One such item was their original struggle with staying true to Pride and Prejudice and the growth the show made when they created their own interpretation. The divergence from Pride and Prejudice would be noted by some of the audience members of this production.

Sahli goes on to look at *I Love You Because*'s success Off Broadway. Perhaps, the most important thing to take away from this is the understanding of the show's ability to draw young adult audiences, a group that is be important to target for a university production.

The analysis of Pride and Prejudice that follows certainly doesn't lack for length. Sahli delves into a breadth of information analyzing Austen's novel. The issues covered vary from multiple scholars' views on the book, to Austen's personal history and the book's publishing history, to the sexual relationships of the characters. Throughout Sahli draws comparisons between the book and the play. Ultimately, this section is long winded due to the fact that only someone studying both pieces of

literature would be able to note these parallels while viewing a production. As a result, this information may be valuable to Sahli's analysis and understanding of the writer's intentions, but holds little value to anyone tied to or viewing the production.

An interesting tidbit from this chapter is the information that in earlier versions of the play more of the Bennett family was seen. To this author's knowledge this is the first documented source that contains this information. This was an interesting revelation.

The analysis also looks at several of the differences between the play *I Love You Because* and Pride and Prejudice. These differences in the end are more numerous than the similarities that remained. This fact that was not lost on several audience members, as a group of 26 walked out, thinking they were going to see a musical closer resembling the original novel. It is important to note that Sahli and the authors admit to these differences and identify that it is the themes that tie the two shows together.

The final piece of analysis that Sahli looks at is the definitions of love. He compares different types of love and how these forms tie into the story. It is this analysis that is the most pertinent to Sahli's production as these can be seen in the primary couples of Austin and Marcy as well as Jeff and Diana, and were used to help develop the character relationships between them.

Analysis of Chapter Three has no need to be long as it is straight forward and its final product will be further looked at later in this chapter. The two largest issues that should be addressed are the two issues that caused the greatest strife within the

production. This would be the design of the set and the struggle with actors upstaging themselves. Within the production meetings, the team looked at the initial scenic design no less than four times trying to create a finalized design concept that worked for both the director and the designer, Joel Schiebout. Sahli's desire to give the designers room to create their own ideas about what his concept meant may have caused unnecessary struggles, as Sahli should have made the decision about what the design would be after a second attempt. This will be further discussed later in the chapter.

While working with the actors, Sahli's greatest struggle appeared early and never seemed to go away. Sahli spent a great deal of time trying to get the actors to understand how to position themselves so that they were visible to the greatest number of audience members at any time. Sahli tried multiple blocking configurations, stage pictures and ways for the actors to view the stage. Despite these attempts he was unsuccessful. The inability to get the desired result from the actors implies that Sahli was unable to effectively communicate his ideas and needed to communicate through different means. In his penultimate journal entry, Sahli may have stumbled upon what would have been the best answer to the problem. The idea of using video footage to help an actor would tend to be against Sahli's instincts as a director and would be something that he has not tried before. At the same time this cast, as group, had no experience performing in the deep thrust configuration, and very little experience viewing theatre in this formation. Seeing where they were making mistakes may have helped the actors to see exactly what was being discussed.

Once the rehearsals ended the audience saw the culmination of everyone's work. Throughout the production there were plenty of learning experiences. When working with the production team Sahli was working with a varied level of expertise and experience. As always, working with each designer came with its own set of difficulties based on the individual designer and director's experiences. Lighting Designer Mary Jane Olson, for example, had more experience in production teams at Minnesota State Mankato than anyone outside of the production advisors. Still this was her first opportunity to have a realized lighting design. Both these strengths and weaknesses showed during the production. In the early light and sound technical rehearsals, Olson's lighting was dim and made it hard to see the actors' faces. To Olson's credit, her production experience showed. Olson proved incredibly easy to work with. She quickly adapted her design as needed, questioning only what specifically was desired. By performance time Olson's design was practical, allowing the audience to easily see the actors, and artistic, creating the varying locations and atmosphere of New York City.

Costume Designer Kirsten Lerohl is a BFA candidate in Theatre Design/Technology with an emphasis in Costume Design, so she clearly has skill in her area. Lerohl's greatest struggle throughout the process seemed to be communication. Sahli often had questions for Lerohl that were communicated through the rehearsal report emails. These issues would not be addressed unless Sahli specifically found and talked with Lerohl face to face. Once discussed, Lerohl would usually finish any

projects, though this often took some time to be accomplished. Lerohl's aversion to communication created stress for the director and others even outside of the production team as her advisor, David McCarl, needed to ask several times if deadlines were being met. In the end the costumes were all finished, though in performance there were issues that were not addressed. Often costume corrections would not happen in a timely manner. In one instance, Sahli requested a shirt for Rachel Howard to be rigged for a quick change. This did not occur before the next night's dress rehearsal and waited until the day of the first performance, giving the actress no time to work with the correct costume piece. Additionally, a shirt worn by Steven Labine was painted by Lerohl. This shirt read "Is your name Summer because your'e hot?" Sahli requested that the incorrect apostrophe be corrected, by the end of the production nothing had changed. In this case Sahli made his issue clear to the designer but went no further in ensuring that these projects be completed. In both cases, once it became clear that Lerohl would not accomplish these tasks, Sahli should have gone to George Grubb, the production's technical advisor, to ensure that all projects got the necessary attention.

A very pleasant surprise throughout the production process was working with Technical Director Eric Charlton. Charlton has not had many projects during Sahli's time at Minnesota State Mankato. Charlton is also very quiet and has a shy demeanor that often caused the director to wonder how everything was going. Yet Charlton was always confident in his progress and always met all of his important dates. While he ran into a couple of struggles in the process, he also quickly came up with solutions to

each project. Charlton's hard work made him easy to work with for Sahli and the two never had any miscommunications.

Sahli felt that he had the best experience working with the Sound Designer Anna Alex, a first year MFA Sound Design candidate. *I Love You Because* was her first project at Minnesota State Mankato though she has had many professional opportunities in the field. The Andreas Theatre creates several issues for a sound designer. Alex attacked all of these issues head on, addressing several of the issues before rehearsal would even begin. Alex, along with the project advisors, also talked Sahli out of an initial idea of his, which was using songs from New York based musicals as the pre-show music. Not only would this have disconnected the audience from the show they were about to see, it also would have been costly, or illegal, to obtain any rights to make this idea a possibility. The greatest issues that Sahli needed to address with Alex were finding volume levels for the scene change effects, solving an issue with the bass amp, and having her work with her board operator to reduce feedback. Alex, much like Charlton, was a joy to work with due to her open demeanor and ability to communicate with the director whenever problems did arise.

Sahli's greatest struggle came in working with Scene Designer Schiebout, a second year MFA Technical Direction candidate. From the beginning Sahli and Schiebout clearly saw the themes of the show differently. Sahli's concept centered on the acceptance of another person when in a loving relationship. The designer and director went over the initial design several times trying to find one that would fit the

concept. Sahli never felt like Schiebout's design of black angular steel furniture ever fit the play, Sahli's concept or the production's style. Additionally, the location of the furniture in each scene to set location was done by Sahli, as the rear wall was the final location of the designer's set. Ultimately, this design felt out of place when visually partnered with Olson's lights and Lerohl's costumes. Sahli had desired not to step on the toes of his designers but clearly should have been more forceful with Schiebout, even if it meant guiding his hand to ensure a cohesive production. This was not the only struggle that Sahli and Schiebout had though. Throughout the project, Schiebout was behind on important dates and got side tracked during the project, from pulling props and painting the set, to paying more attention to the TD's progress than his own. Sahli should have sat down with Schiebout to ensure that he was aware of his duties and their due dates. If this failed to be successful, Sahli should have worked with Grubb to alleviate the issue. By doing this Sahli could have saved himself and other designers some stress.

