Moby Dick! The Musical: A Travesty In Travesti

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MOBY DICK! THE MUSICAL:
A TRAGEDY IN “TRAVESTI”

by

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B.A. Rollins College, 2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

*Moby Dick! The Musical* is a comedic parody based on Herman Melville’s 1955 classic novel *Moby Dick* about a madman who seeks revenge on the great white whale that crippled his body and consumed his spirit. The thesis role I have chosen is “Starbuck”, the ship’s first mate. If this were a dramatic telling of the classic tale, my role would be considered an absurdity for the sure-known fact that Starbuck is a male character. However, since *Moby Dick! The Musical* is a spoof that features a play within a play, many, if not most, of the roles are being played by women (teenage school-girls to be exact). These roles are known as “trouser roles,” and this tradition stems back to the 17th Century. The term refers to a male character sung by a woman (mezzo). It is also referred to as a “breeches part” or in Italian, “travesti”.

This will be my first trouser role experience. Before today, I hadn’t given the concept much thought in relation to musical theatre. These roles generally live in works ranging from Shakespeare to early operetta, and most important, Opera. This thesis role will allow me to log a personal experience in journal form and experience those challenges and rewards that transpire from a live performance. My research will include the history of the “trouser role,” including famous performers, specific roles in shows, and the effect it has had on audiences over the years. My main concern, however, is when, where, why, and how the concept made its transition to musicals. It will also be interesting to see what genres these roles are generally written for. Are they all parodies like *Moby Dick! The Musical* or are there a few dramas thrown into the mix? There will surely be a long list of shows that include the “lady in drag”. When all is said and done, I
will have a wealth of information in an educational thesis that will prove the significance of an ever-transforming concept.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the Summer of 2005, I performed my MFA “thesis role”. I had the opportunity to portray a sizable character in a reputable theatre’s production. The role was “Starbuck,” and the show was *Moby Dick! The Musical*. The role involved researching the character and seeing the process through rehearsal and performance. Along with that, I was expected to formulate a topic that directly related to the show.

I was limited once I picked up the script. Although, I was fortunate enough to work with a playwright-in-residence and take part in a regional premiere, I was reminded of what else I was dealing with: a show that had very little history and a multitude of bad reviews. As an optimist, the early critical response was a bit discouraging; however, I remained persistent. I was going to find something positive to take away from this show. It just so happens that the topic I chose couldn’t have been more appropriate, for it dealt directly with my character research and experiential growth. I chose to research the “trouser role,” which is where a female actress takes on a man’s role, wearing his garb and matching his characteristics. Since Starbuck was itself a trouser role, I felt I had a reason and a profound interest that would carry me through this experience.

The interesting thing about “trouser roles” is that not many people know what they are. It is a term found in both theatre and music; the latter art form having a bit more experience and knowledge. Since my role was based in musical theatre, I wanted to focus on the trouser role’s emergence into the arena. I knew I would have to research the history of the role, as well its representative characters and performers. I also wanted to discuss its absence from musical theatre curriculum, considering many of its students are in the dark.
During my three years of study I have developed techniques to create the best possible analysis of a show and/or role. With these techniques, I have developed a role that is fairly new to the American stage. The analysis is broken up into 8 parts: the conceptual history of the show, the authors, production history, critical response, plot summary, structural analysis, music/lyric analysis, and character analysis. Along with that I have kept a daily rehearsal journal, noting important goings-on during the process. The thesis analysis marks MFA completion, for it is a scholarly representation of training, performance, and research. Coupled with an in-depth look at an age-old concept, my analysis assists in educating artists, urging them to take a closer look when researching a show, a piece of music and/or art, no matter how broad or how new. There just might be a diamond in the rough.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY AND DEFINITIONS

A trouser role is also known as a breeches role, a pants role, or a travesti (Italian). Over the last four centuries, the term has evolved, following the steadily growing trends in music and theatre. The vaguest definition would be a role in which a female actress appears onstage wearing male attire, specifically breeches or tight-fitting knee-length pants. The convention dates back to 1660 London, when women were first allowed to share the public stage with men. Before this time, young men would perform the feminine roles (i.e., Desdemona was played by a man). Once women began to tackle the heavy dialogue and characterization, producers took advantage of the feminine physique. They began dressing women in male attire that better showcased their bodies. Scantily clad women became a popular spectacle and the story took a back seat.

For fifty years, this sexual sensation pleased the male London crowds. However, the most popular of breech roles came from a plot line. A female character would dress up like a man in order to deceive others and overcome some sort of obstacle. Shakespearean plays, such as Twelfth Night and Merchant of Venice were some of the first to introduce this formula in the 1500s, though men were the ones portraying the female characters. In the late 1600s, when women took the stage, Shakespearean trouser roles reached their full potential.

The art form that truly took hold of the transgender concept in the early 1700s and carried it to present day would have to be “Opera”. Many call it the purest form of singing and innovator of the “trouser role”. Before the counter-tenor, Mozart, Strauss, and Offenbach relied on “Castrati”. These were young boys who would be castrated (surgically removing part of the male genitalia) in order to sing in an unnatural falsetto.
They would play the roles of young boys and princes whenever a particular opera called for such a range. They were also responsible for female roles when women were not yet accepted on the stage. As castratos became less popular, composers were suddenly in need of a voice that could handle the high male tessitura. They turned to the “mezzo”, a female cross between a soprano and a contralto. In order to keep with the story, a mezzo would have to sing as a young man with the audience accepting her in the role. Fortunately, the audience at the time was appreciative and had enough faith in the art form to grasp such a unique concept.

In the 1840s we were introduced to burlesque: a variety act featuring music and comedy that would parody operas, plays, and the upper-class. “Without question, burlesque’s principle legacy as a cultural form was its establishment of patterns of gender representation that forever changed the role of the woman on the American stage…” (Allen 258-259). Audiences latched onto the idea of women, scantily clad in men’s tights performing intelligent social spoofs. Unlike 200 years prior, audiences were beginning to pay attention to what the actresses’ had to say.

Around 1870, the theatre saw a re-emergence of trouser roles in the form of a disguise, much like Shakespeare’s themes. Operetta brought simplistic stories that involved love and deceit to life. The first operetta to involve a trouser role was 1874’s *Evangeline* by Edward Rice. The show was based on Longfellow’s poem and followed the comic adventures of Evangeline, who journeys far and wide to find her love, Gabriele. The show saw great success with a slue of revivals. Trouser roles would become a staple of the musical genre, lasting well into the next century.
As a new century emerged, so did unique forms of cross-dressing. The trouser role began to change. Different methods, mostly unconventional, began developing around the world. Opera, however, denied the trend. Their trouser role formula remained successful in its purpose. Here begins the debate. As the concept heads in a new direction, does it still deserve “trouser role” status? It’s important to continue looking at how it has evolved.

In 1914, the Takarazuka Revue was introduced into Japan. These Western-style musical productions were created by Ichizo Kobayashi and featured performance troupes, made up entirely of young, unmarried women. The company is made up of six groups: Hana (Flower), Tsuki (Moon), Hoshi (Star), Yuki (Snow), Senka (Special Course), and Sora (Cosmos). What made the troupes so unique was that all the roles were played by women. The revues draw from popular Western classics, such as Gone With the Wind, Tale of Two Cities, Phantom, and Aida. The shows are fancied mostly by women and draw in a crowd of 2.5 billion a year. Today, the Takarazuka is considered to be more of a fetish than a cultural art form.

In the mid-1980s a new movement took the entertainment industry by storm. The drag show was born. In England, there has always been the tradition of the “Principle Boy” in Pantomime. He is always the male love interest (i.e. Prince Charming) and always played by a woman. Similarly, the Pantomime “Dame”, who is the older female character, is played by a man in drag. The ‘80s was a re-emergence of sexual energy and promiscuity. Unlike the ‘60s movement, we were now dealing with open homosexuality and freedom of expression. Drag Queens and Drag Kings began to emerge out of London and San Francisco with something to prove. The Drag King show was often
confrontational; the performer consciously acting out masculinity and entertaining in the process. Such cross-dressing spawned popular photo spreads in mainstream magazines. The look was no longer flashy and burlesque. It was classy and empowering for women to be seen in a new light.

Today, the trouser role concept remains in tact. Opera companies around the world hold it as standard, whether or not a changing society grows skeptical. The theatre continues to produce classical Shakespearean plays with the disguised woman plot line and musicals are beginning to experiment with pants roles. Even the Actor’s Equity Association has recognized this strange new phenomenon. In September 2005, a symposium titled, *When the Best Man for the Part Can Be a Woman*, was held in Los Angeles. It was sponsored by the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee under the direction of Nancy Daly. Miss Daly’s goal “was to spark some initiative, get some wheels turning, build a greater sense of community” (Equity News, vol. 90, p. 3). The event featured various artists such as Pat Carroll, Debi Derryberry, Michele Mais, Concetta Tomei, and Diane Venora. It also relied on the knowledge of casting director Joy Todd and agent Buzz Halliday. The panel came together to discuss their experiences in reversing gender-specific roles. From becoming Hamlet or Falstaff to playing Edward in *Cloud Nine*, these women are paving the way for “a new breed of leading lady”.

Although we are taking newer strides, one thing stands in our way: the audience. We are losing the audiences that were once educated in theatre and its practices. Perhaps today’s general audience and/or populace are too puritanical or sexually repressed to accept a woman playing a boy/man as a boy or man. There are those slight “gay” implications that could and will arise. It stems from inability on the part of the audience
member to understand the needs of such a role both vocally and dramatically. Although the role is written for a woman to play, the audience’s political perspective sees it as an absurdity.

