

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2020-

---

2020

## Adaptation of the Novel "Silas Marner" into a One-Act Play and Performance

Melaney Douglass  
*University of Central Florida*

 Part of the [Playwriting Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd2020>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2020- by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### STARS Citation

Douglass, Melaney, "Adaptation of the Novel "Silas Marner" into a One-Act Play and Performance" (2020). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2020-*. 36.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd2020/36>

ADAPTATION OF THE NOVEL SILAS MARNER INTO A  
ONE-ACT PLAY AND PERFORMANCE

by

MELANEY CHRISTINE DOUGLASS  
B.A. Rollins College, 1980

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Masters of Arts  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2020

Major Professor: Earl Weaver

© 2020 Melaney Douglass

## ABSTRACT

As a teacher of high school theatre, I aspire to create powerful and thought-provoking theatre with my students. For my thesis, I adapted George Eliot's classic novel *Silas Marner* into a one-act play. I researched the novel and the necessary aspects of writing a one-act play. I explored the overriding themes in the novel. I researched and applied the techniques, skills and literary mechanics necessary to construct a one-act play. I recorded the creative process with my students as we, the director and actors, produced this original one-act for public performances. I reflected on this thesis journey and objectively critiqued the entire learning experience.

I wrote the adaptation in a one-act form to also allow my student to compete with the original theatrical piece in our District V Thespian Festival. The four highest scoring one-acts in the competition advanced to the Florida State Thespian Festival in Tampa, March 2020. *Silas Marner* was one of the highest scoring one-acts and will compete on March 19, 2020 at the Florida State Thespian Festival. This is a great honor for a high school Thespian Troupe and offers a wonderful, professional experience for the students.

The story of *Silas Marner* was told in its entirety. My students presented the completed one-act in two public performances, and I reflected on this creative process. I directed my high school actors and they created the characters and developed the plot of my original one-act.

To Tim, Ryan, Katelyn, Christian, Drew  
and to my beloved Mother and Father  
and the thousands of children  
who have taught me over the years.  
For you are all the blessings at my door and in my heart, always.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I cannot express enough gratitude to my esteemed Thesis Committee, Earl Weaver, Cynthia White, and Huaixiang Tan, for their kindness and support. Dr. Julia Listengarten, your love of research and literature guided me throughout my personal research and exploration as I created my thesis project. The professionalism and creative encouragement of the entire University of Central Florida's Theatre Department faculty has made this thesis journey so very rewarding. I offer my sincere appreciation for the incredible opportunity this Masters program has provided for me in my educational career. And to my mentor, friend and fellow theatre educator Earl Weaver, I extend my heartfelt gratitude and admiration. Your encouragement and kindness were beacons of light that sustained me daily as I taught my students and had the delightful pleasure to be a student myself, again. Thank you Earl also, for giving me the courage to persevere in all areas of my life. I hope your oldest student has made you proud!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Biography of George Eliot.....	3
Summary of the Novel <i>Silas Marner</i> .....	5
Themes in the Novel .....	9
Adaptation Techniques .....	16
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS.....	21
Rehearsal Process.....	21
Public Performance.....	23
Judges Adjudicated Performance District V Thespian Festival .....	24
District V One-Act Results .....	29
CHAPTER FOUR: COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY .....	30
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	34
REFERENCES .....	36

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I was sitting in the library at Walker Junior High School reading a book on my list of classic books I had never read. I was acting in musicals at the *Once Upon a Stage Dinner Theatre* at night, and working as a substitute teacher during the day. Spending time in the library on my breaks was the favorite part of my schoolwork day. I loved reading. My Irish parents, who loved to tell grand stories every night to their children, instilled in me a love for storytelling. These rich stories and my imagination worked overtime, putting the stories I heard to life in my mind and for as long as I can remember. The classic book I was reading on this day was *Silas Marner*. A turning point in my creative life as an artist occurred on that very ordinary day, for the story of the lonely weaver of Raveloe, who chose to care for and love an abandoned child, would become the cornerstone of my life's work.

I simply fell in love with George Eliot's tale of family love of the most unconventional kind, and I knew this was a story I would dramatize one day. Eventually my substitute days turned into a permanent position as a high school drama teacher. Over the years of choosing plays for my drama students, I always searched for an adaptation of *Silas Marner* in play form. I did not find a play of *Silas Marner* throughout my early days of teaching. Since the novel was in public domain and free of any copyright restrictions, I finally decided I would write an adaptation myself. The story leapt off the page to me from my first read, and I had been replaying the plot and themes in my mind for many years.

I have always been drawn to stories about children in need and good people choosing to do the right thing and help the child. *A Christmas Carol* is another one of my favorites. Dickens used the plot of a helpless child often in his stories. Readers of Dickens' Christmas classic were more concerned with what happened to Tiny Tim than they were about Ebenezer's fate. Mother, in the musical *Ragtime*, finding a baby in the garden and deciding to keep the child and protect the baby, is one of the most beautiful moments in musical history. Val Jean in *Les Miserables* devotes his life to raising the beautiful orphan Cosette. In fact, the most important story in Western civilization is one where a baby is born in a stable with a death warrant already on his head. I think all of these great authors, even God, knew the redeeming themes of unconditional love seen through the life of a helpless child would evoke the true meaning of family and would teach the greatest lessons in life. I always tell my students, the question we have to answer in life and thus, in the life of a play, is; "what are you going to do with the baby you find in the garden?" What choice will you make in life about your humanity? My favorite quote from the *Silas Marner*, "When a man turns away a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in," (Eliot 161) eloquently explains the simple truth in life about the power of unconditional love.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Biography of George Eliot

Mary Ann Evans is one of the most famous and fascinating authors of the nineteenth century. Her progressive themes tempered by her settings of the pastoral English countryside reflected the voice of Victorian Era literature. Her novel *Silas Marner* would become a standard classroom text for generations of school children. Evan's literary canon, including seven novels, propelled her into the realm of celebrity in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Yet, the world does not recognize the name Mary Ann Evans. The world knows her as the much more marketable name George Eliot. She used this pen name so her work would not be stereotyped, for although female authors were published during this time period, their works were usually ones of romantic fiction and quickly dismissed as unimportant. Eliot wanted her work to have the same respect as her contemporary male authors. She wanted her novels, whose plots posed unconventional questions about British society, to have a voice. The eloquent Mary Ann Evans and the brave George Eliot accomplished literary hierarchy as one voice and became known as a sage of the Victorian Age.