Outside of his struggles communicating with the production team, at times Sahli had his own technical struggles as well. The clearest of these being the problem with the actors upstaging themselves and the blocking playing into this issue. Paul J. Hustoles helped Sahli to see some of the inherent issues with his early blocking. While Sahli addressed these issues and gave his actors new blocking, upstaging continued to be an issue throughout the run. As addressed earlier in the chapter, Sahli believes he may have found a solution to this issue, although it came too late to be beneficial to this

production.

Sahli's greatest pride came from his work with the actors. While working with Hannah Maslinski and James Ehlenz, who played NY Woman and NY Man respectively, Sahli found that both actors were self-conscious despite being the most educated and experienced of the cast. Maslinski is very talented but had some bad luck getting onto the stage, namely, breaking her ankle after being cast in *Rent*, a previous Minnesota State Mankato Mainstage production. As a result she has not seen much stage time and wanted to make the most of it. Maslinski's struggles seemed to disappear when a casting change brought Ehlenz into the cast, as her new partner's singing ability was able to match her own. Ehlenz, on the other hand, is an actor who will try just about anything on stage. As such, Ehlenz looks for confirmation that the choices he is making fit within the world of the play. This resulted in Sahli letting Ehlenz hold on to certain character choices so that Ehlenz would not limit other great ideas that he was coming up with.

Other than these two, the remainder of the cast was incredibly young. The secondary couple of Jeff and Diana were played by Labine and Howard, both 18. Howard's greatest struggle came within her finding comfort with her body. Despite being a dancer, Howard is very stiff. To help her to naturalize, Sahli talked about choosing which traits she would retain as Diana to separate the character from Howard. As the process moved forward, Howard became more and more comfortable within the character. Labine is a very talented non-major whose sense of comic timing is on par

with that of almost anyone in the program. Labine struggled to trust his instincts early in the process. He would make very intelligent decisions but they would be small in nature. Sahli constantly told Labine to play bigger and let the director decide when he should back off, a point that was never reached.

Finally the leads, Austin and Marcy, were played by Ian Lah and Cassie Johnson. Both actors were very self-conscious. Johnson, who has more time in the program, just needed assurance that she was making the right decisions. Lah is a freshman who had not yet had the opportunity to showcase his talents. Lah needed to learn that he had both the ability to play and that he belonged in the role. With each rehearsal, Sahli would work to boost Lah's confidence and Lah's talent would shine more with each rehearsal. Early in the process Sahli worried if Lah was ready for such a large role, by the end of the production Lah was wonderfully prepared and excelled as Austin.

Throughout this process Sahli feels that he grew in four key areas. This growth came through both successes and struggles as all growth does. Sahli feels that this work in the deep thrust has helped him to fill a gap in his theatre knowledge. Prior to this production, the only traditional staging configurations that Sahli had not worked in were court and deep thrust. While working in this configuration, Sahli had initially approached the blocking trying to play to each side as an individual. Upon his first viewing, Hustoles helped Sahli to learn that it is better to block as though the stage is still in proscenium and then play angles to connect with the audience. This is how Sahli

had worked with the shallow thrust but he had allowed himself to be intimidated by the different configuration.

An area that has been a strength of Sahli's in productions at Minnesota State Mankato has been actor coaching. While working with the actors in *I Love You Because*, Sahli feels that he has continued to grow in this area. Working with a cast that contained four teenagers, Sahli was able to help every actor reach levels they didn't know they were able to attain. Sahli got his greatest pride in seeing the artists grow as actors and musicians.

The overall blocking of this production had some issues. By the time the show opened Sahli had reworked the piece enough that it was much stronger than its original look. In the reworking of the blocking Sahli really learned the importance and difference between stage pictures and composition. Sahli has always had a good eye for stage pictures, his initial blocking of this piece showed this again. Sadly, Sahli also can struggle with composition while creating these pictures. When Sahli gets too concerned with specific moments he loosely ties the moments together creating an overall composition that can feel disconnected. In the early forms of the work this was an issue when viewing the show from any one position. Sahli created pictures that would look great from one direction but looked flat to the remaining two thirds of the audience. Ultimately, Sahli sacrificed single one-dimensional images for more grounded three-dimensional compositions.

The greatest growth area for Sahli during this production came in his own confidence level. Sahli is by far his greatest critic and as a result can get in his own way. In the final week of rehearsals Sahli took a step back to view the show objectively and knew that this would not be his best production. Later he took time to really think about what that meant. When analyzing the production Sahli recognized the faults that have been addressed in this paper. More importantly he saw what his actors were beginning to accomplish, at that point he knew the better decision was acknowledge the faults to himself. He would then fix what he could but continue to develop the actors and the show from its current state, rather than trying to rebuild. The realization helped Sahli to refine what the actors were doing. As a result this is not Sahli's best work but it is a work that he is very proud of. For Sahli this is the first time that he doesn't feel that he has outdone himself as an artist. But it is impossible and impractical to believe that an artist will always be able to do this. *I Love You Because* stands as a good piece of work by Sahli and was enjoyed by most who saw it, which Sahli believes is a key point of art. As an artist Sahli is beginning to reach a confidence that is needed to work as an artist. This confidence is a maturity that has been lacking in Sahli's work and has held him back in the past. Rather than looking at what went wrong, Sahli is choosing to look at what went right, acknowledging what went wrong and analyzing how to fix these issue when confronted with them in the future. Because of the development in maturity, this must be identified as Sahli's greatest growth. It allowed him to take a step forward as an artist, ensuring that he can put forth a better product and continue to grow.

CHAPTER V

PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

The techniques used during *I Love You Because* by Director Adam Karal Sahli have been learned and cultivated during his time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The methods, whether learned or enhanced during his time in Mankato, were developed through his course work and participation in productions.

Sahli started his graduate work at Minnesota State Mankato in the fall of 2010. In that first semester he took classes in Dramaturgy, Theatre Speech II, Advanced Acting Techniques, Design for Directors (Scenic) and was cast in *The Odyssey*.

Dramaturgy, as taught by Heather E. Hamilton, helped Sahli to refine his skills for research. This included helping Sahli to learn the importance of not only researching an author's original intent when writing a piece of literature, but understanding the socio-economic situation that affected the writer during their life leading to the time of the original writing. This idea was new to Sahli as a director and has been one of the single greatest changes in Sahli's approach to a play and his understanding of the author's intent. An additional technique learned in this course, which has been helpful to Sahli, was the advice Hamilton gave that, while Wikipedia is an untrustworthy source (which Sahli knew) using the bibliography of a well written article can lead a reader to many worthy, informative sources.

In Theatre Speech II, Sahli began the process of trying to master the International Phonetic Alphabet. Sahli first encountered the IPA as an undergraduate in a music diction course. In that course it was used for the correct pronunciation of foreign languages in singing. Paul J. Hustoles taught Sahli a more practical use for the IPA as a theatre practitioner. Since relearning the IPA, Sahli has used this technique in the pronunciation of dialects, helping actors to use the correct standard English pronunciation of lines, used it for his own work as an actor and as a means of improving his own proper American English pronunciation. Additionally, in the course Hustoles emphasized the development of ten distinct vocal qualities. Sahli has had a history of character voice work. Due to this, this section of the class stretched him as his experience used blended qualities and Hustoles emphasized the need for understanding and working towards the ability to isolate the qualities to allow an artist to have a pallet to work from. This approach has helped Sahli to understand what he is doing and gives him the ability to have greater alteration with his voice work.