A friend and avid theatre-goer recalls going to see an opera where his significant other was playing a trouser role. During the intermission, he made his way to the restroom where he overheard two men discussing the show. One said to the other, “…and that girl playing the pageboy part is very good, but I wonder why they couldn’t find a real boy to play it?” This was not a reflection on the singer’s performance, rather an uninformed patron showing unintentional ignorance. Here’s a prime example as to why trouser roles need to expand across the cultural board. If the roles can be accepted as a unique artistic concept, people might better appreciate them.
CHAPTER 3: FAMOUS PERFORMERS

Becoming a man is not an easy task. Several actresses pride themselves on trouser roles because it takes more skill, more physical and emotional vicissitude to become successful. Many female actresses are remembered for such roles and have the awards to prove it (i.e. Hillary Swank for the 1991 film, *Boys Don’t Cry*). The most recent actress to watch is *Desperate Housewives* star, Felicity Huffman, who plays a male transsexual in the critically acclaimed film, *Transamerica*; another testament to the evolution of trouser roles.

The pants role covers so many artistic arenas: opera, film, stage plays, and stage. Even musical theatre actresses (i.e. Julie Andrews, Betty Buckley, Joanne Worley) have had their go at trouser roles. The list of performers exceeds the number of roles. Then, there are the innovators; the women who stand apart.

**Charlotte Charke** (1713-1760)-Charlotte was born in January on Southampton Street West, London. She grew up a tomboy, preferring work in the stables to sewing or other feminine things. In 1730, at the age of 17, Charlotte married a violinist by the name of Richard Charke. Within a year she had a child, Catherine. Charlotte had to support herself and her child, so she decided to take up acting. Her first performance was a benefit for Mrs. Sarah Thurmond, where she played Mademoiselle in *The Provok’d Wife*. Owing to the popularity of “breeches parts”, Charlotte became best known for her male roles onstage. She played Roderigo in *Othello*, Macheath in *The Beggar’s Opera*, and Lord and Pistol in several *Pasquin and the Beggar’s Pantomime*.

Charlotte was not the first female to dawn trousers onstage, but she was one of the few to dress in male attire outside of the theatre. It is believed that she did so in order to
fool debt collectors who would lock her up on account of money owed. She gave herself an alias, Charles Brown, which she used to gain rights which women did not have at the time. Before Charlotte’s death in 1760, she was asked to be a prompter at the Orchard Street Theatre in Bath. This was very unlikely for a woman, but Charke was no ordinary woman. She left us with an autobiography “A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke”, one of the only accounts of her life.

**Lydia Thompson** (February 19, 1838- November 17, 1908) – Legendary producer-dancer-actor Lydia Thompson was born in Covent Garden, London in 1838. At age 14, she joined the chorus at Her Majesty’s Theatre, thus prompting a career on the stage. She was noticed one year later while playing Little Silverhair in *Harlequin and the Three Bears*, a pantomime at the Haymarket Theatre. She grew to be a strong dancer, eventually performing throughout Europe in 1855. In many of these performances, Thompson assumed male roles for which she was loudly applauded (Valentine in *Magic Toys*, Young Norval in *My Name is Norval*, and Abdallah in *The Forty Thieves*). When she returned to London, her performance status was unmatched, and the term “burlesque” had become synonymous with her appearances.

In 1868, she played Darnley in the burlesque *The Field of Cloth of Gold*. After 104 performances, however, Thompson quit and headed for America. Her American premiere came in New York at the Woods Theatre September 28, 1868. She starred in *Ixion*, “a mythological spoof that had women in revealing tights playing men’s roles” (Kenrick 2). Thompson and her troupe of “British Blondes” took the New York Theatre circuit by storm. *Ixion* was so popular, it moved to Broadway’s largest grossing house, Niblo’s Garden. Thompson’s first season earned an approximate $370,000. Her shows
were catchy and scandalous. They featured popular songs of the day, coupled with shapely underdressed women acting out miniscule storylines. They toured the country presenting a multitude of these pieces (*Ixion, The Forty Thieves, Blackbeard, Aladdin, Robin Hood, Kenilworth, Mephisto, Lurline, Sinbad, La Sonnambula, Robinson Crusoe, Ivanhoe, Princess of Trebizond, and Pippin*).

By 1887, Thompson said goodbye to burlesque and returned to London. She mounted a revival of *The Sultan of Mocha*, a comic opera. She continued to make appearances; however, her ability to produce proved more difficult as she aged. Thompson made her final appearance in 1904. She passed away only four years later, leaving behind her legacy. Thompson’s skill at producing some of the first theatrical trouser shows opened the door for an entire genre. The burlesque has been characterized as the forerunner of the striptease. Although this is chronologically true, Thompson did not find her work sleazy and undignified. Instead, she challenged male audiences, gave several women lucrative careers and made a success of her own. She opened doors for women both on and off the stage. Her methods were ingenious because she used the feminine mystique as an advantage.

**Sarah Bernhardt** (October 22/23, 1844- March 26, 1923) - Bernhardt was born in Paris. She was the illegitimate child of a Dutch courtesan and was brought up in a convent. Instead of becoming a nun like she had wanted, she was enrolled at 16 into the Conservatoire, the government sponsored school of acting. In 1862, she was accepted by the Comedie-Francaise but was fired after slapping a senior actress in the face. During her brief employment at the Theatre du Gymnase-Dramatique, Bernhardt found herself a series of lovers and had a child named Maurice. She began to question her own talent. In
1866, she built her reputation at the Odeon Theatre, with her greatest success being “Zanetto” in *Le Passant*. She left the Odeon in 1872 and traveled to different theatres playing numerous title roles, such as *Zaire* and *Phedre*. Bernhardt considered the voice key in developing a dramatic character. Victor Hugo called her the “golden voice”, but some critics remained skeptical. In 1880, she formed a traveling company and became an international star. Her trouser role performances came in 1899 when she played “Hamlet” in Paris and London. The late 1800s was also the emergence of chief melodramatic playwright Victorien Sardou, who penned *Fedora, Thedora, La Tosca*, and *Cleopatra* with Bernhardt in mind. After an injury to her right knee in 1905, Bernhardt had to have her leg amputated in 1915, due to gangrene. She continued to travel, visiting soldiers on the line during WWI and completing her final U.S. tour in 1916. Her final project was a motion picture titled, *La Voyante*, which was being filmed in Bernhardt’s Paris estate at the time of her death. She was a member of France’s Legion of Honour, a hall of fame honoring those who have made great contributions to the country.

Bernhardt’s role in *Hamlet* was undoubtedly her most famous. She used her professional reputation and position to set a precedent in classical theatre. For the first time, a woman was allowed to perform a man’s role.

**Mary Martin** (December 1, 1913- November 3, 1990) - Martin was born in Weatherford, Texas. She married Ben Hageman in 1929 and had a son, Larry. However, Mary and Ben divorced in 1936. She struggled for two years to make it into show business, earning her the nickname, “Audition Mary”. She finally caught her big break from producer Lawrence Schwab and became a true American star. Her first Broadway show was *Leave it to Me* in 1938. In 1940, Martin married a second time to Richard
Halliday and had a daughter, Heller Halliday. Martin’s career took off, and she was featured in a number of original Broadway musicals and motion pictures. Her tomboyish charm and go-getter attitude made it both easy and tough to place her. Her most famous, critically acclaimed roles were: Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific* (1949), Peter in *Peter Pan* (1955), and Maria in *The Sound of Music* (1959). These shows earned Martin three Tony awards and an Emmy for the televised version of *Peter Pan*. Martin was known for her overpowering voice, which many believe is why she was passed over for film so many times; however that didn’t stop her from appearing on several musically televised events. She also published her autobiography in 1976, called *My Heart Belongs*. Martin died of colon cancer in 1990. Interestingly enough, she was later outed in Boze Hadleigh’s book, *10 Hollywood Lesbians*. The book revealed that she and actress Janet Gaynor had been lovers.

Martin may not have performed many trouser roles during her career. In fact, she played more feminine ingénues than anything else. What made her role in *Peter Pan* so significant is it was the first role in musical theatre where a woman played a believable boy. It’s also important to note the audience accepted Martin in the fictional role. Peter is the ultimate breeches part because there is no disguise, no play-within-a-play, and no stepping into a man’s role. The show is written for a woman to play a man.

**Pat Carroll** (b. May 5, 1927) - Pat Carroll was born in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1927. She trained early for a career in musical comedy, attending Catholic University. She made her theatrical debut in a stock production of *A Goose for the Gander* in 1947. Her off-Broadway debut came in 1950 with the show *Come What May*. Finally, in 1955, Carroll made her Broadway debut in *Catch a Star*, a musical revue for which she
received her first Tony nomination. After starring in a 1959 revival of *On the Town*, she ventured towards a television career, appearing on *The Red Buttons Show*, *Caesar’s Hour* (received Emmy award), *The Danny Thomas Show*, *Busting Loose*, *The Ted Knight Show*, and numerous others. She was known as the “dowager queen” of talk shows. She also played one of the wicked step-sisters in the CBS presentation of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella*. Eventually, Carroll made her way back to New York, starring in her first one-woman show *Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein*. She moved into classical theatre in 1986, where she initially toyed with the “trouser role”, playing Falstaff in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. In 1989, Carroll performed her claim-to-fame role as the voice of Ursula, the sea-witch villain in Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*. In 1992, she reprised Helen Hayes’s role in the Roundabout Theatre’s production of *The Show-Off*.

Carroll continues to perform in the theatre after almost 60 years. Her latest trouser performance was *Our Town*, where she played the Stage Manager/Narrator, who, although unspecific in gender, has always been cast as a man. She has made the most recent impact on the trouser role, speaking out in forums (as mentioned earlier) and adapting classic plays to fit the trouser criteria. Just like Bernhardt, Carroll has used her leading lady status to further a concept.