George Eliot was born November 22, 1819 in Warwickshire, England. She learned to read at an early age and was a voracious reader as a child and young adult. As was a custom of the time, she and her sister were sent to boarding schools. She was greatly influenced by the free thinking students she encountered, and she developed some very controversial beliefs about religion and decided to leave the church. This caused a great divide with her father. When his health began to fail, she respectfully agreed to continue attending church so he would have peace of mind in his final days. After his death, however, she left London and the church behind and

toured the world. Also around this time, her love of reading propelled her to write and she sought a way to have her words heard.

*The Westminster Review* became Eliot's first literary endeavor. This very popular review consisted of a compilation of freethinking authors' essays, which proposed very radical views concerning religion and politics. Her vast contributions were very well received and this gave her the encouragement to begin writing novels. Under the pen name of George Eliot she would become a part of literary history. Her realistic characters, neither good nor evil, let the reader make their own individual judgment about the stories. This followed her belief that individuals should be open-minded and make their own decisions, not just blindly follow the edicts of the church or society norms. "Eliot was possessed of a radiant, luminous intelligence that outshone her perceived deficits, which rendered irrelevant the small-minded criticisms of her character and visage to which she was subject for much of her life" (Mead).

Eliot's groundbreaking novel *Middlemarch*, published in 1871, is considered a masterpiece in literature. She was given the title The Victorian Sage, an impressive achievement for a woman author in nineteenth century as a result of the novel's literary success. This novel was very progressive for its time with its non-traditional themes. The heroine in the novel questions the status of women in British society. She defies the tradition of marriage and has radical religious beliefs. Because of these factors, public opinion of Eliot's personal life was controversial; causing many to think *Middlemarch* was an autobiography (Williams).

Eliot's most read and popular novel, *Silas Marner*, became a standard text for school children for generations. *Silas Marner*, the third novel written by the innovative author, seems a simple

tale at first: The plot follows the life of an isolated, bitter man, Silas Marner, whose life is changed when he takes in an orphaned child. Themes ranging from religion to the industrialization of Britain are interwoven like the threads of the linen Silas weaves in the plot. Eliot again aligns her personal journey with the characters in her novels.

Like the themes in Eliot's progressive novels, her personal life was very controversial. The majority of biographies written about Eliot devote many chapters to discussing her love life. In 1851, she met George Henry Lewes, who was married, and she became romantically involved with him. He and his wife had been separated for many years and his wife was living with another man. Eliot and Lewes lived together unwed, earning them moral disapproval by English society for many years. Two years after Lewes passed away, Eliot finally marries legally for the first time. She marries John Cross and even changes her name to Mary Anne Cross. This outwardly traditional marriage also caused controversy because Cross was twenty years younger than she (Williams).

Mary Anne Evans who bravely lived her life as the defiant George Eliot changed the course of literature in Victorian England with her beautifully written progressive novels. Eliot's venture into traditional domesticity lasted only two months. She became ill with a throat infection that combined with failing kidneys, led to her death at the age of sixty-one. Her legacy of encouraging readers to be freethinking and independent will live on in her novels forever.

#### Summary of the Novel *Silas Marner*

*Silas Marner* is a simple story of family love. Of course, no story about a family is ever truly simple. Silas starts his journey in the town of Lantern Yard in Northern England. As a devout

member of the town's small Calvinist church, Silas was an active member, visiting the sick and making sure the church was in proper order for Sunday services. Life was simple, until one night an ailing parishioner's money goes missing. Silas, being the last person to visit the man, was falsely accused of the theft and banished from the church. This devastates him and when he learns it was his best friend, William Dane, who framed him, he can no longer stay in Lantern Yard. He goes to his fiancée to plead his innocence and asks her to leave town with him only to discover she has betrayed him and is now engaged to William Dane. Silas, betrayed by the two people he loved most, feels his life is destroyed. He leaves for the little village of Raveloe in Warwickshire, vowing to himself to never trust another person again. He also no longer trusts God.

Silas has to work hard to become invisible in the busy little village of Raveloe. He takes a home on the outskirts of town and settles into an isolated existence as the town's weaver. Much to his surprise he soon discovers he does have the capacity to love again; he falls in love with the gold coins he earns for his work at the loom. His lonely, desolate existence is undisturbed by the village life around him until one cold night when his gold is stolen by Dunstan Cass, the reckless son of Squire Cass, the town's richest inhabitant. Dunstan secretly disappears from town with the gold and Silas drifts into a deep depression.

Squire Cass has another son in Raveloe and he, like his brother also has a secret. Godfrey Cass, in a wayward drunken stupor, married Molly Farren, an opium-addicted lower class woman. There is another secret in the town of Raveloe; Molly and Godfrey have a baby daughter. Godfrey is ashamed of Molly and though he gives her monetary support, he does not acknowledge his marriage. He wants to marry a young woman of his class and situation, Nancy

Lammeter. Molly does take care of the secret baby, but her life is controlled by her opium addiction.

On New Year's Eve, Molly decides she will not be Godfrey's secret anymore. She knows his father, Squire Cass, is hosting a grand party at their family home, the Red House. Molly, with baby in tow, sets off to the Red House to tell everyone Godfrey's secret. Trudging through the snow, trying very hard not to succumb to her drug-induced fog, Molly finally can go no further and collapses in the snow. She is just outside Silas's cottage door. The little toddler scrambles from her mother's cold arms and seeks comfort inside Silas's house, beckoned by the warmth of his hearth. Silas sees the child and thinks at first his gold has returned. He rushes to the hearth to find a little child, with hair the color of gold, sleeping by the fire. Picking up the little girl, he goes outside. Following her footsteps in the snow, he discovers her mother has died. Silas and the baby make their way to the Squire's house and he informs the party guests that a woman, the child's mother, has died in the snow outside his house. They all rush to the scene of the unfortunate accident. Godfrey leads the way. Upon the guest's arrival, the doctor intercedes and confirms the woman is indeed dead. Godfrey gets a closer look and tells the crowd he does not know who she is. But he does know. He also knows, with Molly dead, he is free to marry Nancy. No one will ever know his secret. He thinks.