Sahli also took Advanced Acting Techniques with Hustoles. In addition to advanced work with the ten vocal qualities, the course explored a wide variety of acting styles and techniques. Whether working on psychological centering, anthropomorphization, the system and the method, the classes served as miniature seminars in different approaches to acting. This class gave a strong opening into many techniques that allowed Sahli to further explore. Additionally, Hustoles required several readings for the graduate students. To fulfill this requirement Sahli read

Stanislavski Directs, which added to Sahli's knowledge of that system.

The first of the four "Design for Directors" classes that Sahli took was scene design taught by John Paul. In this class Sahli furthered his understanding of the design element that he was most comfortable with. In the course Paul emphasized the use of white models which Sahli had not used in his previous scenic designs. Ultimately, Sahli was most proud of a design he did for *Endgame*. This would become an important design a year later when Sahli directed *Endgame*. His design helped him to work with his production designer to discuss what they felt to be the most important aspects of the set.

In addition to his course work, Sahli furthered himself as an artist by being cast in *The Odyssey* and working with Hustoles, the director of the production. This production is the most stylized that Sahli has ever been a part of. The greatest learning that Sahli felt he had was witnessing the stylistic approach that was unified throughout the entirety of the production. Sahli had never experienced or seen acting fit the style of the designs the way that they did in *The Odyssey*. Additionally, Sahli struggled with this acting approach. Sahli studies the Stanislavski System approach to acting. Working this way showed Sahli a gap in his ability that he strived to fill. Hustoles's work with Sahli helped his growth as an actor and furthered his understanding of how to work with actors as a director.

The spring of 2011 contained a very heavy course load for Sahli. During this semester Sahli took Musical Theatre I, Stage Dialects I, Theatre History II, Advanced

Directing I, and Theory and Criticism. In addition to this course load, *The Odyssey* moved on to both regional and national competition through the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and Sahli directed his first graduate production, *Frozen*.

Musical Theatre I was Sahli's first class with Paul Finocchiaro. In this course Finocchiaro taught an approach to singing that was a blend of soft focus and method acting. This approach was new to Sahli. It allows the musician to connect emotionally to the piece. For Sahli this approach was a little too loose, allowing the emotion to take over and conflicting with the technical aspects of the music. While this style did not work for Sahli, he learned a great deal from Finocchiaro. Sahli used this style with Ian Lah in *I Love You Because*, to a very emotionally affecting success.

Stage Dialect I with Hustoles continued Sahli's development with the IPA. In addition to gaining further experience with this tool, Sahli learned several new dialects as well as improving dialects that he had previously worked with. Where Sahli improved with dialects like Irish and Cockney, he struggled with the German and French. Through work and the use of the IPA, Sahli was able to perform serviceable dialect work in these difficult dialects. Using the knowledge gained from this course Sahli feels that he would have the skills to listen to, document and learn any dialect or regionalism.

Theatre History II was taught by Hamilton. As a history course Sahli studied the progression of the theatre. While he enjoyed the course for the re-examination of

history that he had previously learned, Sahli enjoyed and gained the most from the small group discussions. Hamilton put the graduate students in charge of leading a small group of undergraduates in study sessions. While some of the graduate students did not take advantage of this opportunity, Sahli flourished. While working with the students, Sahli not only prepped them for upcoming tests but introduced them to additional topics from the period that there was not time to discuss in class. This received positive feedback from Sahli's group as they felt it helped them to better position important dates in a timeline. At the same time this gave Sahli an additional opportunity to teach while discussing some of the topics that have drawn him to the theatre.

The first directing class Sahli took at the graduate level was Advanced Directing I with Hustoles. During the work in this course Hustoles discussed a blocking method called "T blocking," a method very similar to what Sahli had used in the past. At the same time it was more efficient in the fact that it used fewer figures resulting in cleaner blocking pages. While this was not a major point in the class, Sahli liked the clean look and efficient style so much that he instantly adopted it. The major emphasis of this course was the discussion and development of stage pictures and composition. Sahli really grasped this and quickly learned both ideas. Working with Hustoles, Sahli developed a strong eye for evocative stage pictures. While his work with composition was less refined, Sahli developed in this area with Hustoles's guidance.

While taking Theory and Criticism with Hamilton, Sahli explored a variety of theatre practitioners' thoughts on the art. While Sahli felt some to be pretentious, the course as a whole helped Sahli to solidify what his belief theatre as an art should be, an art form that serves society by holding a mirror to the world in which they live and letting them enjoy the good things, and forcing them to see, analyze and correct human faults.

During this semester *The Odyssey* moved on two more times. First to the regional level where it was performed in Ames, Iowa, at the Region V Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. And then it moved on to the national level and performed in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center itself. This advancement served as a great learning experience for Sahli in many ways. With each advancement of the show, Hustoles found new things to work on. This served as a great learning opportunity to see that with each lead into a performance Hustoles saw things that could be fixed but worked with the actors to put on the best performance they could with the time they had. Each time the production received another venue, the cast was given more rehearsal time and the opportunity to further improve the production. This experience would serve Sahli well in future productions as he always felt there was more that could be improved. But, thanks to his opportunity to work with an experienced director, Sahli learned one can only give the best production that can be created in the time that is allowed.

Frozen was Sahli's first production at Minnesota State Mankato as a director. In this production Sahli ran into a couple of inconveniences that helped him continue to grow. With the advancement of *The Odyssey*, the performance date of *Frozen* needed to be moved back. Additionally Sahli, as well as one of his actors, were in the process of rehearsing two shows. This gave Sahli the opportunity to understand how important scheduling can be and how a director needs to make the most of every rehearsal. *Frozen* opened the week after the return from Washington. This gave Sahli the opportunity to rehearse his cast in nontraditional spaces as he got to rehearse his production in the Kennedy Center, the hotel in Washington and in the Detroit airport during a layover. While none of these furthered Sahli as an artist, it was a joy to experience what artists do for their craft.

When Sahli returned for the fall of 2011 he took three classes: Stage Dialects II, Design for Directors (Sound) and Theatre Research. In addition to his course work Sahli also acted in *Rent* and directed his second graduate production, *Endgame*.

Stage Dialects II was taught by Hustoles. In this course, much like Stage Dialects I, Sahli continued to develop his knowledge of the IPA. During this semester Sahli was much more successful with all of the dialects. While some dialects like Russian came naturally for Sahli, others that were more difficult for him came easier due to the development he had been making with the IPA. This development lent itself to a confidence that also improved the performance aspect of the class for Sahli.

When Sahli took his second Design for Directors course it was in the area of sound design with George Grubb. While Sahli had no experience with the technical aspects of sound design, he had a firm grasp of the more artistic side. Throughout the course Sahli was able to quickly move through the topics as he found them very interesting, as well as connecting with Grubb's style of teaching. This combination would lead to Sahli's decision to pick up a production sound design the following year.

Theatre Research was perhaps the most beneficial and difficult course Sahli has taken in graduate school. Writing is the weakest of Sahli's skills. Through the knowledge developed in this course, Sahli's writing ability has improved greatly. Also during the course Hamilton encouraged Sahli to write on topic that he found interesting and then "find the hole" in the information. This advice aided Sahli in looking at the prospect of writing in a more enjoyable light and, in doing so, he grew in this area more than he ever previously had.

During this semester Sahli was also cast in the chorus of *Rent*. This gave Sahli his first opportunity to work with Finocchiaro as a director. While working in *Rent*, Sahli viewed Finocchiaro's directing style, a more hands off style that watched the actors work then guided them when they struggled. Sahli enjoyed seeing Finocchiaro work in this way as he saw the actors grow confident in themselves, with the director there to catch them when they stumbled. For Sahli this occurred when Finocchiaro used him as one of the primary male dancers. Sahli had a moderately strong dance background, centered around four years of jazz and three years of tap being taught by

professionals. This experience was bolstered by an additional four years of dance and movement training taught by movement teachers as well as roles in the theatre that required dance, including a featured dance role. Sahli stopped dancing after his knees began to wear down after years of abuse from sports. With Finocchiaro's teaching and support, Sahli found that he could still dance, albeit diminished by physical limitations.

