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Performing Princeton in Avenue Q

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PERFORMING PRINCETON IN AVENUE Q

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Theatre and Dance
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Joshua G Bartosch

April 2016

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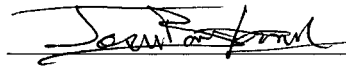
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04/28/16


*Performing Princeton in
Avenue Q*

submitted to the Department of Theatre & Dance
in fulfillment of THEA 482: Senior Project

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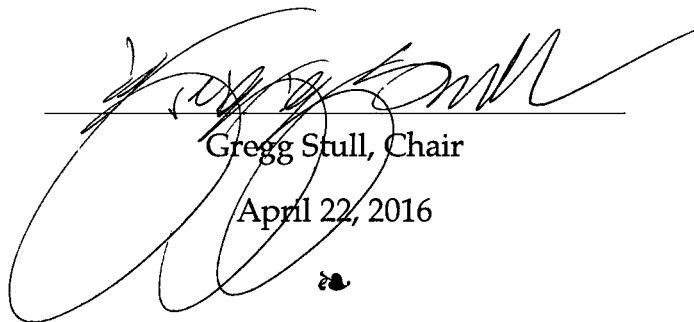


Joshua Bartosch



Gregg Stull, Project Advisor

AWARDED HONORS IN THEATRE, 2016



Gregg Stull, Chair

April 22, 2016



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Hello!

This is my UMW blog for the show Avenue Q. I play the role of Princeton, and look forward to sharing my journey with you.

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~ November 5, 2015 ~

Puppet Boot Camp

This is where I'll put the exercises we learned in puppet boot camp. The camp as a whole was extremely helpful and opened my eyes to how complex puppetry is.

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~ November 10, 2015 ~

Princeton's Mix Tape

I included a link to all of the songs that Princeton used in the song "A Mix Tape."

You've Got a Friend by Carol King

The Theme From Friends aka *I'll Be There For You* by the Rembrandts

That's What Friends Are For by Dionne Warwick

A Whole New World from Aladdin

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Kiss the Girl from The Little Mermaid

Ma Cherie Amour by Stevie Wonder

I Am The Walrus by The Beatles

Fat Bottom Girls by Queen

Yellow Submarine by The Beatles

Stuck On You by Lionel Richie

Love Me Do by The Beatles

My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion

She's Got A Way by Billy Joel

Yesterday by The Beatles


Good Night Saigon by Billy Joel

Through The Years by Kenny Rogers

The Theme From Cheers aka Where Everybody Knows Your Name by Gary Portnoy

Moving Right Along by The Muppets

I Have To Say I Love You In A Song by Jim Croce



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~ November 11, 2015 ~

First Musical Rehearsal

Our first musical rehearsal was on 9/2/15. I hadn't had much experience with the music before this, so it was fairly new. Chris taught us breathing exercises and vocal warm ups so we didn't end up destroying our voice. Most of these were new to me, and I'm glad I now have them in my arsenal. We spent most of our time on these exercises. I hadn't sang for a while before this musical, and my voice was a little rusty.

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~ November 11, 2015 ~

Rehearsal At Wonderbread

The first rehearsal at Wonderbread was an adventure. It was a challenge to hold the script and the puppet at the same time, so it was important for us to get off book ASAP. I got a sense of the space through these rehearsals, because the outline of the set was taped out on the floor. There was a plentiful buffet of food for us every rehearsal, and it was stellar.

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~ November 11, 2015 ~

Looking at the Music

The first time we went over the music, I was a little intimidated. I didn't know how read music well and there were some high notes and complex harmonies. Chris taught us exercises to increase our range, and this helped a lot. He would plunk out the notes on the piano and we would sing them back to him. I put in a lot of time outside of rehearsal to be able to get the character voice to sound right. I was able to get recordings of the songs from Chris to be able to practice on my own.

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~ November 16, 2015 ~

Puppet Boot Camp Lessons

Puppet boot camp was a unique experience for me. I had never worked with puppets before this. It was a lot more complex than I originally thought. Kevin Nonchester taught us a lot of exercises and routines to get us into good puppet habits. He started us out by saying simple words and phrases that also had a motion that accompanied it. Here are a few of them.

The first thing he taught us was puppet position. This was with the puppets eyes looking straight forward and the hands in neutral position. This is the position that we would always reset to.