**Marilyn Horn** (b. January 16, 1934) - Marilyn Horne was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania in 1934. She studied voice at the University of Southern California with William Vennard and then with Lotte Lehman at the Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara. She made her opera debut in 1954 with the Los Angeles Guild Opera as Hata in *The Bartered Bride*. That same year, her vocals were used in place of Dorothy
Dandridge’s in the film *Carmen Jones*. In 1956, Horne left school to pursue her singing career. Her next role was Giulietta in *The Tales of Hoffman* at the Gelsenkirchen Opera in West Germany. She spent three seasons at the Gelsenkirchen, then, she returned to California. Horne’s first bel canto role was Agnese in *Beatrice di Tenda* at the San Francisco Opera, where she also joined Joan Sutherland for the first time. Her New York Metropolitan Opera debut came in 1970, when she played Adalgisa in Bellini’s *Norma*. Horne’s greatest successes as an opera star came from such title “trouser roles” as *Tancredi* and *Rinaldo*. She was known for resurrecting lesser-known operas. In 1982, Horne was awarded the first Golden Plaque of the Rossini Foundation, which honored her as “the greatest Rossini singer in the world”. She published her autobiography, *Marilyn Horne: My Life* in 1983. In 1994, she established the Marilyn Horne Foundation, which gives performance opportunities to upcoming opera singers around the United States. In 1995, she became the director of the vocal program at The Music Academy of the West. Today, she continues to perform in concerts around the world and frequently visits schools across the country giving heartfelt Master classes. In 2000, she visited my alum, Rollins College, where we were able to sing with her in concert. It was an unforgettable experience. Marilyn Horne is one of the world’s leading opera mezzos. Where there are mezzos, there are trouser performers, and Horne embodies that.

**Frederica von Stade** (b. June 1, 1945)- Frederica was born in Somerville, New Jersey. She grew up loving opera and would soon be one of its most-loved stars. As a mezzo-soprano she received her first contract at the Metropolitan Opera auditions from Sir Rudolf Bing. She made her Met debut in 1970 and since that time she has performed most of her famous roles there. She has also performed with esteemed companies around
the world, including, the San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Los Angeles Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera Covent Garden, the Vienna State Opera, and the Paris Opera. She is a concert vocalist, bel-canto specialist, stylist of French repertoire, and one of the world’s favorite interpreters of the great “trouser roles”, from Strauss’ Octavian to Mozart’s Cherubino.

Von Stade has also made cross-overs to operettas and occasional musical theatre, performing the title role in *The Merry Widow* and Desiree Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music*. In 1998, American composer Richard Danielpour helped Miss von Stade to write *Elegies*, a tribute to her father, Charles, who was killed in the final days of WWII, two months before her birth. The piece is orchestrated for a mezzo and a baritone and is based on the letters written to Frederica’s mother during the war. *Elegies* was first performed in 1998 by the Jacksonville Symphony in Florida and in New York’s Carnegie Hall.

Frederica von Stade or her nickname “Flicka” continues to impress audiences with her gift of musical storytelling. She has received numerous honors from the White House and France’s *L’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, as well as honorary doctorates from Yale and Boston University; not to mention from her alma mater (the Mannes School of Music).
CHAPTER 4: TROUSERS IN EDUCATION

The trouser role has much to offer theatre students. We all carry elements of the male and female within us, but we are expected to appear within the appropriate gender guidelines. The trouser role breaks down those barriers; however, women have to have the willingness to share that new identity. Exploring masculinity presents a huge challenge because she is looking to truthfully portray a rather complex character. It’s not her general way of being. Usually, she employs a greater directness of intent, both emotionally and physically. The performance is far more physically present or “louder”.

Not only does this exploration affect how the actor moves (walks, looks, and gestures); it also allows different colorations in the voice, whether she is speaking or singing. A female has to tackle a slightly broader palette when expressing broader, masculine emotions.

I began my classical vocal training at the age of 13. Owing to the experience I had developed from lessons and competition, I had become a highly disciplined performer. My breathing was always very controlled. My stance was always very neutral. I relied on the face as a main form of expression. When I turned my focus to theatre, it was like “teaching the old dog new tricks”. Not that I am an old dog. Professors pushed me out of my comfort zone and urged me to use more of my body when expressing character. This challenge kept presenting itself role after role, and still does to this day. However, never have I ever felt more physically out of my body than tackling the trouser role of Starbuck. The effect it had on me as a singer-actor and my overall performance was enough to deserve a closer look. I had to experience the trouser role to gain a passion for it, and that’s unfortunate. However, I was able to experience it
in musical theatre, and that’s unique. In fact, if I was to direct a student in a trouser role, I
would more than likely call on my own experience.

Since rehearsals for Moby Dick! The Musical began July 5th and we opened July 28th, I had three weeks to become a man. It can be a rather frustrating process, so it’s important to note that it’s not going to happen right away. First, you must decide to what degree you will be portraying a man. Are you a woman pretending to be a man in
disguised form, or are you playing a realistic male character? My case was complex, in that, I was a female with stereotypical male qualities that gets the chance to portray a man in a play. This was a challenge because I wanted to find the right balance between a believable male and a character spoof.

Once I decided the degree I wanted to butch it up, I paid special attention to the script and score. Here’s where you begin to discover your character’s intellect (how they think and speak). I found that Starbuck is a perfectionist who becomes easily frustrated or dissuaded because of personal issues such as loss of control or morality interference. His/her attitude is reflected in how he/she communicates with others, which in my case, was rather aggressive.

When you get on your feet in the rehearsal process, it becomes time to explore your physical characterization. Since Starbuck is a man’s man, I had to lose any femininity I was carrying in my body and mannerisms. I kept my body very loose, but grounded, remaining flat on my feet. I felt comfortable placing my hands on my hips. It showed confidence and defiance while drawing attention to my status. With my new stance, I felt that I commanded the space and demanded my scene partners’ attention. Starbuck is extremely confrontational. I decided to lead with my chest, keeping my
movement very broad. Vocally, my discoveries drew from the same adjectives: low, chesty, and present. This was a huge challenge because I am normally a soprano. Luckily, I have a naturally low speaking tone; therefore, I didn’t have to reach so far that I could damage my voice. I insist that any singer-actor be extremely cautious when spending large amounts of time in a vocal range they are not comfortable in.

As the mannerisms begin to set in during rehearsal, you should continue to research. Become aware of the men and women around you. Pay particular attention to their differences and similarities. See how they react in similar situations. Continue to take risks and try everything. If something doesn’t work, move on to something else. When I was on my feet, I realized how tough and indestructible Starbuck was. Seeing that I carried a tied-up male security guard on my shoulder at the top of the show, I was making a rather bold first impression. This was a crucial observation because it defined the beginning of my character’s arc in the show. Eventually Starbuck is faced with a vulnerability that consumes her spirit (which I go into more depth about in my character analysis).

Taking on a male character can be a unique experience with daunting challenges to overcome. Some will struggle with every issue and some with hardly any. Ultimately, it depends on an actress’ willingness to share that complex side of her. You can’t just turn on a switch when playing the opposite sex. You must first discover your character as an individual, whether male or female. Then, you are ready to play.

Although a “trouser role” is gender specific in its purpose, it is universal in whom it affects both on and off the stage. Obviously, women are more susceptible to learning first-hand what the term entails. However, when a man happens to be busy researching
for upcoming auditions and comes across *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, there has to be some explanation as to why he’s not right for Drood. There’s also the “action/reaction” method. This is commonly used in shows where a woman dresses up like a man in order to deceive other characters in the story. All actors, male and female, must be aware of the trousers transition or else the production’s value is depleted. Basically, every theatrical player needs to be informed of its definition.

I pose a rather unfortunate problem in regards to fine art education. The “trouser role” formula has not been thoroughly integrated into musical theatre curriculums. The reasoning behind this remains unclear. Perhaps most programs have forgotten about the convention or feel it is impertinent information for their students. In fact, unless they are studying Shakespearean themes, most students are unlikely to come across the term at all. I was fortunate to already know; however, it took a Masters degree and one attentive professor to teach many of my peers a word that signified a “woman in pants”.

I’m certain most music departments educate their students in some form, whether it be academic theory, vocal coaching, or classical study. If their knowledge of opera synopses is anything like musical theatre, then they’d run into the breeches convention quite often. Mezzo-sopranos are more likely to experience the trouser role first-hand than men or coloraturas. However, in some cases, with much reservation, the counter-tenor (a.k.a. man) is taking over the mezzo pants role. Similarly, this has been done in a number of productions of *Moby Dick! The Musical*. It is the director’s discretion; however, many professionals and critics believe it takes away from the writers’ intent and reflects poorly in performance.
It’s no mystery that music and theatre departments center around two different curriculums. Each discipline has a unique focus that prepares their students for artistic success. The programs are so intense that they rarely have time to collaborate on projects that could be beneficial for both. They have different priorities and traditions and produce two different kinds of performers. However, they also happen to have many of the same performance aspects and same artistic purpose. Perhaps a subject, however small, such as trouser roles, is just another way of bridging the gap. It exists in both arenas, and no matter how extreme, it should be a topic of educational discussion.