The semester culminated with Sahli's second graduate directing project, *Endgame*. In the casting of his second production Sahli cast a younger cast than the one he had in *Frozen*. This turned out to be an exciting experience for Sahli as a result of this choice. Sahli found that the excitement he received from the younger cast drove the production and the cast fed off one another's positive energy. Additionally, Sahli was able to get performances out of his cast that had not previously been seen from these artists at the university. Sahli also had great success working with his design team, creating a unified design for the entirety of the show that pulled everything together for Sahli's most successful production to date.

By the spring of 2012 Sahli had already learned a great deal while in school at Minnesota State, Mankato. This would not slow him down though as this would become his busiest semester to date. While taking Theatre Management, Design for Directors (Lighting), Advanced Directing and Theatre History I, Sahli also acted in *Gingerbread Lady* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Theatre Management, as taught by Hustoles, prepares students for the possibility of one day running their own theatre. Sahli learned a great deal in this class, perhaps

nothing more important than the fact that most artists would not be capable of running their own theatre. Throughout the course Sahli learned the necessary skill of constructing a chain of command, as well as finding the means of balancing a theatre budget. The most important issue Sahli chose to take away is that it is necessary to find realistic sources of revenue for the initial start up of a theatre company.

Sahli's third Design for Directors course emphasized lighting design with Steve Smith. This course essentially divides into two areas the mathematic and the artistic aspects of lighting design. For Sahli the mathematic was simple as the most difficult problems were solved with the Pythagorean Theorem. The artistic aspect of lighting design was a whole different issue. Sahli struggled initially with the color theory of light. Once that was settled he lacked the ability to see the design of a show in his mind's eye. Taking the class with Smith was a benefit as he answered Sahli's questions, and the two had a great rapport discussing mistakes Sahli would make in projects.

When Sahli took Advanced Directing II with Hamilton he got some beneficial opportunities. When selecting scenes to direct, Sahli looked for a variety of play styles that he had not previously worked with. Sahli also asked for and was given an open third slot. In this slot he had the opportunity to direct three short original scenes by artists in the department. When directing these plays Sahli set a meeting with each of the writers to learn their intent and what the play meant to them. This was Sahli's first opportunity to direct original pieces.

Sahli also took Theatre History I with Hustoles in this semester. To start the semester Hustoles had the class read The Mask of Apollo. While some students didn't enjoy it, Sahli appreciated the historical accuracy the book contained as well as how it set the timeframe with which the course began. During the semester the class read anywhere between one to three plays a week. While this pace was daunting it certainly added to each student's repertoire. These two factors really added a twist to the course that made it enjoyable after having taken a history course that covered the same time frame as an undergraduate.

In this semester Sahli was cast in two plays. The first was *Gingerbread Lady*. In this production Sahli was by far the oldest actor. In this way Sahli was a role model and, as such, ensured that he gave Director Shelley Whitehead what she asked of him at all times. While rehearsing and performing in this production, Sahli was also cast in the *Phantom of the Opera*. Sahli had his second opportunity to work with Hustoles as a director as he ran between the two rehearsal spaces. While this combination had the potential to be strenuous, Hustoles's experience managing rehearsal made it easy and taught Sahli the importance of efficient time management.

In the fall of 2012, Sahli is winding down his time at Minnesota State Mankato. In addition to his thesis project *I Love You Because*, he is taking Design for Directors (Costume), Stage Combat and sound designed the production of *November*.

Sahli's fourth venture into Design for Directors is costume design with David McCarl. Costume design is the most inherently frightening of all of the design elements

for Sahli. Yet, throughout the course, Sahli's drawing abilities improved and by the end he could render a serviceable design.

Stage Combat was also taught by McCarl. This course came much easier for Sahli. Sahli's previous experience with bare hand and rapier stage combat helped him. While he had no previous experience with the quarter staff or the broadsword, his strength helped with control which allowed for a quicker learning curve.

With a lighter course load in this semester Sahli picked up the sound design for the studio production of *November*. While working on this production, Sahli got his first chance to work strictly as a designer on a show. In Sahli's previous experience any practical designs he had done had been for shows that he was directing. Sahli enjoyed this process enough that he picked up a scenic design for *Plague of Angels* in his final semester.

Sahli ended the semester with his thesis production of *I Love You Because*. Where his previous projects served Sahli's idea of theatre being a means of showing the world to itself and initiating change, *I Love You Because* showed what beauty in the world can be. For Sahli, *I Love You Because* was a celebration of love and served Sahli's idea of a secondary purpose of theatre, to make people happy.

It is through these courses and projects that Minnesota State Mankato's Department of Theatre and Dance has developed Sahli into the artist that he has become resulting in the success of productions he has directed and Sahli's own growth.

Through Sahli's time at Minnesota State, Mankato he has grown as an artist and as a craftsman. Sahli has gained a confidence in his abilities as an artist that has allowed for the outside viewer to truly see his potential. The greatest service that Minnesota State, Mankato has given to Sahli is his growth as a craftsman. This includes the furthering of his knowledge, which has been substantial, and his development as a scholar. It is this scholarly development where Sahli owes the most to the faculty of Minnesota State, Mankato as they have encouraged and taught him how to most clearly express the ideas that have made him a successful artist. Due to the support of the faculty Sahli has the skills and the ability to take his knowledge and further his craft and art of theatre, as well as to teach future practitioners to do the same.

Sahli has always strived to make theatre a means of education and social change. His education at Minnesota State Mankato has also taught him that this should be done in a way that reaches out and moves and entertains the audience, and makes the world a better place. Sahli still believes that it is not enough for theatre to just be thoughtless entertainment. With his time in Mankato coming to a close, Sahli has matured and with the guidance of the faculty he understands all good theatre makes the world a better place. So as an artist and practitioner he must always strive to make good theatre.

APPENDIX A


PRODUCTION POSTER

507-389-6661 MSUTheatre.com

I LOVE YOU BECAUSE

Book and Lyrics by Ryan Cunningham
Music by Joshua Saltzman

Nov. 28 - Dec. 1, 2012
Andreas Theatre
7:30 P.M.



Theatre & Dance
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

APPENDIX B

CASTING INFORMATION

I Love You Because Callbacks

The callbacks for *I Love You Because* will consist of singing from the show as well as the possibility of cold reading from the script. The song that will be used for callbacks can be picked up from Beth in the office.

Austin – Maybe We Just Made Love

Marcy – Just Not Now

Jeff – Marcy’s Yours

Diana – Marcy’s Yours

The section to learn is marked out. If you have any questions speak with Adam Sahli, Robb Krueger or PJ Crowley.