Silas surprises the party guests by saying he will keep the child. She came to him after all, he declares. Godfrey is relieved by Silas's announcement, and he secretly vows to help them out financially. Secrets are safe in Raveloe, and the lonely weaver will now have a family. Silas names the baby Eppie in memory of his late mother, whose full name was Hephzibah. And, life settles to the normal pace of little village life. Eppie and both her fathers, one biological and one

ordained by fate, are happy. For sixteen years all is blissful in Raveloe as Eppie grows into a charming and beloved young woman. But, of course, secrets cannot remain hidden.

The town of Raveloe is expanding, and the decision is made to drain the stone quarry for more land. And, one secret comes to light. Dunstan's skeleton is found at the bottom of the quarry, with Silas' gold in hand. The money is returned to Silas; however, the gold no longer has a hold over him. Godfrey, on the other hand, is greatly changed by the gold's discovery. His conscience cannot continue to live the lie he has created through his marriage to Nancy. Godfrey confesses to Nancy that Eppie is his child. This revelation is so cruel to Nancy because she had lost a child and cannot have another. She tells Godfrey he should have told her the truth. Godfrey says he was afraid she would not have married him if she knew the truth. Nancy says she is not sure if she would have agreed to marry him knowing this truth, but she should have been told and given the opportunity to make a decision. Godfrey asks for forgiveness and tells her they can now claim Eppie as their child and raise her as a gentlemen's daughter.

Silas and Eppie are talking about her impending marriage to Aaron, a kind and gentle local boy, when Nancy and Godfrey knock on the door. They are delighted to see Mr. and Mrs. Cass, who are regular guests in their humble home. Godfrey reveals his secret to the innocents and asks Silas to let Eppie come and live as a Cass, and as his rightful daughter. Silas rises in anger and tells him that when "A man turns a blessing from his door it falls to those that take it in" (Eliot). He tells Godfrey he might as well rip out his heart but he will let Eppie make up her own mind. Eppie sweetly thanks her visitors but tells them she will never leave Silas. With all the strength of her character, Eppie proclaims she only has one father and that father is Silas. She vows she will never leave Silas, the one person who loved her and did not turn her away.

Godfrey and Nancy leave the little cottage and Godfrey realizes he determined his own destiny. When he had the chance to claim Eppie as his daughter, when she was a baby, he preferred to appear childless. By claiming to be childless, he would be able to marry Nancy and have the ideal he life he yearned for. And now, so many years later, he realizes the destiny he created by lies has come to pass. He wanted to pass as childless once and now he will be childless forever.

The book ends with a beginning. Eppie and Aaron get married and although Godfrey does not attend the wedding, he makes sure Silas' cottage is made new and comfortable for the newlywed couple and Silas. Eppie and Aaron and Silas will live together until the end of Silas' days. The entire village comes to the wedding and celebrates Eppie's joy. Silas' unselfish love for Eppie has made the village respect and honor the once lonely weaver.

### Themes in the Novel

There are many important themes within the story of *Silas Marner*. I had to be judicious in my decision as to which themes to include in my one-act adaptation. I chose themes that resonated with me from my first reading of the novel in 1981 and still lingered in my creative vision of the story to this day. The class system, which is the hallmark of English society, is very prevalent throughout the story of Silas and the wealthy Cass brothers. Victorian Era authors chose to include the class system and the injustices inherit in this societal order, in the majority of their novels. Silas and Eppie's lives were at the mercy of the higher-class Cass family and this was a vital focal point in the novel. Destiny determines the lives of the characters of the novel and thus a very important plot point and I chose to include this theme in my adaptation.

The people, who should be most loyal to both Silas and Eppie, chose to selfishly abandon them. Abandonment would be the theme I would start my adaptation with. All of these themes take place against the backdrop of the industrialization movement, which changed the way of life for all people of Victorian England. I chose to include Silas' work on his loom, constantly working but never moving, and a scene in which the quarry was drained for more land, as an example of the change from the pastoral village life to the beginnings of the Industrial Age. The novel *Silas Marner* weaves many themes together to create an enchanting and timeless story that has become a classic. Likewise, I chose themes that had exciting and creative theatrical aspects.

### Class

The Cass family is the richest family in the town of Raveloe. The Squire is the mayor and governs through the power his money and land render him. Godfrey and Dunstan, the Squire's sons, are wealthy young men, but squander money recklessly. Although they appear to be the higher class in comparison to the middle class and poor village folk, their actions are of an extremely low nature. Molly Farren, the drug addicted secret wife of Godfrey, is of the lowest class and yet her actions change the course of everyone's life. Silas at first only covets the cold metal comfort of gold, seeking solitude from a former life of love that caused terrible pain. His vast amount of gold made him a very well to do man, but once Eppie comes into his life, he has no interest in the class distinction wealth would bring. Eppie and Aaron, the local boy she marries, are considered lower class because of their lack of money, yet their happiness elevates their position in everyone's eyes.

Like the threads Silas weaves to make a garment, the threads of class are interwoven into every aspect of the lives and decisions of each character in the play. Class is the deciding factor in the fate of the characters and thus, creates the conflict and eventually resolves the conflict of the plot. The Cass brothers are wealthy, or so the village assumes, and therefore, their wealth and entitlement exclude them from any problems. I used this belief in the opening scene at the tavern. The drunken conversation supports the town's belief that the brothers are privileged and excluded from life's problems. The brothers are members of the richest family in the village; however, their frustrated father has cut off all funds. As is true with the higher class, the brothers have no other source of income. So they are now penniless and have no experience being poor. The thought of doing work for a wage does not enter their minds. The brother's monetary dilemma, no money and no source of income, propels Dunstan's decision to rob Silas of his gold. This is one of the initial incidents in the plot and it is borne from class distinction by Dunstan. I incorporated this rising action plot point in the beginning exposition montage.

Molly Farren, the scorned, opium-addicted, lower class, secret wife of Godfrey Cass, creates another pivotal plot point. Although Godfrey Cass holds a place of highest esteem and supposed power in the village community, his destiny is altered by the impoverished Molly. Godfrey married Molly in secret and became a father. He is ashamed of his relationship with Molly, who is of much lower class in the eyes of the village than the powerful Cass family. He hides his family and attempts to keep his secret safe by placating Molly with money. As long as Molly has money for her addiction, she remains in a drug-induced state of contentment. Godfrey shows no regard for the welfare of his child in the reckless care of a drug addict. However, once he has no money to pay for Molly's silence, his fate rests in Molly's desperate, lower class hands. The one,

who is considered powerless by society, holds all the power. Molly's decision to go to the Red House and introduce Godfrey's secret, their child, to the village is a definitive plot point and creates the central conflict in the lives of all of the characters of the play, regardless of class.