For now, music students and professionals have the upper-hand. They have a better understanding of what a “trouser role” is and how it plays onstage. I’m sure they have no idea that opera historians and music scholars remain close-minded, refusing to divulge the term among other art forms. Let’s call it what it is, then, start to spread the word.
CHAPTER 5: MOBY DICK! THE MUSICAL- ANALYSIS

The Creators

Hereward Kaye

Music man Hereward Kaye was born in Middlesbrough, England in 1953. After school, he tried his hand as a band member in the ‘Café Society’. They toured the U.K. for two years and broke up. He discovered the world of theatre in the early eighties, writing a cabaret for The London Bubble titled Hell Can Be Heaven. He was also an actor, touring Germany as Dr. Scott in Rocky Horror Show, and then joining Robert Longden’s theatre as an original company member. Robert and Hereward began their careers as a writing team; however, Kaye was also involved with the Liverpool Everyman Theatre. He served interchangeably as actor and musical director three times for the show Forbidden Planet. His work in the West End included several songwriting opportunities, including the score for Goodbye America, which toured in 1990, and Willy Russell’s film, Dancing Through the Dark. He also worked with Tom Robinson on the score for Cramp, which premiered at the Edinburgh festival and toured nationally. In 1992, he and Longden brought Moby Dick! The Musical to London’s West End with the help of Cameron Mackintosh. He continued this trend with another musical, Underworld, which, in 1998, he and his collaborators workshopped in New York and Seattle. His love of music brought him back to Middlesbrough in 1996 where he settled with his wife and two sons and started another band called ‘Orchard Road’. Hereward has recently finished the musical adaptation of Hell Can Be Heaven.
Robert Longden

Actor-turned-writer/director Robert Longden received his training from the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. It was there he won the esteemed John Gielgud Award. His acting credits include: *The Rocky Horror Show* (Riff Raff) at the Essoldo Theatre; *Me and My Girl* (Gerald Bollingbroke) at the Adelphi Theatre; *Windy City* (Earl Williams) at the Victoria Palace Theatre; *Taming of the Shrew* (Hortensio) at the Haymarket Theatre; and *Chicago* (Mr. Cellophane) at the Newcastle Playhouse. There are numerous others, not to mention film credits such as *Agatha, Adolph Hitler-My Part in his Downfall, Live on Arrival, Selling Hitler, Secret Life of Ian Fleming, and Violent Summer* and television credits such as *Moon and Sun, The Blackheath Poisonings, The Gentle Touch, Watch All Night, Cost of Loving, and Dickens of London*. Longden is also a writer of several revues, thriller screenplays, musicals, and pop songs. He and colleague Charlie Hanson founded the Old Red Lion Theatre Club and the New Cornet Theatre, Battersea. He also created opening showcases for the Old Profanity Showboat in Bristol and five shows for the New End Theatre in Hampstead.

Martin Koch

Martin Koch is an established musical arranger/orchestrator in the West End. His musical training comes from The Royal College of Music. He served as musical director for shows including: *Chicago* (Cambridge Theatre), *Cats* (New London Theatre), *The Pirates of Penzance* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), *Blondel* (Aldwych Theatre), and *The Boyfriend* and *Follies* (Shaftesbury Theatre). He has musically supervised *Mamma Mia* (Prince Edward Theatre/Toronto/NYC), *Into the Woods* (Phoenix Theatre), *Les Miserables* (Barbican Theatre/Palace Theatre), *Les Miserables-10th Anniversary Concert*
(Royal Albert Hall), *Miss Saigon* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), *Just So* (Tricycle Theatre), *Which Witch* (Piccadilly Theatre), and *Martin Guerre* (UK tour). His work has also led to several gold and platinum cast recordings, including *Les Miserables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Oliver!*, and *Hey Mr. Producer!* Koch has recorded over 19 albums. His most recent work would have to be his orchestrations of *Just So*, *Moby Dick! The Musical*, *Tutankhamen*, and *Which Witch*.

*Russell Ochocki*

Adaptation expert and professional actor Russell Ochocki began acting at age 10 when he played Winthrop in a production of *The Music Man*. Since that time he has performed in over 60 productions, including National Tours of *Can Can* (Boris), *Damn Yankees* (Sohovik), and *Hello Dolly!* (Barnaby). His regional credits include: *Finian’s Rainbow* (Og), *A Funny Thing...Forum* (Hysterium), and *Guys and Dolls* (Nathan). He spent a lot of time with “Garfield the Cat”. He has traveled the world performing and directing shows starring the famous cartoon character. He is also a skilled composer whose song, “Discovering America,” was used as a National Spot for Embassy Suite hotels. Ochocki has worn many hats in his career including consultant for the National Symphony League and the Literacy in America Foundation for Family and Youth Projects. He has served as casting director for several New York agencies and has conducted numerous audition workshops for students across the US and Canada. His role as director has him directing over 100 productions in youth and professional locales. Recently, he has traveled around the country directing, adapting, supervising, and supporting *Moby Dick! The Musical* and Disney’s *Aladdin Junior* under MTI. He continues to work for MTI (Musical Theatre International) and currently resides in NYC.
Conceptual History and Research

*Moby Dick* was originally going to be set in Venice because the two collaborators, Robert Longden and Hereward Kaye, were handed a free backdrop, and on that drop was a scenic Venezia. Lucky for us, they scrapped the idea and went with a more reasonable approach. The idea that a rowdy bunch of schoolgirls must come together in order to save their school is based upon the St. Trinian films of the 1950s. More specifically they are *The Belles of St. Trinian’s* (1954), *Blue Murder at St. Trinian’s* (1957), *The Pure Hell of St. Trinian’s* (1961), and *The Great St. Trinian’s Train Robbery* (1966). However, every film must find its inspiration from something, and that was the case with Trinian’s. The concept of these films came from the 1940’s comic cartoons created by Ronald Searle. The St. Trinian’s that Searle invented dealt with the “School for Young Ladies” or the unruliest group of young women and the horrific actions they take against each other and opposing schools. Truth be told, there was actually a group of girls that this entire dynasty is based upon. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a tiny school in Edinburgh, Scotland whose populous consisted of ill-mannered, undisciplined girls, which back then had to have been highly unusual.
Figure 1: A Ronald Searle Cartoon

Moby Dick was written by Herman Melville in 1851 and dedicated to friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne. He considered it to be his masterwork, although it wasn’t a public success at the time. In fact, it wasn’t until the 1920s that Melville became recognized and Moby Dick became one of the great American classics. The story of the great white
whale dates back to the 19th Century; a time of whaling, where harbor towns, such as Nantucket, would fill with rugged men sharing stories of the kill. For many men, whaling was a job, while others looked to it as their passion. The theme that lies behind *Moby Dick* is both Ishmael and Ahab’s “quest for truth.” This parallels Melville’s quest for literary truth. He figured the symbolic fierceness of a whale was one way to get across such a powerful message, and he was right. It certainly defines “Whale of a Tale,” which just so happens to be my song in the show.

In May, 1839, there was a write-up of a whale named “Mocha Dick” that Melville and others read in the local paper. The whale was a great white of enormous size and strength spotted off the Chilean coastal island of Mocha. The term “Dick” refers to an everyman name (Tom, Dick, or Harry). How Melville came up with “Moby” is a mystery. However, the Mocha Dick tale differs greatly from that of Melville’s. Jeremiah Reynolds’s report in the “Knickerbocker” happens to be a whaler’s triumph where *Moby Dick* was not.

Herman Melville was an avid seaman, born 1819 in New York. His father died when he was young, leaving the family in debt, which deprived Melville of any formal education. In 1839, he became a merchantman and sailed back and forth to Liverpool. Two years later he joined his first whaling fleet aboard the Acushnet. While at sea, Melville experienced life among cannibals on the Marquesas Islands. He committed mutiny aboard an Australian ship and was hauled to jail in Tahiti. He escaped and became a beachcomber for several months. After some time spent in Hawaii, Melville returned to the U.S. and decided to write about his adventures. These turned into semi-fictional novels such as *Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849),
White-Jacket (1850), and Moby Dick (1851). His later works were no longer sea related and didn’t do as well, so he decided to stop writing and became a NY customs inspector. Melville died in 1891.

Production History

Moby Dick! The Musical was first presented as a British Water Pageant in 1985. Longden and Kaye were commissioned by market manager of Camden Lock, Eric Reynolds, to write a few songs for the Camden Arts Festival.

The team composed five more songs for their next version, held at the New Cornet Theatre in Battersea, which used to be a gay roller disco. This was to be a musical version of the “Hunchback of Notre Dame”. However, the lack of support and the writers’ priorities stood in the way and the show got dumped.

Several years later, Longden and Kaye regrouped and developed a two-act musical. They went with Melville’s tale, changed one of the original songs to “I Live and Breathe” and added in the idea of St. Trinian’s. The show ran to sold-out houses at Oxford’s Old Fire Station Theatre. Producer Cameron Mackintosh came to see a performance and was so impressed, he decided to bring the show to London’s West End. This was indeed a great honor because of the immense popularity that Les Miserables, Phantom of the Opera, and Miss Saigon were having. Unfortunately, the show had a short run, however, the music that was recorded drew a large fan-base, reaching cult-classic status in the U.K.

When Moby Dick! The Musical came to the U.S, Music Theatre International’s Russell Ochocki oversaw the transformation from a script that had a strong British sensibility to a much more “Americanized” version. Once the show was adapted, it was then catalogued under Music Theatre International for production licensing purposes.
Past Production/Workshops:

- Piccadilly Theatre in London’s West End 1993; ran for 4 months
- New York Workshop/Reading; January 2003
- The Human Race Theatre Company (Dayton, OH) Regional Premiere/Workshop; February 9-10, 2003
- Theatre on the Square (Indianapolis, MD); September 2003
- Irish Premiere-MIDAS; April 27-29, 2004
- U.S. professional regional theatre premiere @ Seaside Music Theatre (Daytona Beach, FL); July 28-August 7, 2005
- The show has also played in Japan, Austria and other parts of Europe and North America.

Critical Reaction

Some people love it and some people hate it, but whatever the reaction is from a critical standpoint, it’s backed by a strong opinion. That’s what’s so great about *Moby Dick! The Musical*. There’s a passionate response to every review that hits the newsstands. I’m not going to lie, the book is extremely weak, and the concept can easily be misconstrued as a bad high school or community theatre production. That’s going to scare most professional theatres away in a heartbeat. Who is going to want to put on a show that nobody’s heard of? However, the show carries a rare sense of humor that, if shared by the director’s vision and the actors’ tenacity, can be hilariously entertaining. The musical score covers a wide range of musical styles and genres that add to that effect. The songs are extremely memorable and they belong in performance. So, what’s the problem? I believe we are in a highly analytical society where cultural activity such as theatre and music has to be smart. When we come across random humor, sexual
innuendo, and silly stereotyping, we find it childish and poorly developed. The same holds true in film. Just ask any number of people about *Napoleon Dynamite* and see who actually got it. My advice is: take it for what it is. If you enter the theatre wondering how they turned *Moby Dick* into a musical, you’re probably going to leave very surprised.