I Love You Because

Characters

Austin Bennet – 25, Greeting card writer.	Tenor to A
Jeff Bennet – 28, pedi-cab driver.	Bari-tenor to A
Marcy Fitzwilliams – 24, photographer.	Soprano belt to D, Mixed Head voice to F
Diana Bingley – 27, Actuary.	Alto to D
NY Woman	Soprano
NY Man	Bari-tenor

Songs:

Austin: Another Saturday Night in New York; Oh What A Difference; But I Don't Want to Talk about Her; Coffee; Because of You; Maybe We Just Made Love; That's What's Gonna Happen; But I Do; Marcy's Yours; Goodbye; I Love You Because

Jeff: Another Saturday Night in New York; Oh What A Difference; We're Just Friends; That's What's Gonna Happen; But I Do; Marcy's Yours; I Love You Because

Marcy: Another Saturday Night in New York; The Actuary Song; But I Don't Want to Talk about Her; Coffee; Because of You; Just Not Now; Alone; Even Though; But I Do; What Do We Do It For?; I Love You Because

Diana: Another Saturday Night in New York; The Actuary Song; We're Just Friends; But I Do; What Do We Do It For?; Marcy's Yours; I Love You Because

NY Man: Another Saturday Night in New York; The Perfect Romance; Alone; That's What's Gonna Happen; What Do We Do It For?; I Love You Because

NY Woman: Another Saturday Night in New York; The Perfect Romance; Alone; What Do We Do It For?; I Love You Because

I Love You Because

Characters

Austin Bennet – Ian Lah

Jeff Bennet – Steven Labine

Marcy Fitzwilliams – Cassie Johnson

Diana Bingley – Rachel Howard

NY Woman – Hannah Maslinski

NY Man – Zach Bolland*

Rehearsals Begin: October 23 in PA113

Pick up script from Beth in office

CD's from Adam

* Replaced by James Ehlenz

APPENDIX C

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

I Love You Because Schedule

October

Tues. 23 – 6:35 – 10:00 Read & Sing Thru

Wed. 24 – 6:35– 10:00 Block Act 1

Thu. 25 – 6:35– 10:00 Block Act 1 songs

Fri. 26 – 6:35– 10:00 Block Act 2

Sun. 28 – 6:35– 10:00 Block Act 2 songs

Mon. 29 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I Scenes 1-4

Tue. 30 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I Scenes 5-7

Wed. 31 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I Scenes 8-12

November

Thu. 1 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act II Scenes 1-4

Fri. 2 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act II Scenes 5-6, and Trouble Spots

Sun. 4 – 6:35– 10:00 Off-Book Act I

Mon. 5 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I

Tue. 6 – 8:00 – 11:00 Off-Book Act II (Elections)

Wed. 7 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act II

Thu. 8 – 6:35– 10:00 Run Show

Fri. 9 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Trouble Spots

Sun. 11 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I pg.1-35

Mon. 12 – 6:35– 10:00 Work Act I pg.36-72

Tue. 13 – 6:35 Publicity Photo Call, 7:00– 10:00 Work Act II & Trouble Spots

Wed. 14 –7:00 Call – 10:00 Run Show

Thu. 15 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go Light/Sound Tech

Fri. 16 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 1st Tech

Sun. 18 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 2nd Tech

Mon. 19 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 3rd Tech

Tue. 20 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 4th Tech

Wed. 21 – 6:00 Call Work Trouble Spots

Sun. 25 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 1st Dress

Mon. 26 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 2nd Dress

Tue. 27 – 6:00 Call, 7:30 Go 3rd Dress

Wed. 28 – 6:30 Call, 7:30 Go Open

Thu. 29 – 6:30 Call, 7:30 Go Prod. Photo Call

Fri. 30 – 6:30 Call, 7:30 Go

December

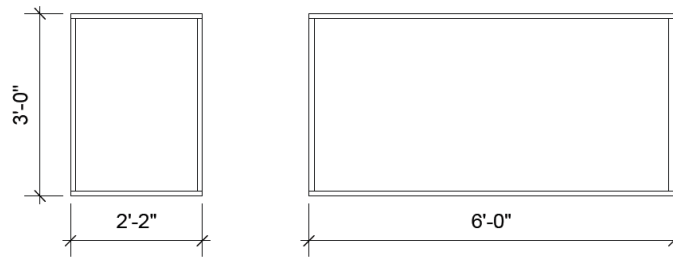
Sat. 1 – 6:30 Call, 7:30 Go Close

Strike all cast must be there

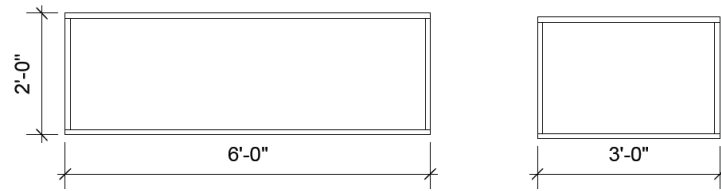
APPENDIX D

SCENIC ELEMENTS

Vectorworks Educational Version



Bar: Side Rear



Bar: Side Rear

Bed:

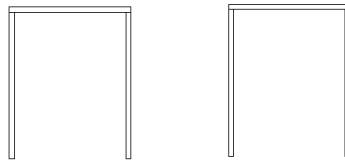
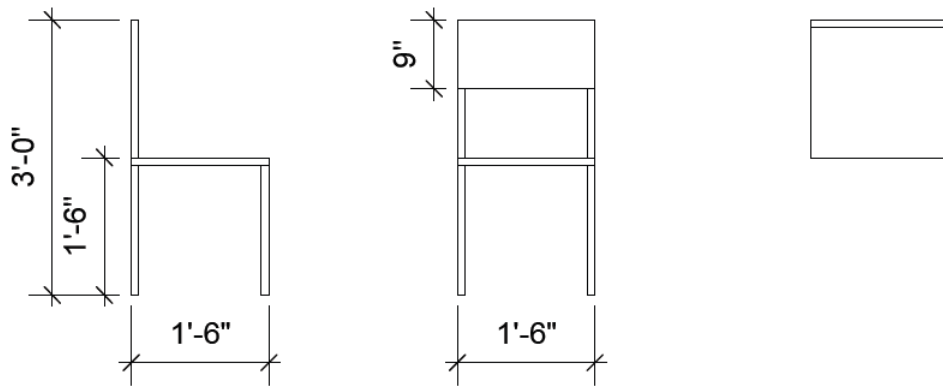