I chose the scene where the baby is revealed to be a moment when all classes are leveled at once by destiny. Everyone's life is changed on Christmas Eve by the journey he or she takes through the village of Raveloe. Molly decided to go to the Red House and tell the Squire about his secret grandchild. She starts walking recklessly through the night in the snow, with her baby in one hand and her opium in the other. Godfrey takes his place at the party, as the Squire's oldest and privileged son. He flirts with Nancy Lammeter at the party, longing to change the course of his life. Silas sits at the loom constantly weaving, constantly moving, and yet goes nowhere. I blocked this scene so all these journeys are shown at the same time. Eventually all of the characters are brought together as the baby is discovered in the snow. Molly, in her tattered clothes, lies dead in the snow. Godfrey and his party guests look on horrified, shivering, as their dancing shoes get wet from the snow. Silas stands still, as always, removed from everyone. Everyone stayed in the position appointed by his or her class in the village, until someone decides to put another before self and station. Silas comes forward and claims the lowly baby in the chest. He breaks all the barriers within this society and puts the welfare of the child first. Godfrey had a choice of what class to associate with at this pivotal meeting of the village. In one direction his dead wife and their innocent child lay in the snow. And, in the other direction is the beautiful and cultured Nancy, a member of his class in society. Godfrey chooses class and reputation above his moral duties as a father.

## Destiny

George Eliot has a preordained destiny for everyone's character in her novel. The rich Cass brothers decide their unhappy destiny through lies and breaking the law. Silas's sacrificial adoption of Eppie creates a destiny of family love for him. He never thought he would love again. He made it his life's destiny to not love again after the betrayal in his early life. Yet, when Eppie was a little one in need, he opened his heart and raised her in love. He made a conscience decision to change his destiny. Godfrey on the other hand also made a decision to alter his destiny. When he denied Eppie was his child and turned away at Molly's death, he claimed to be childless. He was correct for his destiny would be to remain childless for the rest of his life.

## Abandonment

Silas, as a young man, was abandoned by everything he knew and believed to be true. His best friend framed him by planting stolen items in Silas's home. His fiancée committed the ultimate betrayal by not having faith in his truth and by marrying his conniving best friend. The church condemned him for this turn of events and did not allow Silas to plead his case. Silas even felt God had abandoned him. Those who should have loved and protected her, also abandoned Eppie. Her mother chose drugs over Eppie's safety when she was a baby by venturing out in the snow when she was impaired by opium. Godfrey abandoned Eppie when he pretended not to know Molly. He turned his back on his child when she needed him the most, when she was the most vulnerable. However, these two abandoned souls, Silas and Eppie, found each other and the plot that evolved from that fateful meeting changed the lives and decisions of

every character in the play. An all-encompassing event like this is the earmark for a successful, engaging and enduring plot.

I chose to emphasize the control that abandonment had played in Silas' life by making his first line, and, in fact, the first line in the play, express his bitter heart towards the abandonment he had experienced in life. "My friend betrayed me, my love abandoned me, the church condemned me. I will stay with my gold" (One-Act).

Silas sought a reclusive refuge in the village of Raveloe after everyone in his life, friend, love and the church, had betrayed him. He felt so alone and bitter that he even rejected God. He did find comfort in the gold his new life brought to him. I blocked the opening of the play to show Silas as a solitary figure in the village and he voiced his desire to remain alone. However, another abandoned soul soon appeared on his doorstep and changed the course of Silas' life.

Eppie's abandonment by both of her parents is an instrumental moment in the rising action of my one-act. Godfrey hid her existence from society and pretended to live the life of a bachelor. I wrote the opening scene in the play to take place in a tavern, with Godfrey already desperate from his thoughtless choices. He is desperate for money to keep Molly satisfied and his abandoned daughter hidden and, less importantly to him, safe. I wrote a scene between Godfrey and his brother Dunstan to give crucial exposition for the plot. Both are desperate for money. Both threaten to reveal secrets about the other if money is not produced. Godfrey is terrified Dunstan or Molly will reveal his secret family to the Squire and village. Godfrey wants to marry Nancy Lammeter, a proper young woman in the village. He fears if all the truth is revealed, Nancy will abandon him and eliminate any chance that they will someday be married. Molly chooses to drink opium on her ill-fated walk in the snow and increases the chance that her baby,

Eppie, will be abandoned as a result of her selfish choice. I chose to keep the theme of abandonment all through the rising action by blocking scenes that portrayed the abandonment of each character. Silas sits alone at the loom with his abandoned, empty gold chest outside in the snow. Molly died alone in the snow, abandoned by the world, whose indifference to the poor, hastened her death. Eppie, a helpless baby, abandoned by both her parents, was left shivering and crying in the snow. Godfrey's fear of abandonment by his social class, left him standing alone in the snow with a fateful choice in his hands. All these character's destinies were altered and eventually determined by an act of abandonment.

#### Industrialization

The story of Silas takes place at the cusp of the industrialization movement in Great Britain. Soon people will not be totally dependent upon their village for all their needs. Silas is a weaver. He uses a loom. His loom is in constant movement, and yet it goes nowhere. Likewise the pastoral life of the village is not mobile in nature. However, the world outside of the village of Raveloe is starting to change and people will become mobile and go beyond their village for material and food. The pastoral setting of English villages in then nineteenth century will fade. Silas, already isolated from his village, will find it very difficult to go beyond his set boundaries of comfort. His loom will not be needed soon. He will find it impossible to survive if something does not change in his life and give him the confidence to join his village's life and join the industrialization of his environment.

I am using the hint of the impending major change of lifestyle for the inhabitants of the little village of Raveloe as an underlying urgency for all to accept change. The people living within a

village during the Victorian age were interdependent upon each other. All needs for livelihood had to be found, grown and constructed within the constraints of the village. Travel to buy basic everyday supplies was simply not done. As Silas desired to have no human contact, he tried to disappear within the busy life of the village. However, the nature of his occupation, a weaver, kept in in constant interaction, albeit just for profit. The people of Raveloe were well aware of the reclusive weaver and the stories of his hoarding of gold, was part of the village gossip. I wrote this plot point into the discussion within the tavern by the village inhabitants.