*Moby Dick! The Musical* has seen its share of versions, ranging from water pageants, readings, workshops, to full-blown productions. The reviews, if any, remain mixed. Europe seems to love the show, while the U.S. is trying really hard to get on the bandwagon. Here are a few examples of what critics had to say:

> “Not just for kids, or just parents or for the twenty-something’s, but for everyone.”
> 
> *The Oxford Times*

> “This thoroughly, roundly, persistently resonant musical, whose bubbly-sounding rock and pop songs melt together well.”
> 
> *MWV Germany*

> “…a hellish jumble of lame jokes, lousy dramatic Dialogue and 26 mostly lackluster songs, all performed at a frenzied pace that neither masks the flummoxed material nor lends any theatrical validity to a production that seems to be fueled by desperation.”
> 
> *InterCityBeat: Indianapolis*

In the case of Seaside Music Theater’s production, the critic’s perception is no different. Theatre reviewer Dick Kerekes had nothing but praise for “the funniest musical…ever seen by SMT”. He has been attending their shows since 1988. He writes, “It is an extraordinary evening at the theater that produces fun at such a frantic pace, it will leave you breathless at times” (Jacksonville Entertainment). Just a few counties away, Elizabeth Maupin headlines an article of the same production with, “Call me ‘Perplexed’ by muddled musical”. She says the show was “…a sea of lame humor and
hard-to-understand speech” (Orlando Sentinel). The reviewers obviously differ in their opinion of what funny really entails. It just goes to show that Moby Dick! The Musical gets the job done; however, it needs to further develop its succinct style so that theatre-goers aren’t left in the dark.

**Plot Synopsis**

The story is set at a dangerously run-down school for girls known as St. Godley’s; time is present-day and geography is unknown. The school is run by a materialistic Head-Mistress, who just so happens to be played by a man. This exposition is delivered during the pre-show. In no time, the girls learn their school is going to be shut down due to financial reasons (inciting incident). However, one of the schoolgirls comes up with a brilliant idea to put on a money-making production that will save the school. The musical she has written is none other than Moby Dick. Although the adventure should be played by men, the girls of the school and the male staff decide to make it work. Everyone is quickly introduced to their parts and rehearsal, so that by the end of the first number, it is opening night.

As the play-within-a-play ensues, we are introduced to Herman Melville’s famous characters: Ishmael, Queequeg, Starbuck, Stubb, Pip, and the fearless Captain Ahab, who is played by the Head-Mistress. Ishmael, the musical’s narrator, journeys to Nantucket Town to join a whaling fleet for the season (play-within-a-play exposition). The town is filled with harbor men and Quakers alike. Beyond Nantucket town, Captain Ahab has arrived home with his cabin-boy, Pip, to see his wife, Esta. After she discovers that he is unable to produce a family due to the loss of his leg and other parts while at sea, Ahab
drives her to her untimely death (play-within-a-play inciting incident). He vows to seek
revenge on the whale that crippled him, known as Moby Dick.

When we return to Ishmael, she is introduced to Queequeg, a cannibal, who
befriends her and joins her on the journey to find a ship to set sail on. After being blessed
by the Gospel-like Preacher, Father Mapple, they head out to discover the ship known as
the Pequod (led by Ahab). They sign up with the ship’s first and second mates, Starbuck
and Stubb, but not before an encounter with the creepy prophet, Elijah, who warns them
of the doom connected with Ahab and the voyage.

Once the Pequod is out to sea, the crew rejoices at the splendor of sailing. When
Ahab finally arrives on deck, he offers a gold doubloon to he who spots Moby Dick
(play-within-a-play rising action). The crew discovers a number of whales in no time,
and although it is not the Great White, Ahab approves the hunt. After a long day, the
men retire, but Starbuck is tormented by his master’s madness. He decides to commit
mutiny, but his faith tells him otherwise.

The following day, the Pequod is visited by Captain Gardiner of the Rachel. He
is looking for his lost son, who has had an encounter with Moby Dick. Instead of helping
the friendly Captain, Ahab decides to venture on. As a storm erupts at sea, Ahab doesn’t
give up. Pip is thrown overboard while attempting to fetch Ahab’s hat, and the crew is
down-hearted. Queequeg has gone into a trance that reveals more prophesizing.

Finally, Ishmael spots Moby Dick, and the showdown begins (climax). Moby
Dick taunts Ahab, then ascends the Pequod, wiping the entire crew overboard. The show
peaks when a man-made version of the Great White whale appears onstage and swallows
Ahab. We are left with Ishmael, who gets picked up by Captain Gardiner and the Rachel and lives to tell the “Whale of a Tale”.

When the show is finished, the school celebrates with applause and congrats. The Head-Mistress reappears with a suitcase full of cash that will keep St. Godley’s open (resolution). The girls celebrate with a Moby Dick Finale.

*Please Note- The entire play-within-a-play sequence should look and feel like a low-budget high-school production. There is a lot of bawdy humor and bits that I didn’t put into the synopsis because each production must discover it on their own.

**Structural Analysis**

_Moby Dick! The Musical_

**ACT ONE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>There is commotion as the school-girls enter the building. One of the janitors tries to get things under control before the Head-Mistress arrives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“School Hymn”</td>
<td>The girls line up to sing the school song, rather poorly, while the Head-Mistress makes her way into the scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Head informs the girls that due to lack of funds, St. Godley’s has to close. Everyone gets upset, until one of the girls introduces a musical “Moby Dick” that, if produced, might save the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Moby Dick”</td>
<td>Everyone gets their assigned roles, and rehearsals are underway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparations are being made for opening night.

“I Live and Breathe”

The show has begun. The character of Ishmael is introduced. She is journeying to become a whaler for the season. Meanwhile, she is surrounded by marine life.

“In Old Nantucket”

Ishmael finds Nantucket Town, where she meets a number of people. We are introduced to Queequeg, Starbuck, and Stubb, Flask, Pip, Tashtego, Daggoo, Coffin, and Ahab. Ishmael decides to share a room with a stranger at the Spouter Inn that evening. We also learn that Ahab has returned home to see his wife.

“A Man Happens”

Esta receives a letter from Ahab, informing her of his return. She is overcome with the thought that they can now start a family.

“Ahab’s Homecoming”

Ahab arrives with some bad news. We learn that he has lost his leg to Moby Dick, a Great White whale, and he is unable to reproduce due to other bodily damage. Esta laughs at his misfortune, but Ahab’s anger drives her to throw herself to an untimely death. He admits to madness that Moby Dick has caused him.

“Love Will Always”

Pip, who is starved for affection from the mourning Captain, decides to try and cheer him up. He comments on love’s power over man and Ahab joins in the message.

Dialogue

At the Spouter Inn, Ishmael is introduced to Stubb, the second mate of the Pequod. Stubb points everyone out to Ishmael with brief
descriptions. Everyone is drinking and talking about the upcoming voyage. The Head-Mistress makes a brief cameo when the school-girls try to push product placement. Ishmael learns her new roommate is a cannibal.

“Primitive”
Queequeg and Ishmael meet in their room. Queequeg shares her pipe and goes on to tell the story of his/her travels. She decides to befriend Ishmael and join her for the season.

“A Sinking Man”
Pip prays for his master, who is having a hard time forgetting Esta. Then, Esta appears as a vision. She wants Ahab to stop wallowing and return to sea. Ahab decides to take her advice and seek out Moby Dick.

“Jonah Fell”
The whalers and their families, along with Ishmael and Queequeg, go to church. Father Mapple preaches the fate of Jonah from the Bible and blesses them for the voyage ahead.

“Pequod”
With a number of ships to choose from, Ishmael is drawn to the Pequod. They comment on the ship’s beauty, which spurs everyone to join in, including Ahab.

Dialogue
Ishmael and Queequeg are stopped by the prophet, Elijah, who warns them of Ahab and the doom that awaits them on their voyage. They think he’s mad, but he persists anyway.

“At Sea One Day”
Elijah tells them they will smell land where there is none and everyone aboard will die, save one. The sailors throw Elijah over the bridge once he is done ranting.
Dialogue
Ishmael and Queequeg meet Starbuck, who signs them up for work and shares on the Pequod. Suddenly, it is Christmas Day, and they are ready to set sail.

“Building America”
Starbuck gives the crew their first commands, and Stubb explains what purpose whaling serves for America. Together, the crew becomes a patriotic unit ready to explore the deep blue.

ACT TWO
Dialogue
The headmistress lets the audience know that we need more money if we’re going to save the school.

“Moby Dick Reprise”
The girls are ready to start the second act of their production and recap where they are in the story.

Dialogue
Ishmael narrates about the crew’s journey into icy waters and the joy that overcame all when it started to warm up.

“Deck Dance/Death to Moby”
The crew celebrates, re-enacting the story of King Neptune on board. They fast-forward to scrubbing the deck as they await word from Captain Ahab. When he finally appears, it is to rouse the crew and offer a gold doubloon to whomever spots Moby Dick.

Dialogue
Ishmael sights a number of whales; however, none of them appear to be Moby Dick. Ahab decides to let the crew do some whale hunting anyway.

“Heave Away”
Led by Starbuck and Stubb, the crew goes whale-hunting, commenting on the chase and the kill.
Dialogue
The action is reported back to the Captain by Pip, who is still aching for his master’s attention. Ahab sends Pip away to sleep on deck. Meanwhile, Starbuck is disturbed by Ahab’s behavior.

“Can’t Keep Out the Night”
Starbuck confronts Ahab about his obsession with the deadly whale, but Ahab doesn’t listen. When Starbuck leaves, he is left alone to consult the voices and the madness that subdues him.

“Whale of a Tale”
Starbuck rallies his crew and tells them his plan to commit mutiny aboard the ship.

“Love Will Always Reprise”
Starbuck cannot go through with shooting Ahab. Meanwhile, Ahab is struck with another vision of Moby and Esta.

Dialogue
Starbuck tries one last time to reason with Ahab, but he is too far gone. They are interrupted with news that a neighboring ship has been spotted in the distance.

“The Rachel”
The Pequod is visited by Captain Gardiner of the Rachel. He has lost his son to an encounter with Moby Dick and requests the help of Ahab and his crew in finding him. Ahab refuses to help Gardiner and drives on in search of the Great White.