Table: Side Front

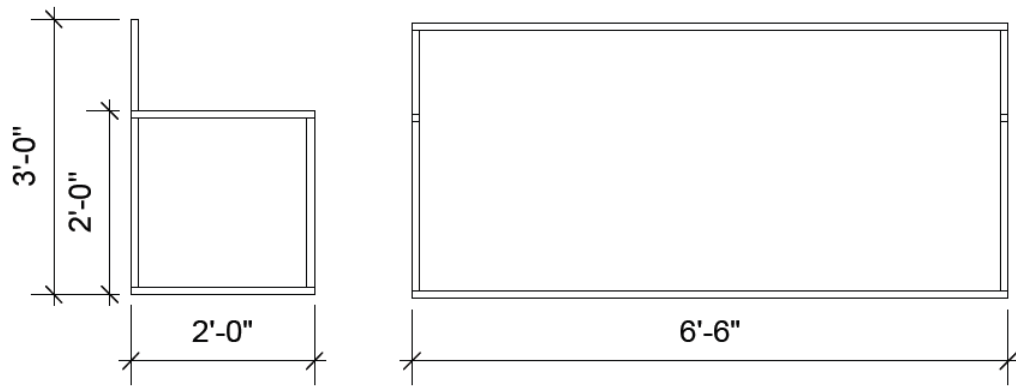
I Love You Because
Bar, Bed, and Table

Vectorworks Educational Version

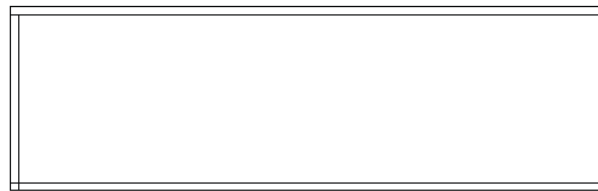
Vectorworks Educational Version



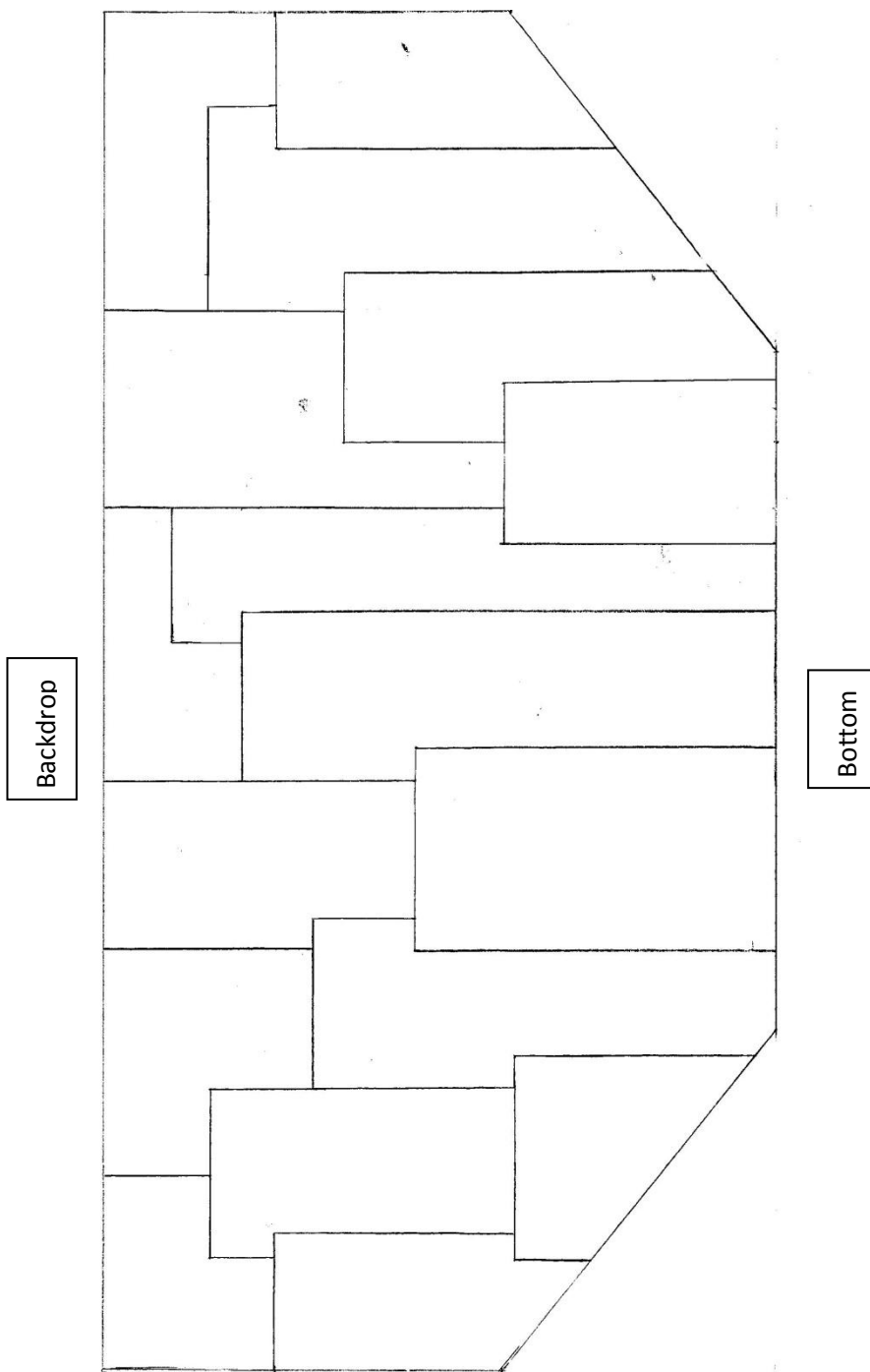
Chair: Side Front Top



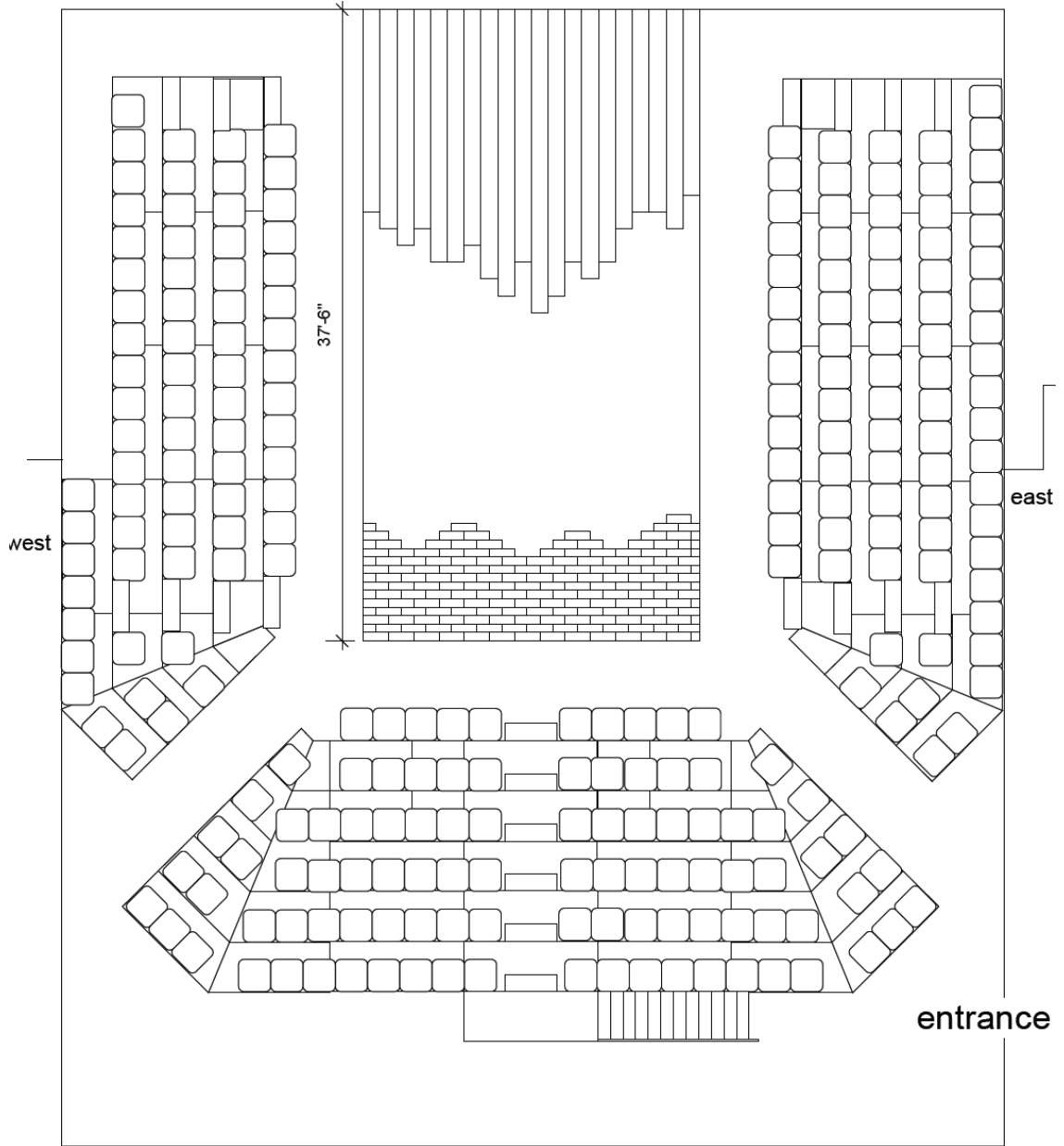
Couch: Side Front



Top



Vectorworks Educational Version



03/27/08

south

Exactly 251 seats

Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Vectorworks Educational Version

APPENDIX E

PRODUCTION PROGRAM



**Theatre & Dance
Faculty and Staff**

Paul Finocchiaro
Acting and Dance
George Grubb
Technical Director / Sound Design

Heather E. Hamilton
Acting and Directing

Paul J. Hustoles
Chair, Acting and Directing

Julie Kerr-Berry
Director of Dance

Mike Lagerquist
Public Relations Director

David McCarl
Costume Design

John David Paul
Scene Design

Catherine Schmeal-Swope
Costumer

Steven Smith
Lighting Design

Daniel Stark
Dance Technique & Composition

Nick Wayne
Musical Director

Beth Weisbecker
Business and Office Manager

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Theatre & Dance
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

**Remaining Shows in
the Mainstage Season**

Spring Awakening

Jan. 31-Feb. 3 & Feb. 6-9, 2013
Book and lyrics by Steven Sater, music by Duncan Sheik.
Based on the play by Frank Wedekind.