A very important piece of rising action is revealed in the plot by the forces of industrialization. When the Squire desires more land to build upon, he drains the natural quarries surrounding Raveloe to acquire dry land. This leads to the discovery of Dunstan's skeleton at the bottom of the drained quarry. Dunstan's crime of stealing Silas gold is brought to light and this starts a chain reaction of events that would alter the lives of the citizens of Raveloe. George Eliot was a very progressive thinking woman and she knew the inevitable changes that would occur in pastoral settings within the England of her time. She chose to include these changes of nature within the plot to show that these changes would also change the course of the society of the time.

### Adaptation Techniques

To adapt a full-length novel into one-act play form required judicious and artistic decisions. *Silas Marner* is composed of twenty-one chapters. Since each chapter is imperative to the story, choosing which chapter to use for the adaptation of the story was crucial (Perry). The one-act also had to fit within the confines of a forty-minute one-act for competition purposes. However,

the adaptation had to tell Silas' entire story. I chose the chapters very carefully and used creative and artistic discretion.

I began the plot with Silas already living a solitary life in Raveloe, Warwickshire, England. This means I did not dramatize the first half of the book. Therefore, I needed to include the preliminary situation in the exposition in a way that would reveal to the audience Silas' past. I used a montage of lines from various people in the village to tell Silas' beginning story. I felt this enabled a large amount of information and passage of time to be revealed in a timely manner.

The majority of the play takes place at Silas' cottage. I kept Silas' cottage center stage, which covered the majority of the stage's acting space. This allowed scenes in other locations to be easily staged on stage right and stage left. I used four settings in my adaptation. The main set was Silas' cottage. I also include scenes in the tavern, the Squire's house and the drug den where Molly was living. This was a major part of the adaptation process because the novel tells the story using many locations.

I knew there would be story lines that needed additional adapting to fit within the time and rules of the Florida State Thespian one-act competition guidelines. I adapted the one-act to be performed at our District V Thespian Festival. The festival has a one-act play competition. A one-act awarded a superior rating has the possibility to advance to the Florida State Festival to compete at the state level. Out of twenty-five one –act plays, four would be chosen to advance to the state level. I had to adhere to the one-act rules and guidelines of the Florida State Thespian Festival. The age of Eppie in the play is a good example of a factor I had to change to comply with the one-act rules. Eppie is a two-year-old toddler when Molly attempts to take her to the

Squire's house on New Year's Eve. All actors in the play, according to the rules, must be students in my high school program for this competition. So, I could not use a child actor. Eppie, in the novel, sees the warm glow from Silas' hearth and follows the light into the cottage. She then falls asleep by the fire and is discovered by Silas. This is the most important plot point of the entire play. So how did I accomplish this without a child actor? I decided to change the age of Eppie from two years to an infant. I had Silas throw the chest he kept his gold in outside when he discovers he has been robbed. When Molly, carrying the infant Eppie, was walking towards the Squire's house, she stopped to rest by Silas' cottage. She put the baby in the dry chest to keep her safe. She planned to just rest a few minutes but she fell asleep and died in the snow. Silas heard something outside his door. When he went to investigate, he found the baby in the chest.

In the novel, once Silas found the child, he goes to the Squire's house. I wanted to keep the action at Silas' cottage. So I had the character of Aaron, a young neighbor boy, go to the Squire's house at Silas' bidding and inform the party guests about Molly and Eppie in dire conditions at Silas' cottage. Everyone went to his cottage and the death of Molly was revealed to all. This allowed this pivotal action to be blocked downstage center.

I wrote the one-act so that the action at Silas' house and the action at the Red House could be seen simultaneously. While the action was taking place at Silas' house, Molly walked by holding the baby. Molly then set the baby in the chest. Molly collapsed in the snow and died. Silas heard the noise and went outside. He discovered the child in the chest. While this action is taking place, the audience also saw the party at the Red House. The party guests were dancing while Godfrey flirted with Nancy and Aaron sang for the guests. The characters were blocked to

move around the stage like they were on a revolving stage. So, for example, when Molly is walking by the cottage downstage with the baby, we saw the backs of the party guests upstage at the Red House. When Molly went upstage, the party guests moved downstage while performing a dance from the time period and the action of the party was now center stage. Then the characters revolved upstage and Molly was once again downstage. This is the first creative vision I had for the one act. I developed the plot structure from this point both backwards and forward.

Since the novel has been in Public Domain for many years, artistic license and needed changes were allowed. I kept the dialogue within the time period the novel is written. I liked the idea of my students learning an accent and learning word structure and word usage from another time period.

I loved doing research and choosing the musical selections I used to underscore my original script. I had the character of Silas sing a lullaby to Eppie once he decided to become her father. I wrote the lyrics to the song incorporating the themes of the plot. The song was also used in the montage scene where the audience saw Eppie grow from a little girl to a young woman of eighteen. Eppie, Silas and the ensemble also sang the song at the wedding of Eppie and Aaron, which was the finale of the play.

I was blessed when you came to me Eppie

All the blessings the Lord could bestow

And now our lives are together our lone hearts are home

I made that choice long ago, when you were just a baby in the snow.

As the years pass, I'll cling to you Eppie

Wipe my tears as the years start to toll

Your father forever, even when I must go

I made that choice long ago, when you were just a baby in the snow.

The students sang the song in perfect harmony. In the three different scenes we used the song, the story was supported and the plot was moved forward. The performance was enhanced in every way by the addition of the music I chose and especially by the original lyrics I wrote and the beautiful voices of my student actors.

I also designed an original set design for my one -act adaptation of *Silas Marner*. The performance needed to have seamless transitions in all scenes and the set needed to be simple and to support the locations. The majority of the action takes place in Silas' house. I also had to show the action at the house of the Cass family. In several scenes, we needed to see the action in both locations at the same time. I designed four pillars which would be covered in fake stone material and have a period style lantern at the top, which could be illuminated. The pillars were used in all the scenes. We also used scenery to show the changing of the seasons, winter to spring, to indicate the passage of time and the growth of Eppie from a baby to a young woman of eighteen. The set also consisted of a loom and a fireplace. We did research to make sure the loom was of the time period. We used two freestanding window units to indicate the wealthy Cass house. In the novel, the wealthy Squire and his family's home was always referred to as the Red House. We painted the two window units red to comply with the novel's intent. The set worked perfectly and the audience believed all the locations by the simple set pieces, which were true to the time period. The set created the beautiful atmosphere of a Victorian village in the pastoral countryside of England in the early 1800s.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

### Rehearsal Process

The rehearsal process for my adaptation of the novel *Silas Marner* into a one act for my high school students was the highlight of my thesis experience. Through this process, I was able to give life to my artistic vision for the masterful work of George Eliot through my student's rehearsal and performance of my script. My students were readily able to follow, understand and passionately create a genuine piece of theatre from my text. We also spent a large portion of the rehearsal process learning and sharing ideas about the themes of the novel. As a class, we engaged in dramaturgical work to discover the conventions of the Victorian time period. The time period was well researched and the costumes and architecture as well as the societal customs, and moral beliefs of the period, became the foundation for our one act production. The students were open minded and interested in the life style of the late 1800s and specifically the life of a little village in the countryside of England in the waning years of pastoral life.