“The Storm”
A sudden squall hits the ship. Pip is thrown overboard trying to capture Ahab’s hat and is lost at sea.

“Shadows of the Deep”
The sullen mood of the crew is capped off with a heavenly vision of Pip as they grieve their loss.
“Bones”

Queequeg is sent into a trance that involves the use of bones to prophesize near danger. He requests a coffin be made as his final resting place.

Dialogue

Ahab returns to set sail again. Ishmael smells land, and the prophecy is realized. Suddenly, Moby Dick is sighted.

“Heave Two”

The crew prepares to back Ahab in the kill. Moby disappears from sight.

“Ahab’s Death”

Moby Dick reappears and without warning, capsizes the Pequod. Everyone is thrown overboard, leaving Ahab face to face with the whale. He grapples and is swallowed whole.

Dialogue

Ishmael is alone at sea, but gets picked up by the Rachel, living to tell the story. The cast celebrates with a curtain call and the headmistress’s announcement that the school has been saved.

“Moby Dick Finale”

The girls finish the evening with dancing and cheering. They comment on Ahab’s death and the show’s theme.

Character Descriptions

Ishmael: the nerdy, introverted schoolgirl. Ishmael is the narrator of our journey, this being his first time whaling. He encounters a new world with interesting characters and unlucky happenstance.
**Head-Mistress/Captain Ahab**: the over-the-top, quirky leader of the school and the show. This role must be played by a man. Ahab is the crazy Captain of the Pequod who seeks revenge from Moby Dick

**Esta**: the sassy and boy-crazy new girl. Esta is Ahab’s wife, who desperately wants a family.

**Queequeg**: the punk-rocker rebel of the group. Queequeg is a foreign cannibal, who is very spiritual and ritualistic. He befriends Ishmael and becomes one of the Pequod’s harpooners.

**Pip**: a weak security guard with little power and a big crush on Starbuck. Pip is the ship’s cabin boy. He longs for attention, especially from Ahab.

**Starbuck**: the butch, radical tomboy with a heart of gold. Starbuck is the religious Quaker and first mate of the Pequod, who is morally against his master’s vengeance.

**Stubb**: the “dumb-blond” schoolgirl. She really hasn’t a clue. Stubb is the Pequod’s second mate and crew cheerleader.

**Flask**: a school janitor. Flask is the drunken third mate of the Pequod.

**Elijah**: the prophet who warns Ishmael of her fate at sea. He has one arm and is wildly imaginative.

**Father Mapple**: much like a Baptist Preacher. His sermon becomes one showy production.

**Daggoo**: one of the boys snuck into St. Godley’s. Daggoo is one of the harpooners.

**Gardiner**: a security guard. Gardiner is the Captain of the Rachel who seeks out his lost son.
**Coffin**: one of the boys snuck into St. Godley’s. Coffin is the owner of the Spouter Inn in Nantucket Town. He has an odd sense of humor, but he is very knowledgeable.

**Tashtego/Mary**: the schoolgirl that nobody pays any attention to. Tashtego is the Pequod’s third harpooner. Mary is Starbuck’s wife. She briefly bids him a safe farewell.

**Pierre**: a school janitor. Pierre is the French sailor who speaks in “French-isms”; mostly dance terms.

**Janitors, Security Guards, Fifi and Natasha, Voice of Moby Dick**: designated by director

*Descriptions based on Russell Ochocki’s Moby Dick! The Musical Notes/Introduction

**Musical/Lyrical Analysis**

**WHALE OF A TALE**

Longden/Kaye/Koch

THE TRIP’S IN TROUBLE LORD
THE CAPTAIN’S POSSESSED
THE SHIP’S GONE OVERBOARD

A FOR MOTIVES UNBLESSED
OUR PILOT’S SHOWN HIS COLOURS
THE DYE HAS BEEN CAST (aeh)
THE QUESTION FACING US IS
HOW LONG CAN WE LAST?

SHALL I GO

B DOWN BELOW
WITH A GUN
YES OR NO

GIVE ME MORE OF THE LONG STROKE BOY
SAVE YOUR LAST HARPOON

C FOR THE DEVIL WHO’S SAILING TO HIS
LAST HIGH NOON
IT’S COMING SOON

CAN’T YOU SEE WE SHOULD MUTINY  (ee)
IT’S A MOMENT OF TRUTH

C 1
DAMN HIS EYE FOR AN EYE
AND DAMN HIS
TOOTH FOR A TOOTH

IT’S A WHALE
IT’S A WHALE

B 1
IT’S A WHALE OF A TALE  (aih)
IT’S A WHALE
IT’S A WHALE OF A TALE

ARE YOU REALLY BEHIND ME BOYS?  (ee)
YOU’RE MY LAST HARPOON

C
FOR THE DEVIL WHO’S SAILING TO HIS
LAST HIGH NOON
HE’S MAD AS A LOON

CAN’T YOU SEE WE SHOULD MUTINY
PUT HIS HEAD IN A NOOSE  (ih)

C 1
TIME TO STAND AND BE COUNTED AS MY
 GIRLS (BOYS)
 GIRLS (BOYS)
 GIRLS ON THE LOOSE!

IT’S A WHALE
IT’S A WHALE
IT’S A WHALE OF A TALE

B 2
IT’S A WHALE, WHOAH
WHAT A WHALE OF A TALE
IT’S A WHALE
IT’S A WHALE OF A TALE

Color Key
** Rhyming  ** More rhyming  ** Alliteration  ** Assonance
** Repetition  ** More repetition  ** Antithesis  ** Punctuation

Figure 2: "Whale of a Tale" Lyric Analysis
**“WHALE OF A TALE”**

Longden/Kaye/Koch

ANTE- antecedent / CONS- consequence / EXT- extension

M.- measures / I through V7- chords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>Ante</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Ante</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Ante</th>
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<th>Cons</th>
<th>Ante</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>key of C</td>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>INTRO</td>
<td>ANTE</td>
<td>CONS</td>
<td>ANTE</td>
<td>CONS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dotted $\frac{1}{4}= 95$</td>
<td>m. 1-9</td>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>m. 11</td>
<td>m. 12</td>
<td>m. 13</td>
<td>m. 14</td>
<td>m. 15</td>
<td>m. 16-17</td>
<td>I-iii-IV-ii-iii</td>
<td>vi-</td>
<td>(\rightarrow)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Starts in the bass clef; heavy triplet movement then moves to treble during intro; final triplet in m. 1(g-a-b)/m. 9 (e-flat-d-c); m.10-15 has a lot of bluesy breaks; in the turn, there is no harmonic movement</td>
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<td>17-18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Ante/Cons contains a question and answer series between the melody and the backup; harmonic triplets pick back up</td>
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<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>ANTE</th>
<th>CONS</th>
<th>EXT- Tag on</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I-iii-IV-iv</td>
<td>I-vi7-ii7</td>
<td>V7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*In consequence, back-up doubles the melody (same in m. 34-37/50-53/58-61)</td>
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<th>ANTE</th>
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<td>30-33</td>
<td>34-37</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I-iii-IV-iv</td>
<td>I-vi7-ii7-V7</td>
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<tr>
<th>B1</th>
<th>New Melodic</th>
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<th>CONS</th>
<th>ANTE</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Idea</td>
<td>37-39</td>
<td>40-41</td>
<td>41-42</td>
<td>43-44</td>
<td>44-45</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V7-IV-V7</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>vi7-ii7</td>
<td>V7</td>
<td>I-vi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Considered to be the chorus of the piece</td>
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<td>46-49</td>
<td>50-53</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>I-iii-IV-iv</td>
<td>I-vi7-ii7-V7</td>
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<td>54-57</td>
<td>58-59</td>
<td>60-61</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I-iii-IV-iv</td>
<td>I-vi7</td>
<td>ii7-V7</td>
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<tr>
<th>B2</th>
<th>ANTE</th>
<th>CONS</th>
<th>ANTE</th>
<th>CONS</th>
<th>ANTE</th>
<th>CONS- Rides out</th>
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<td>61-63</td>
<td>64-65</td>
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<td>68-69</td>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>71-74</td>
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<td></td>
<td>V7-IV-V7</td>
<td>I-V/vi</td>
<td>ii7-V</td>
<td>I-V/vi7</td>
<td>ii7</td>
<td>V-I-vi-I</td>
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41
*m.71 there is a beat before the final phrase with no harmonic movement; m.72-73 are the same harmonically as m.44-45/greater fill in (less chords) underneath, punch resolution (I-chord) at end of song

**Figure 3: "Whale of a Tale" Music Analysis**

Now that I have completed my musical analysis of Starbuck’s solo “Whale of a Tale”, I feel I can fully communicate Longden, Kaye, and Koch’s idea of story-telling through music. Their music and lyrics are sort of a roadmap for the character I play. There are specific musical patterns and techniques that inform how Starbuck not only speaks but how she thinks. For example, in my lyric analysis, I noticed Starbuck’s drive to lead. However, she respects the crew and looks to them for approval. In fact, most of her phrases are questions meant for them. “Shall I go down below with a gun?” “Are you really behind me boys?”, and “Can’t you see we should mutiny?” are fine examples of Starbuck’s desperation. Obviously, this is my character at her lowest. The fight lies within her, between what she feels and what she stands for morally. The lyrics are a good representation of that conflict. The repetitive nature shows a person who is highly unsure of his/her self. The terminology, both whaling and religious connotations, reveal someone who has had a level of higher education and maturity beyond their years. The song is intelligently written with the character and the plot in mind.

The musical portion of this analysis takes a different approach, one unrelated to the story. “Whale of a Tale” is purely show-tune and quickly becomes a spectacle of a number. The style is 1950s Doo-Wop and a little bit Elvis. It has a jaunty pace; however, it can get kind of racy or, more appropriate to the thesis, burlesque. The song is made up of triplets that keep the rhythm steady and get the feet tapping. The breakdown consists of two verses and a repetitive chorus that grows, leading to the big finish. That big finish wouldn’t be complete without the key change three quarters of the way through the song.
There is some leeway given to the soloist in terms of stretching certain phrases or cutting off for emphasis. The vocal range lies in the singer’s chest voice or belt, which calls for a strong sound. It’s a simple melody with a lot of room for stylization. This can be dangerous; however, in my case, it was spectacular!