And Then There Were None

Feb. 21-23 & 28-March 3, 2013
By Agatha Christie

Legally Blonde

April 11-13 & 18-21, 2013
Book by Heather Hach, music and lyrics by Laurence
O Yeeffe and Nell Benjamin.
Sponsored by *Community Bank Mankato*,
Mankato Ford and Radio Mankato

Remaining Studio Shows

The Goat or Who is Sylvia

7:30 p.m. March 27-30, 2013
By Edward Albee

Plague of Angels

7:30 p.m.-April 24-27, 2013
By Mark St. Germain

MSUTheatre.com
or call 507-389-6661 from 4-6 p.m. M-F.

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www.Facebook.com/MSUTheatre

I Love You Because

Music by Joshua Salzman,
book and lyrics by Ryan Cunningham,
orchestrations by Larry Hochman.

Enjoy Both the Joys and Struggles of Love

I Love You Because celebrates true love. When this show is over, all we want you to walk away with is a view of love that does not discriminate. Salzman and Cunningham wanted to present a piece that showed how in true love we accept the "faults" of the ones we love and see them as endearing qualities. By accepting these differences we accept our significant other.

In this production I wanted to emphasize both the struggles and joy of love. *I Love You Because* doesn't try to hide the difficulties of a relationship nor does this production, for it is the struggles that make the relationship stronger. Whether the relationship has spanned two months, five years or 50 years, it is always changing and evolving, and takes work. As legendary playwright Sir Tom Stoppard said, "True Love is always 20 different things, but never 19." This idea of full acceptance is the central theme of *I Love You Because*.

I hope that you enjoy the production as much as we enjoy presenting it because it is this shared love of theatre that brings us all here on this night.

—Adam Sahli

I Love You Because is produced through special arrangement with
Theatrical Rights Worldwide,
570 Seventh Ave., Suite 2100,
New York, NY 10018

Cast

Austin Bennet..... Ian Lah
Jeff Bennet..... Steven Labine
Marcy FitzWilliams..... Cassie Johnson
Diana Bingley..... Rachel Howard
N.Y. Woman..... Hannah Maslinski
N.Y. Man..... James Ehlenz

Setting

New York City, present day.

Song List

ACT I

"Another Saturday Night in New York"..... Ensemble
"Oh, What A Difference"..... Jeff, Austin
"The Acnary Song"..... Diana, Marcy
"...But I Don't Want to Talk About Her"..... Austin
"Coffee"..... Austin, Marcy
"The Perfect Romance"..... NYC Man, Woman
"Because of You"..... Austin, Marcy
"We're Just Friends"..... Diana, Jeff
"Maybe We Just Made Love"..... Austin
"Just Not Now"..... Marcy

ACT II

"Alone"..... Marcy, NYC Man, NYC Woman
"That's What's Gonna Happen"..... Jeff, Austin
"Even Thought"..... Marcy
"But I Do"..... Austin, Diana, Jeff, Marcy
"What Do We Do It For?"..... Diana, Marcy
Bartender, Cocktail Waitress
"Marcy's Yours"..... Diana, Jeff, Austin
"Goodbye"..... Austin
"I Love You Because"..... Ensemble

Production Staff

Director
Adam Sahli
Musical Director
Robb Krueger
Scene Design
Joel Schiebout
Costume Design
Kirsten Lerohl
Lighting Design
Mary Jane Olson
Sound Design
Anna Alex
Production Stage Manager
P. J. Crowley
Technical Director
Eric Charlton
Assistant Stage Manager
Ryan Strelow
Choreographer
Austin England
Sound Board Operator
Rob Anderson
Backstage Crew
Natavia Lewis
Kayla Simmel
Musical Combo
Logan Burns, bass
Scott Petersen, drums
Michael Stamp, piano
Faculty Advisors
George E. Grubb
Paul J. Hustoles

APPENDIX F

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS



Cassie Johnson as Marcy Fitzwilliams.



Ian Lah as Austin Bennett.



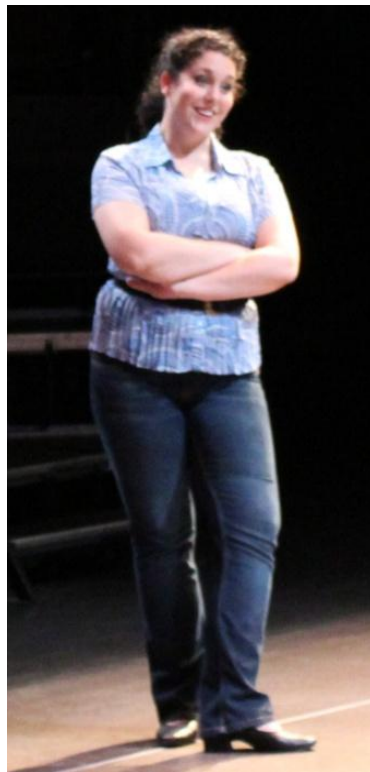
Steven Labine as Jeff Bennett.



Rachel Howard as Diana Bingley.



James Ehlenz as NY Man.



Hannah Maslinski as NY Woman.



Brotherly Advice.



Goodbye Sorrows.



“That’s What’s Gonna Happen.”



“We’re Just Friends.”



“Ow, that’s hot.”

APPENDIX G

EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH RYAN CUNNINGHAM

July 11, 2012

1. When listening to *I Love You Because*, several musical genres are presented but a big band feel seems to be present throughout the orchestration. Is this due to personal styles or did it seem to stem from the story?

We very much wanted *I Love You Because* to be a celebration of New York. We wanted to highlight the rich history of the city, and reflect the history of the theatre as well. So you'll discover some classic song forms and styles throughout the show as we try to create the "contemporary song standard." We harken back to those old forms while trying to give them a contemporary spin.

2. You and Josh both previously worked on separate musicals, so you both must love the genre. Who have been some of the artists/plays in the genre that have inspired you?

For me, it's Frank Loesser. He has the perfect mix of humor and heart in his lyrics, and he remains fun while still having lyrical integrity. For Josh, I would guess it's George Gershwin or Richard Rogers. They both have unending inventiveness in their melodies, while maintaining the "rules" of the form.

3. What "straight play" authors/plays have done the same?

Neil Simon is my hero. His book Rewrites is one of the few books I've read over and over again. He's a comic genius, who gets to the painful core of comedy. His plays are rife with some of the best one-liners in theatre history—and they all serve a purpose beyond the joke. There's no one better.

4. I feel that the libretto and the composition of *I Love You Because* blend together well, much the way the works of Stephen Sondheim and Jason Robert Brown's do.

Often when these two elements are written by two separate authors we get disjointed, while beautifully artistic, works. (Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, George and Ira Gershwin) How did the two of you go about making the compromises for the sake of cohesion?