Clock Exercise: We would have the puppets look around in a circle to the corresponding number on a clock. For example, we would make the puppet look upwards and say "12." Then we would continue in a clockwise rotation with all the numbers.

Word: Yes. **Action:** You nod the puppets head as you say the word "yes." Make sure you nod your head as well. Reset into puppet position.

Word: No. **Action:** Look to the left and say no as you're looking right. Nod your own head as well. Reset.

Word: Definitely Yes. **Action:** Say "definitely" and then point with the puppet hand and nod while saying "yes." Nod your head as well, and reset when you finish.

Word: Absolutely not. **Action:** Say "absolutely not" and then do a no head shake. While shaking your head, put puppet hand across body opposite of head while facing the palm out. Counter the hand with the nod, moving them in opposite directions. Reset.

Word: I Guess So... **Action:** Look down at b, and brush the puppets belly with hand before looking up and saying the line. Reset.

Word: Why not? **Action:** Tilt head to weak side and move puppet upwards. Say line and make puppets hand reach out just a little while shrugging. Reset.

Word: Mmm...Maybe. **Action:** Tilt head like a shrug, but then dip down further and swoop back up. Say line. Reset.

Word: (Double Take) What?? **Action:** Do a small glance to strong side. When you look for the second time, move your actual head in sync with puppets head. When you say the line, lean puppet to the right as if you've taken aback. Don't move your actual head for that one. The "what" can be said with different emotions. Reset.

Word: Awesome! **Action:** Shrug shoulders out and lift elbows. As you say "awesome," swoop arm across body as far as it can go. Reset.

So these are all the actions that we were taught. I went through the script and matched what actions I could to what emotions the puppet was feeling. Learning these actions made it easier to emote with the puppet, and get the audience to understand what Princeton was feeling.

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~ November 16, 2015 ~

Walk In/Walk Out Puppet Exercises

A note that Kevin Nonchester gave us was that speed does not equal intensity. Just because you're moving the puppet quickly doesn't mean there is more feeling or it is more urgent. Strong, deliberate actions are better than speed. Instead of moving the puppet's mouth as much as you can, he told us to focus on moving it once per syllable.

Another exercise Mr. Nonchester taught us was the walk in walk out exercise. In this exercise, we would enter, say the line "Hi, my name is Josh. I came from over there, and I'm going over there." Then exit.

Although it sounds simple enough, there were actions associated with it. In my notes, this is how I broke it down.

Walk in: Rise before you start walking, remember the bounce pace for the puppet. Bounce from the shoulder, keep the vision triangle. Arm at 45 degrees and elbow slightly elevated to look to the weak side. Take 5 steps.

Talking: When you stop, plant the puppet. Take a breath before you speak. Keep eyes even. Look before you point. Make the point deliberate and specific. Come to home position before you say "Bye."

Walk out: Triangle of vision. Rise before you walk. Arm at 45 degrees. Bounce from shoulder. Do exercise entering and exiting from each side.

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Puppet Challenges

The puppets added a whole new element to the process for me. Instead of using my own body and face to convey emotions, I had to channel my energy and emote with the puppet. This meant learning a new format of walking, talking, looking, and even breathing. Instead of two arms, I had one to work with.

The puppets had a range of movements that made it appear the puppet was feeling a certain way. I spent time by myself in the Pollard practice rooms associating specific movements with the lines. In the beginning it was overwhelming, and I felt in over my head a bit. With continuous reinforcement of proper puppet techniques, it soon came to be second nature.

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~ December 1, 2015 ~

In Conclusion

This opportunity to work on Avenue Q has been amazing. This experience has been helpful in so many ways. I have gotten to work with so many talented individuals and have had insights to myself as a performer.

The challenges I faced have motivated me to rise to the occasion and improve my skills. I learned a new form of performance, honed my time management skills, improved my singing ability, and stepped outside of my comfort zone. When I proposed this as my senior project, I expected it to challenge me, but this show challenged me in ways I didn't realize it would. The complexity of working the puppet and making it believable to the audience was more difficult than I originally thought it would be. Looking back, it would have been helpful to invest more time with the actual puppet. I used the eyes that we got from Puppet Boot Camp, but having the physical puppet on my hand during my practices by myself would have excelled my performance even further. Even with all the challenges I faced, I grew as an actor, and discovered things about me personally that will help me throughout my entire life.

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