It didn’t take me long to realize “Whale of a Tale” is where my character truly arrives. I’m not referring to Starbuck, the Quaker and first mate of the Pequod, rather the brassy school-girl and a large part of the actor playing both roles. I’m not ashamed to admit it. From early in the process, I couldn’t wait to take center stage and deliver this song. This is vocally where the performer shines, and Starbuck is fully aware of that, stating “My song in Act 2 better be a show-stopper” (Longden, Kaye, Koch 55). In the two weeks I had to rehearse the number, I handled each detail carefully. I didn’t want to spoil the ending too soon. You see, the song ends on a sustained d-note, belted. I chose deliberate phrasing that would showcase several sides to my character or those qualities she wished to get across. Using different vocal shading, such as breathiness, chesty belting, falsetto, and engagement of false vocal folds a.k.a. “grunting,” I gave the audience a powerful, scandalous, and skillful performance.

**Character Analysis**

It’s not easy to describe a character that begins the show in a plaid schoolgirl uniform and ends it wearing a pirate shirt and knickers. There are two different Starbuck characters wrapped into one, and both of them contradict any normal perception of a girl. When asked to explain Starbuck, I immediately refer to my list of adjectives: butch, radical, feminist, serious, strong, upright, inspirational, cynical, practical, and selfless. She is a leader, and she is a perfectionist. She is looked up to, feared by some and held in
high esteem by others. It has been rumored the Starbuck name, as well as the
Captain/First-Mate relationship, stems from the real adventures of Captain Pease and
Edward C. Starbuck of the Houqua (1831-1835). However, this man was power-hungry,
immoral and ultimately discharged for misconduct aboard the Houqua. Melville’s
character is far more distinguished and revered.

In *Moby Dick! The Musical*, Starbuck portrays the tough tomboy. She doesn’t
possess many lady-like qualities. She almost sees it as a sign of weakness. You see,
Starbuck is highly anti-male. She stands for an equal place in an alpha-male society.
Some may consider her radical views to be extreme; they term her a “lesbian”. In fact,
the script hints at this several times. “I always new I was a Thespian”
(Longden/Kaye/Ochocki 15). I prefer to look at both sides of the spectrum. Her
involvement with women is highly unusual. She tends to make some of her female
counterparts nervous or uncomfortable. However, as the character evolves, she warms up
to men and even recognizes flattery in the case of a male admirer. In other words, the
doors swings both ways.

Gender is a social institution. It is part of our everyday lives and has a direct
effect on human rights around the world. Gender equality has been recognized, with the
United States paving the way for female equality. Today, for the first time in history,
same sex marriages are legal in England and women are allowed to vote in Iraq. Gender
balance, which attempts to redress the low numbers of women in high-paying positions of
power, is evident in Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator of New York
Hilary Rodham Clinton. We’ve made numerous strides, and yet, we are still a target of
discrimination.
Studies show that in a co-ed environment, men are “cleaner, more disciplined, learn better without having to study, volunteer more, and are physically more capable” (Lorber 9) than women. It’s a step backward, judging men and women in the first place. It divides the society and evokes unnecessary hatred for the opposite sex. My character is a prime example of this sort of hatred. She is sensitive to the female cause and lashes out at men for possessing those faculties that differentiate them. I also believe that Starbuck shares a number of those manly qualities, which only feed her fire, because she cannot assert herself as freely. Gender and equality are two subjects Starbuck will not take lightly. They represent the backbone of my character. Don’t get the wrong idea. Starbuck’s sexuality is not a primary representation of her character. It’s simply a topic that has some viewers skeptical, which is why it’s important to break down gender in this case.

As the schoolgirl becomes acclimated to her role in Moby Dick, she tries to play it off as no big deal. However, this actually becomes a golden opportunity. In playing Starbuck, she is finally able to freely express herself. In no time at all, the perfectionist creates her role as melodramatically as she can. Here’s where it becomes necessary to refer back to Herman Melville’s novel. In Chapter 26, there is a lengthy description of Starbuck which includes his physicality, his moral values, and his extraordinary courage.

“He was a long, earnest man…Only some thirty arid summers had he seen. A staid, steadfast man, whose life for the most part was a telling pantomime of action…uncommonly conscientious for a seaman, and endued with a deep natural reverence, the wild watery loneliness of his life did therefore strongly incline him to superstition…domestic memories of his young Cape wife and child, tend to
bend him still more from the ruggedness of his nature…as careful a man as you’ll find anywhere in this fishery…in him courage was not a sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him” (Melville 112-15).

Quite a different version emerges in the musical. Although this appears to be night and day, I assure you, the school-girl does indeed share some of these stoic qualities; however, she’s still a teenage girl with teenage problems. That’s what makes this show so much fun to watch. It comes off as a bad high-school production.

So, how does our character handle her role aboard the Pequod? Starbuck begins her performance slightly annoyed at the fact that her cast-mates aren’t as prepared as she is. She is forced to take a backseat to characters such as Ishmael, Esta, and Ahab early on. She even has to wear a dress in one scene, which goes completely against her own gender display (physical adornments or dress). She is competitive for the spotlight in every scene but grows disappointed. Her disgust for fawning men is clear throughout, but not as clear as her attraction to the character, Stubb, played by the dumb valley girl. However, these silly squabbles and minor on-stage mistakes are soon a thing of the past. In no time at all, Starbuck takes charge of the Pequod and even greater charge in her role. She holds her head up high and revels in the command. The chief mate’s responsibility is the ship’s cargo and crew maintenance. The only person she must answer to is Ahab.

Here’s where we see the softer side of Starbuck; the one Melville has created. Her interaction with the weary Captain is heartfelt. Her willingness to stand beside him becomes a pinnacle decision later in the story, when she must decide whether it is right to commit mutiny. Mutiny is defined as an “open revolt against constituted authority” (Woodman 1). It is usually associated with ships and their crews, such as my character
faces. Ultimately, her faith and morality cause her to back down, and though she continues to plead with her master (in a highly over-the-top, award-winning scene), there is no hope. I believe Starbuck to be the voice of reason in the *Moby Dick* tale. Normally, this responsibility lies on the straight man in a play; however, being there are none, it has been delegated to her.

Once the show-within-a-show is over, we revisit our schoolgirls who are victorious in their performance. As the celebration ensues, we see a new leaf turn over as Starbuck congratulates her fellow cast members, boys and girls. She even reciprocates Pip’s earlier advances. Her arc is extraordinary because even though *Moby Dick! The Musical* is a farce; Starbuck’s growth is quite realistic. I took a lot of pride in playing this role, and I’m happy to share credit in its development.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

There’s no feasible way to sum up the truth about “trouser roles”. There are so many facets involved and invariably argued upon. It could be said the document I have prepared is one of those arguments, but I’d rather it not be. All in all, I have included each and every definition, re-creation, and opinion. I have gone through an extensive time line, hitting on notable performers and repertoire. I have paralleled the term’s usage and popularity among different artistic forums. In essence, I have paid “tribute” to the women in drag. I’m fully aware that I am berating the point, but if theatre educators can include trouser roles into their curriculum and help students easily identify with the concept, not only will they become more well-rounded actors, but they also become more susceptible in helping the role evolve even further. My opinion solely rests on where I believe the age-old concept is going, how it is evolving, and ultimately, who can benefit from it. It’s food for thought.

It’s important for me to re-examine the catalyst that is responsible for my thesis. It all began with my role in a small, relatively unknown production of Moby Dick! The Musical. Who would’ve thought that a show with not one serious moment would hold the key to such a multi-layered topic – the trouser role? The analysis was helpful because it led me to draw similarities to the character in Melville’s novel as well as find those challenges and characteristics one faces when performing a trouser role. I feel I can use my research and experience to inform those brave souls who choose to tackle the role in some form or another.
APPENDIX A: TROUSER ROLES
Opera

“Nerone” in Agrippina- (George Frideric Handel)-1710
“Teseo” in Teseo- (George Frideric Handel)- 1713
“Sesto Pompeo” in Giulio Cesare (George Frideric Handel)- 1724
“Ariodante” in Ariodante (George Frideric Handel)-1734
“Xerxes” in Xerxes (George Frideric Handel)- 1738
“Cupid” in Orfeo ed Euridice (Christopher Willibald Gluck)-1762
“Don Ettore” in La cenerentola (Joseph Haydn)-1766 *opera buffa
“Idomante” in Idomeneo (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)-1781
“Cherubino” in Le nozze di Figaro (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)-1786
“Sesto” in La Clemenza di Tito (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)-1791
“Hassem” in Alahor in Granata (Gaetano Donizetti)-1826
“Smeton” in Anna Bolena (Gaetano Donizetti)-1830
“Ascario” in Benvenuto Cellini (Hector Berlioz)-1838
“Oscar: a page” in A Masked Ball (Giuseppe Verdi)-1859
“Siebel” in Faust (Charles Gounod)-1859

“Stefano” in Romeo and Juliet (Charles Gounod)-1867
“Prince Rafael” in The Princess of Trebizond
“Nicklausse” in Les contes d’Hoffman (Jacques Offenbach)-1881
“Hansel” in Hansel & Gretel (Engelbert Humperdinck)-1893
“Kitchen Boy” in Rusalka (Antonin Dvorak)-1901
“Page” in Salome (Richard Strauss)-1905
“Octavian” in Der Rosenkaivalier (Richard Strauss)-1911
“Baba the Turk” in The Rake’s Progress (Igor Stravinski)-1951
“Boboolie” in The Araboolies of Liberty Street (Ronald Perera)-2001
“Frederico Garcia Lorca” in Ainadamar (Osvaldo Golijoy)- 2003