Josh and I always discuss story first. The dramatic moment is all that matters—and that informs all other decisions. Josh and I both are fluent in each others' crafts—but would never venture to try them on our own. Josh is a great dramatist, and I am a decent musician. That means that we can both cross into each others' areas a bit and overlap our disciplines, which helps to make the show feel as if it's coming from one voice.

5. What kind of unexpected pressures, if any, have come along with your early success?

There is no pressure from the outside world at all. The world is full of people who've enjoyed early success, and then gone away and no one ever noticed. So there's no pressure to create more work for a public that is anxious to hear from us. However, we put a certain amount of pressure on ourselves and each other. We got extremely lucky with *I Love You Because*, in that it was produced Off-Broadway when we were so young. We would like to prove to each other that that was more than just a fluke and that we have more to offer the world of musical theatre.

6. Do you feel that *I Love You Because* has opened doors for the two of you, or do you feel that you still have to prove yourself to the industry?

I Love You Because has opened doors for us, because we can now at least get people to look at our work. However, that's about all it gets you. No one will produce work they don't connect to or enjoy because you've had previous success. You are always proving yourself as a writer—or more aptly, you are always proving the worth of your most recent work. And that's as it should be. Sure, people will give you a chance by reading your play once you've had some success, but your newest work always has to hold its own once it gets through the door.

7. What are goals that you now have for yourselves in the short term?

We are in the process of releasing an album of our new musical *Next Thing You Know*, which is due out on Yellow Sound Label September 4. And we have a first draft of our newest musical *The Last Days of Gotham* ready for a reading at the end of August. The goal from there would be to get it in the kind of shape that it can be shared with other people.

8. The long term?

Josh and I have a list of shows we want to tackle, and all for different reasons. With *I Love You Because* our goal was really just to finish it—to prove to ourselves we could write a musical. With *Next Thing You Know* it was to bring our songwriting to the next level. With *The Last Days of Gotham* we are writing our first big musical, and really exploring some thematic and musical landscapes we've never explored before. And the other shows we hope to write all present their own unique challenges. And that's our long term goal—to keep finding challenges and ideas that excite us and figuring out ways to bring them to life.

9. The two of you have spent time on the production side of the art. Do you still direct/conduct?

I still direct and perform a very little bit and Josh still music directs-both only out of necessity. We are best when we are writing, and once you have the opportunity to work with some of the actors and directors we've worked with, you are sort of embarrassed to try it yourself ever again.

10. What attracted each of you to the theatre?

Josh and I were both theatre rats growing up. Josh found his way into the pit as a pianist and I found my way onto the stage as a performer. Josh eventually moved into the role of musical director and pit conductor, and I eventually became a director. While in college we both (long before ever meeting each other) took a crack at writing a musical. I think for both of us it seemed to be the next step in doing what we loved-telling stories through music.

11. When beginning to write *I Love You Because*, how did Pride and Prejudice inspire you?

Pride and Prejudice was a jumping off point for *I Love You Because*. We were struck by how contemporary the themes were for a piece that was written almost 200 years ago. It's a wonderful story about two people living in a highly regimented society finding love with each other in spite of all the expectations

their society puts upon them—told from the point of view of a woman. Neither Josh and I are women, and we wanted to tell the story of the regimented New York dating scene as we saw it—so we reversed the genders and updated the story. In so doing, we completely took off from the original story. It influenced the beginnings of the show, but we decided to follow the story on its own terms instead of shoehorning it into the structure of Pride and Prejudice. It's been a point of frustration for some fans of Pride and Prejudice, because it does deviate so much. But we feel we've been honest to the central themes of Pride and Prejudice—true love is setting aside your expectations and loving the entire person because of everything that makes them who they are.

12. Did you always look to invert the genders of the main characters, and what inspired this?

See above.

13. When did the story begin to take on its own life?

We struggled early on with *I Love You Because*. We were trying so hard to stay true to Pride and Prejudice, and to tell the story of every character in that story—we used to meet some of Austin and Jeff's siblings and their mother and father. And after a particularly horrible reading we decided to focus in on this central love story and how the secondary love story informs that story. It was

then that the show really took on a life of its own.

14. Have you been surprised by the success that you have achieved with your early works?

We were absolutely surprised by the success of *I Love You Because*. Our original goal with the piece was for it to get performed at some colleges. But then a wonderful producer named Jenn Maloney became involved and she saw that the show could be more than that. We opened the show Off-Broadway, where it amazingly ran over 100 performances, and it has since been performed all over the world in five languages. It's been amazing to watch as people of all nationalities discover the story and relate to it. It's been a huge surprise to us, and we are extremely grateful for it.

15. What was it like when you first found out *I Love You Because* was going to be professionally produced?

When we found out *I Love You Because* was going to be professionally produced, it was like a dream come true. It was actually a bit more than that because we never dreamed it would get as far as Off-Broadway. We really felt like we had "made it" at the age of 22, which gave us a huge amount of confidence (and a touch of arrogance) going into production—which is something

you need as you put yourself and your work out there on a professional stage.

16. What was it like when you first found out you had been nominated for a Drama Desk Award?

I actually didn't know what the Drama Desk Awards were when I was nominated. I was very young and naive to the theatre industry and all of its awards and accolades. So I was out in my back yard the morning they were announced and our director, Dan Kutner, called me. He said, "It's all you, man!" And I said, "What the hell are you talking about?" And then I of course learned all about the Drama Desk Awards and realised what an honor it was to be nominated.

17. How was *I Love You Because* received as a thesis project by your committee?

I Love You Because was warmly received by our committee once it all came together. There were times during the development of the show when it was not warmly received, but that says nothing about our teachers and more about where we were with the piece at the time. The faculty at the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program is wonderful, and they were able to guide us through a lot of the pitfalls that young writers make, and were extremely supportive of the project.

18. *I Love You Because* really connects to young adult audiences, what do you feel has allowed you to reach these audiences were other authors and and plays have failed?

I feel like *I Love You Because* connects with young audiences because it was written by young people who were guided by some brilliant theatre professionals. It's also very earnest in its approach. That's not to say it isn't funny, because it's a musical comedy, but it takes musicals and its comedy seriously. We never make fun of the material or the genre and there's nothing ironic in the style of the show at all. I feel like that allows people to connect with the material and not feel embarrassed about it. It's a musical that wears its heart on its sleeve without being too saccharine, which lets people fall for it without throwing up. So our youth was a big part of that, but the experience that we were able to tap into in the faculty at NYU is not something that all young writers are lucky enough to have access to. So it was a nice mix of youth guided by experience that allowed the show to be well-constructed, but still authentic to the point of view of its authors.

19. Many critics have compared *I Love You Because* to the likes of “How I Met Your Mother” and “Friends.” Do you find this fitting and what plays/shows did motivate your stylistic approach?

We absolutely referenced sitcoms when developing the style of *I Love You Because*. We both grew up watching sitcoms from "The Cosby Show" to

"Family Ties" to "Cheers" and then all the way up to "Seinfeld" and "Friends."
("How I Met Your Mother" debuted a few months before we opened Off-Broadway and we never saw it before the show opened. But I think we were influenced by the same shows.) But we also wanted to reference the musicals that were great love letters to New York—*Guys and Dolls* specifically. And "When Harry Met Sally" was a influence from the film world as well. So when we mixed up all of these influences with our own personal experiences and were guided by incredible mentors and got lucky enough to be produced Off-Broadway—out came *I Love You Because*.

Adam,

Thanks so much for choosing *I Love You Because* as your thesis musical. We'd be happy to help in any way we can. Go ahead and email us your questions, and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

Best,

Ryan Cunningham

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