The central theme in the novel and thus, the narrative of any production, is the question of what constitutes a family. The novel was revolutionary in creating a plot that went against the social norms of the time about what constitutes a family. The traditional belief that blood or rather biology dictates the structure of a family is passionately questioned in the plot of *Silas Marner*. In the Victorian Era in which the play was set, biology would be the most important component in deciding the fate of a child. The biological parents would have unquestioned and lawful support for the fate of a child. There was no precedent established to consider the welfare of a child in society. The plot questions this traditional societal belief and alters the established thought of what constitutes a family. My students live in our present day society where families

are increasingly not governed by boundaries. Marriage equality, religious tolerance and intelligent family laws have enabled families to flourish in many dynamics. The students readily accepted and agreed with the basic plot line in the novel that a family is about love and sacrifice, not biology. The students loved the fact that Silas would go against society's expectations and become Eppie's father. They could relate to this family dynamic because many of their families reflect a non-traditional family structure. I felt that the united belief of the cast and their support of the nontraditional families would provide the foundation for a successful production of a one act of *Silas Marner*.

Rehearsals were conducted during our class period every day for two months. Each class period is only forty-five minutes in length so we rehearsed the play in separate scenes as we began the rehearsal process. This allowed intense concentration on all of each scene and all the acting and technical demands of each scene. I found that I could successfully work on one scene at a time and still maintain the flow of the narrative. Cast members would watch and contribute acquired research to each scene as I directed my actors in my original script. It was very exciting and rewarding to create original theatre with my students. I found that each scene contributed to the plot and my judicious choices were successful in telling the story.

Once our rehearsals were held after the school day and time was not limited, the story began to be created in a wonderfully artistic and holistic manner. The scene-by-scene episodic rehearsal process had produced individual stories, which were very strong. I found putting all the scenes together to create the whole one act to be a delicate task. Since a one act is limited in time and my goal was to produce a one-act play we could use as our competition piece for our District V Thespian Festival, time became a major concern. Yet I could not let the plot and

character development to be rushed. We soon established a tempo and the plot developed at a good pace allowing the characters and story line to be fully fleshed out. I felt my choices as a playwright had been good and the important plot points were established. Nothing in a play can be gratuitous. Not one line or one circumstance can be inconsequential. I felt I was successful in accomplishing a stand-alone one act once I saw the wonderful results of our dedicated and determined rehearsal process. We had successfully created an original one-act production of *Silas Marner*. At the completion of our rehearsal schedule, the students and I were very eager and excited to perform the play for an audience.

#### Public Performance

Our debut performance of *Silas Marner* coincided with the opening of our school year's theatrical season. Also, this is the first year University High School is a designated Performing Fine Arts Magnet, so our original one act became the first play we created and produced as a performing fine arts magnet program. The audience consisted of high school students and adults. Several professional theatre mentors were also in the audience of over three hundred people. My student actors and technicians were very excited and eager to share their hard work with an audience. I was extremely pleased with the dedication and creative talents my students brought to every meeting and rehearsal as we created my adaptation of *Silas Marner*. I knew the students would give an outstanding performance of my adapted play. I was eager to see and feel the audience's reaction to my vision of *Silas Marner*.

The audience was engaged and responsive throughout our performance of *Silas Marner*. I was pleased by the reactions of the audience and felt that our story was being told in a cohesive and

creative manner. I eagerly talked with audience members and asked questions about the plot line and story of the one-act. The audience members found the story to be cohesive and easy to follow. The themes came through to the audience and many were moved to tears by the beautiful, sincere and mature work of my student actors. Several audience members told me through sobs that they identified with each character and had empathy for their actions, both good and bad. My school principal loved the play and was so very proud of the students. She felt very strongly that Silas deserved the justice he received by Eppie claiming him as her only father and that all other characters got their just desert, good or bad. My one-act adaptation had connected with the delighted audience and, in fact, the great work of my students received a standing ovation.

#### Judges Adjudicated Performance District V Thespian Festival

I adapted the lovely story of Silas's sacrificial love for the orphaned Eppie because I wanted my students to be able to have this inspiring play to produce and create into a beautiful theatrical and educational experience. I adapted the text into a one-act play with the goal of my students presenting the play at our District V Thespian Festival. The District V Thespian festival consisted of twenty-five high schools in the Central Florida area competing before an audience of their peers and a panel of professional theatrical judges in the one-act competition. Four of the twenty-five one acts would be chosen as Best in Show and proceed to the Florida State Thespian Festival in Tampa, Florida. My students and I had a goal. We would work together to create quality theatre that would score a superior rating and thus, be chosen at the District level

to proceed to the State one-act competition. We started this creative journey by performing at our District V Thespian Festival on November 19, 2019 in the one-act play competition.

At the District V Thespian Festival, the judges wrote a critique of each one-act performance and used a rubric for scoring. They had a rating rubric based on a point system with six areas to be adjudicated with the highest points given for each category to be five points. The categories were: Design Implementation, Direction, Ensemble Play, Staging, Vocal Delivery and Character Development. The highest score that could be awarded a one-act play from an individual judge was 30 points. The judges also gave individual written and oral comments. There were five judges on the panel. There were three performance one-act judges and two technical one-act judges.

#### Performance Judge Number One

Performance judge number one complemented our “grounded portrayal.” She felt the scenes had a natural and believable flow, which supported the plot. The judge thought our set was beautiful and cautioned the student actors to not break the illusion of the set by looking over the fireplace top and through the wall behind it. A noted strength in the comments were the montage US at the Cass party while Molly was carrying the baby Eppie DS in front of Silas’ house. The dancing was appropriate to the time period, she thought. A suggestion to provide more DS stage area for the dance was made. General notes about the need to keep the English dialect constant and strengthen acting choices were very helpful to the young actors. The judge shared with the students that she was a musical theatre actress and that she “loved the song at the end.” Performance judge number one awarded our one-act a perfect score of thirty points.

### Performance Judge Number Two

Performance judge number two started his written comments about our performance by stating “gorgeous production of a play.” This judge is a casting director, so many of his comments were directed at the student’s acting. I was encouraged by his comments because they supported my intent to adapt a text that would allow for creative character development. I had to be very specific in my dialogue choices because of the constraints of the one-act form. Each character had to have a sufficient number of lines and text to develop their character. This judge was especially impressed with the talent of the young actor portraying the lead character, *Silas Marner*. He felt the actor created a very believable character and was amazed at his talent, “magical, gorgeous, grounded work”. He felt the leading actresses delivered stunning work and that Godfrey was very strong. This judge commented that the theme of the redemptive power of unconditional love was created in my original adaptation. “What a great message to keep your blessings,” he told the entire audience in an oral critique. Performance judge number two awarded our one –act a perfect score of thirty points.

### Performance Judge Number 3

Performance judge number 3 felt the student’s characterizations were rooted in authenticity. She felt the pacing was beautiful and the actors “really utilized a series of different tactics,” to meet objectives. This judge noted that the ensemble’s (villagers) actions were strong throughout the trajectory of the show and all scene transitions were beautiful. She emphasized to the students that they needed to be conscience of how high the stakes were in the plot. The judge

added that the themes were life and death decisions and the student actors should work to raise their level of acting to a point where the audience believed how high the stakes were in the plot. I felt this was a good example of how my adaptation captured the plot and story line of the novel. The audience achieved a sense of empathy with the characters in the play. The plot's sensitive themes came through and the audience felt the urgency in the decisions the characters had to make. My young actors were inspired by the advice of judge number 3 who is a teacher of educational theatre. "There was a beautiful sincerity in watching you reveal the truth about the baby, but remember all that is at stake," she warned the cast. Performance judge number 3 awarded our one-act twenty-nine points out of a possible score of thirty points.

#### Technical Judge Number One

Technical judge number 1 stated that our technical crew achieved a very effective reveal of the set as our competition time began. The rules for the one-act competition stipulate that the one act can only be forty minutes in length. The timing of the entire process of presenting the play is an important component. Therefore, getting the set on the stage in a timely manner is imperative. We used music to accompany the set reveal and the audience and judges were very impressed. Judge one felt the music was a perfect addition and used creatively throughout the play. I was eager to learn how the audience would react to my choice of music throughout the play and if they would feel it supported the flow of the story and plot. The judges unanimously loved all the selections of music I used for my adaptation. The judge thought the action was a little crowded at one point but the acting area soon expanded and used the stage area effectively. I had designed the set to fit all the rules of the District Festival guidelines and hoped the set

would be effective in telling the story. This judge and the audience in general were very complimentary of the set. My stage manager was great and all the cues were on time and contributed greatly to the overall one-act performance. “The timing was elegant and subtle when the wife and baby entered the scene,” was a very rewarding critique he gave the play. Our research on the look of the loom from the Victorian era was extensive. The judge commented on how perfect it was for the period and a perfect look for the style of the play. The scene where little girl Eppie grew into young adult Eppie was very effective and it was a favorite scene of all audiences. The judge felt there was good use of all technical elements: light, set and sound. Technical judge number one awarded our one-act a perfect score of thirty points.

#### Technical Judge Number Two

Technical judge number two found our one-act to have great detail throughout the set. I researched all aspects of our set and was very pleased to have the judge comment “clearly established time and place.” The set needed to connect with the audience and establish a time and place to tell the plot of my adaptation. The reactions from the audience and the judges affirmed my decision to use several elegant pieces (stone pillars) that would establish the mood and atmosphere of Victorian England. Technical judge number 2 awarded our one-act a perfect score of thirty points. The last comment from this judge was a favorite of the cast. He said, “This production in design and tech is story telling at its best.”

### District V One-Act Results

Our production of *Silas Marner* received perfect technical scores and two superior ratings. In addition to these wonderful scores, we were honored to also be awarded the Best in Show Award in Tech award for one-acts. This meant *Silas Marner* was selected as the best use of technical skills in a one-act for the entire competition. Our technical achievements were considered the very best of all the one-acts in the District V Thespian Festival. There is only one Best in Show tech award given. This is great affirmation of the creative process established by my dedicated students and me as we brought my original script to life.

*Silas Marner* was also awarded Best in Show in performance and was selected to represent District V at the Florida State Thespian Festival in March 2020. This was a goal for my students and me. This is the highest honor a one-act play can achieve on the District level. The state festival is an amazing opportunity for all high school students who are passionate about theatre. I am so thrilled our collective hard work has risen to a level that propels our one-act to the state festival. We will perform *Silas Marner* at a professional theatre in Tampa to once again be adjudicated, this time on the state level. *Silas Marner* will be performed March 19, 2020 in the Ferguson Theatre at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa, Florida. This performance will be a wonderful end to our journey with Silas and our desire to bring his story to life.

## CHAPTER FOUR: COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

“When a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to those that take it in” (Eliot 161). This beautiful quote ignited a love in me for *Silas Marner* from the moment I read it in the classic novel. I love that I was in a school library when I first discovered the novel and this journey with Silas will end with a cast of my students from my school of thirty years. I understood the beauty of this Victorian fairy tale and I knew I had to find a way to create my vision for the world. The themes are universal and this is one of the reasons Silas remains a popular novel in schools and leisure reading. I knew high school students would relate to an unconventional family. Silas chooses in the story to sacrifice everything to raise Eppie. Students identify with Eppie on so many levels. They love her being young and in love. However, they really love her strength as she stands up for her love for Silas. She stands up for their unconventional family. She says no to wealth and privilege. This is refreshing to the students and I loved that they understood the true meaning of family.

George Eliot, the author of *Silas Marner* has been a literary hero of mine since I discovered he, or rather she, was really Mary Ann Evans. Evans demanded that her novels have the same respect as the male authors in the Victorian Era, so she used the pseudonym George Eliot. She knew a male author’s work would be taken seriously. Her novels posed unconventional questions about society. I embraced this brave author’s fortitude and I have used her as an inspiration throughout my creative career. I even found the strength she had in her unconventional writing career to help me during the writing of my thesis. My research on her was full of fascinating facts that were new to me. To learn the many brave ways she chose to refuse to adhere to the societal norms of her time, is inspirational to all generations of women. Mary Ann Evans and George Eliot both encouraged me as an author. Through my investigative research on the author known as the voice of the Victorian

Era, I found the personal fortitude to use my creative talents to write an original piece of theatre. I think Mary Ann would be very proud of me, a high school teacher who had a desire to have her creative voice heard in the literary and theatrical world. I feel I have set an example for my students to be independent by interpreting the work of one of the original freethinkers, Mary Ann Evans.

I was determined to create an adaptation that would bring the many important and life changing themes in the novel to life on the stage. I am first and foremost a teacher and teaching children life lessons is my passion. The themes inherit in the story of the lonely weaver who decided to break out of the norms of his society and love a child, offers many great life lessons. Through cast discussions, I discovered the students clearly understood the theme of class structure within the Victorian Era and its significance in *Silas Marner*. They could easily relate to the fact that one's monetary worth determined the course of one's life. They felt the people of Raveloe who were considered higher class in the village's society were the ones who acted the most disrespectful and dishonest. I feel the theme of class in society is related to the role of destiny in life. I wanted my audiences to also ponder the role of destiny in the lives of the characters in the play. Witnessing the role of destiny in characters lives makes the audience question if destiny also dictates their lives. The life changing event that came about with the industrial revolution is hinted at in the novel. I decided to include the theme of industrialization in my script to emphasize the change that would come into the lives of the characters as the outside world encroaches on their placid pastoral village.

The theme of abandonment is the focal point for my adaptation of *Silas Marner*. Silas felt abandoned his entire life. When he discovers the abandoned baby Eppie, on that snowy night, he feels her loneliness. He decides to change both their fates forever by pledging to raise the baby on his own, "I made that choice so long ago, when you were just a baby in the snow" (Douglass). I

knew the audiences would love this gentle act of sacrificial love. By choosing a scene where Silas would find the abandoned baby with the village folk present, I knew the audience would also become a part of the village and thus, become a guardian of Silas and Eppie. I am very happy with this scene.

The experience of directing my original adaptation with my students was so rewarding. To see them fall in love with the characters and make mature, creative choices in their individual character development was life changing for me. I told them to remember the first day we started rehearsal. We wrote the date on the board, which was August 29, 2019. I wanted them to understand the journey we were getting ready to embark on. We started in my classroom and slowly created a beautiful piece of theatre. We then took our creation to the stage and brought in our lovely set and added the music. Magic simply happened. We rehearsed for two months and the students were dedicated to the task and created an award winning performance. They became accomplished storytellers. We all loved telling a story where the hero gets a second chance in life. We live through the characters and we are thankful that second chances do occur. We all know we might need a second chance one day. My students gave me a second chance in my career. My dream of being a playwright came true through this thesis adventure and the dedication of my talented students.

The wonderful reception our performances of our one-act *Silas Marner* received, was very satisfying and empowering. It was vital for me to discover if my adaptation captured the true essence of the beautiful story of Silas and Eppie. I feel very rewarded by the positive reactions and comments the audience shared with my actors and me about our performances. I am also so thrilled our one-act received wonderful ratings and encouraging comments from our District V Thespian

Festival judges. To have the opportunity for my students to advance to the state level and perform on a professional theatre stage was a goal for me. So, I am pleased the one-act received high scores allowing us to advance, however, the scores are inconsequential to the true purpose of my play. I simply wanted audiences to have their life changed by the beautiful story of *Silas Marner*.

I told the story of Silas Marner thoroughly, including important themes and creating a natural flow that told the story in its entirety even in a one-act form. I established the preliminary situation through scenes in the beginning of the play that clearly told the necessary information. The rising action was sufficient and the scene progression built to an exciting climax. The audience gasped when Godfrey tried to claim Eppie as his daughter. I felt so reaffirmed by these kinds of reactions to my adaptation. I was very judicious in choosing which key elements to include and my adaptation became a unique and original play by itself, separate from the novel. I accomplished my thesis goal and I am very thankful to my dedicated and talented students who made my thesis come to life.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Many people have asked me why I earned my MA in Musical Theatre at the end my teaching career. I have been a high school theatre teacher and director for forty years, over half of my life. But, like Silas, I have other chapters in my life to write. There will always be children like Eppie who need someone to see them and hear them and teach them and, most importantly, help them accomplish their dreams. I will always be there for them. I have used theatre my entire life to find and accomplish dreams.

My journey of adapting *Silas Marner* into a play is not my first foray into the realm of play writing. In third grade I wrote *Spring Comes to Bunnyville* for my class at Lansdale Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia. Although this fun romp with bunnies through the barnyard only had one performance, the seed was planted and my passion for storytelling was born. I wrote and directed *Santa and the Martians* in sixth grade. We rehearsed during recess and made the costumes from dyed pillowcases, green for Martians and brown for elves. My very young sixth-grade teacher, in her first year, humored me by agreeing to watch our final rehearsal during her lunch. She literally stood up from the student desk, sandwich in hand, and said we were marvelous. What a great first theatrical review! She arranged for the entire school to see our play in the cafeteria. I have always had a story to tell and I understood very young the beautiful power of theatre to tell a story. Somehow, I intuitively knew as a little girl to not wait for your dreams, in my case that dream was theatre, but to make dreams happen. I have been making the dream of theatre happen in my life for many years. My dream of creating a production of *Silas Marner* with my students brought me to the first step in of my journey to earn a Master's Degree.

When there was no adaptation of *Silas* to be found, I decided to use my experience and talents to write an original adaptation. I did not wait for theatre to happen; I made it happen. I am extremely proud of my beautiful original adaptation of the classic *Silas Marner*. I am extremely proud of the heart touching and life changing performance I directed with my students. As *Silas* told us, “When a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in” (Eliot 161). Like my old friend *Silas*, I have never turned away a blessing at my door and my blessings, my opportunities, have been teaching and directing students as they pursue their dreams.

## REFERENCES

Dunne, William. *The Dramatic Writer's Companion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Eliot, George. *Silas Marner and Two Short Stories*. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005. (Original date 1876).

Mead, Rebecca. *George Eliot's Ugly Beauty*. *The New Yorker*, September 19, 2013

Perry, John. "Adapting a Novel to the Stage." *The English Journal*, vol. 57, no. 9, 1968, pp. 1312–1315. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/812138](http://www.jstor.org/stable/812138).

Williams, Blanche Colton. *George Eliot: A Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.