Operettas

“Orestes” in La belle Helene (Jacques Offenbach)- 1864
“Gabriele” in Evangeline (Edward E. Rice)- 1874
Fantanitza (Franz Von Suppe)- 1879
“Prince Orlof’sky” in Die Fledermaus (Johann Strauss)- 1874
“Lazuli” in L’Etoile (Emmanuel Chabrier)-1877
“Alan-a-Dale” in Robin Hood (Reginald De Koven)-1891
“Willie” in A Trip to Chinatown (Perry Gaunt/Charles A. Hoyt)- 1891
“Nina”* in The Firefly (Rudlof Friml)- 1912
“Seraphina”* in The Madcap Duchess (victor Herbert)- 1913
“Fresco” in The Fortune Teller (Victor Herbert)- 1929

Shakespeare *the following characters disguise themselves as men to deceive others

“Julia”* in Two Gentleman of Verona- 1592-94
“Portia”* and “Nerissa”* in Merchant of Venice- 1594-97
“Rosalind”* in *As You Like It* - 1598-1601
“Viola”* in *Twelfth Night* - 1601-02
“Imogen”* in *Cymbeline* - 1609

**Plays**

“Little Yonkele” in *Yonkele* (Jacob Kalich) - 1921
“Hal” in *The Well of Horniness* (Holly Hughes) - 1983

**Musical Theatre** *the following characters disguise themselves as men to deceive others*

“Peter Pan” in *Peter Pan* (Styne/Comden/Green) - 1954
“Viola”* in *Your Own Thing* (Hal Hester/Danny Apolinar) - 1968
“Julia”* in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Galt MacDermot/John Guare) - 1971
“Harpo” in *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine* (Frank Lazarus/Dick Vosburgh) - 1980
“Edwin Drood” in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Rupert Holmes) - 1985
“Victor” in *Victor/Victoria* (Henry Mancini/Leslie Bricusse) - 1995
“Princess Leonide”* in *Triumph of Love* (Jeffrey Stock/Susan Birkenhead) - 1997
“Yitzhak” in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell/Stephen Trask) - 2001
“Starbuck” and others in *Moby Dick! The Musical* - 2002
“Pirelli” in *Sweeney Todd Revival* (Sondheim) - 2005
APPENDIX B: REHEARSAL JOURNAL
July 5, 2005 (12-5pm)

Today was our first rehearsal of Moby Dick! The Musical at Seaside Music Theatre. The rehearsal lasted from 12 to 5 pm, with the first half-hour consisting of a meet and greet, a design presentation, and paper work. The director of this production is Lester Malizia, the highly esteemed artistic director of Seaside. I have been looking forward to working with Lester, and I finally have the chance. It will be a major goal of mine to showcase my work ethic, positive attitude, and talent, of course. He wasted no time explaining the concept behind the show, which has a lot to do with Rocky Horror and little to do with Herman Melville. From his explanation and the set and costume visuals, we were all given a pretty good idea of the romp soon to occur. Lester expressed how exciting this ensemble-type journey was going to be and got me hyped up. I love to see that “kid in a candy shop” expression in a director.

When the stage manager, Julia Richardson finished going over the schedule and other general information, we took a short break, then made our way over to the DBCC (Daytona Beach Community College) chorus room for music. Here’s where things got a little sketchy. We had to divide up into voice parts. Mind you, there is a lot of choral part singing in this show. Two of the girls, Katie and Tori have done this show; however, they are unclear which parts they sang in which numbers. Now, I am a soprano/mezzo. Basically, I can go anywhere I am needed. The division in this show is odd because there are seven girls and we’re not always singing together. So, for each song that we learn, we have to decide what part Katie and Tori are used to singing, and then shift everyone else. I’m basically singing alto and 2nd soprano, although, during one song, I sing both. Interesting?! Everything’s going to be just fine, however, because I brought my tape recorder and I have a 30 minute down time in Act 2 of The Mikado to practice. Did I mention that I have a cold? Oh yeah, I sounded great today! Our musical director, Kevin Wallace, is a hoot. I lost count of the number of dick jokes he used during rehearsal. He’s a good mixture of an organized, knowledgeable director and friendly, good-natured human being…because directors aren’t human beings, you know! Hee hee! We didn’t make it through Act 1 of the score, but we did accomplish some strong harmonies and stylization. Time sure did fly, even with me coughing through it. I’m really psyched about doing this show. I have the opportunity to create a new character for the stage; a character who Lester referred to as a radical lesbian feminist. That would peak any performers interest. As for my fellow cast members, all I can say is first impressions came rather quickly today. Our pale Ishmael is a lot more colorful in real life. She’s a ball of fire. It’s not that I don’t like her because I do. She’s extremely talented and quite funny. She’s just a lot to take in, that’s all.

So there are my thoughts and observations for the day. I’m a little tired, having to juggle two rehearsals, but that’s the business I’m getting used to. Sail on!

July 8, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)

With a few Mikado set backs, we are back on track, and this is my 2nd Moby Dick rehearsal. My day began with a costume fitting. Even though I arrived early and changed as quickly as possible, we still didn’t have enough time to try on the several costumes my character wears. What I did see looks absolutely marvelous, and the best
news is that they have to take everything in. Someone’s losing weight! After my fitting, I made my way to the rehearsal hall. At 12:30, we continued singing and working through the score. I got to sing my solo. I’m beginning to think I should’ve marked more. My voice is really tired right now with Moby Dick and Mikado going simultaneously all day long. However, my song rocked and everyone was really impressed. As for the rest of the music, I am continuing use of my lower register, and Kevin wants us altos to sing out. As quickly as we were pacing through the numbers, we still didn’t finish in time.

At 3pm, we came back from break, where we were given a design presentation with the actual model set. Then, we began a read/sing through with Lester and Kevin. This was necessary in order to assure that we all had the same script and rewrites before we begin blocking. I had retained many of the notes we learned on Tuesday and those we learned an hour ago. However, when it came time to sing the three songs we never got around to learning, I was completely lost (as was everyone else). The only concern I have is if and when we get to learn them with Kevin because we start blocking tomorrow. I’m quickly realizing that there is a lot of music in this show and the entire cast happens to be involved in it. No breaks! I’m going to buy some Vitamin C and add it to a throat coat routine once I get to my new apartment. I can’t afford to get sick or run-down. Sleep is also quite important at this time. Still, just thinking about this show fills me with adrenaline. When we finished the read-through, Lester commented on how over the top each and every character should be. There is a style that can’t be missed and must be found individually and uniformly. After we were dismissed, I ran home to shower and eat, then, I returned to DBCC for opening night of The Mikado. It’s been a long day. Sail on!

July 9, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)

We began blocking today from the top of the show. We got through ¼ of it, which is not bad, considering we’ve been running behind. All I can say is that this show is going to be CRAZY! There is a lot of impromptu going on that Lester has handed over to the cast. He’d rather have to pull us back, then not to see the full potential up front. Everyone has begun to develop their own character traits. You don’t know what to watch sometimes. Whether that is a good or bad thing in relation to focus, I don’t know, but we’ll see. Lester gave me yet another Starbuck adjective today—“urban”. I’ve only begun to play with the radical feminist and I’m finding it rather difficult to get the stereotype across. I keep playing her tough and mean, but I don’t think she is so much that. There were times today where I my character got a little too pushy. I’ve decided that Starbuck doesn’t like men, but I can’t decide to what extent she likes women. I think I’ll have to try every angle and see what gets the laugh and/or feels appropriate to the style of the show. I’m already happy with some moments, and yet, there are others that I’m toying with. I believe that Starbuck may be somewhat of a straight man. The highlight of my day had to be the fireman’s carry that I had to perform at the top of the show. I have to carry the man named who plays Pip over my shoulder during the pre-show. I’m going to be feeling that tomorrow, but it’s well worth it. It was fun. The show is certainly on its way. Those sections which Lester and Kate staged and choreographed are excellent. They speak volumes on the specific style and humor of the show. I love where this is going! The songs we staged today are: “The Hymn”, “Moby Dick”, “I Live and
Breathe”, and “Nantucket Town”. In between these four songs, I will be doing four costume changes, not including my school girl uniform that I wear at the top of the show. I’m going to be busy, busy backstage just as much as onstage. Praises be, I actually remember most of the lyrics in these songs. Now, singing them in the correct voice part while dancing was a different story. Lester literally has us rolling around on the floor at one point. I usually put all the pieces together by the third time around. The rehearsal ended around 5:30pm. I had enough time to go home, shower, eat, and return to the theatre for a performance. That is, until I got a call from stage management saying that The Mikado was cancelled tonight due to AC complications. How fortunate! After a day of moving apartments and a five hour rehearsal, I was able to settle in for a good nights sleep. Oh, and no second night slump. Sail on!

July 10, 2005 (6-11pm)

Continuing our four songs a day routine, we had a very productive rehearsal today. I had my first break from the show, that is, I wasn’t onstage. Me and three others had to arrive at 6pm to work on “A Man Happens” a.k.a. the “stripper” number or the “Lady Marmalade” number. Midway through the number, we rip off our colorful Victorian dresses to reveal corsets and bloomers. Now you know why I’m happy to be losing weight. It’s a sassy song that when taken over the top, happens to get out of hand, of course! The character, Esta sings the lead vocals. The actors name is Tori and she is just fabulous. She brings so much to the table and continues to one up herself each time we run her scenes. The audience is going to eat her up. Actually, the cast has been discussing the audience’s reaction to this show. If they take any of it seriously, we’re doomed. However, if they have as much fun as we’re having onstage, then we’ll bring the house down. It’s a show that you’d have to see three or four times just to catch every spoof. Ultimately, we don’t care what they think. Our sense of ensemble and team spirit, so to speak, has full control over this production for the time being.

Let’s see, after “A Man Happens”, we went on to “Ahab’s Homecoming”, which spoofs dramatic operetta with the occasional dick joke thrown in. I was able to add some Starbuck-isms during this number. That’s what I’m going to start calling my character improvisations, in case you’re wondering. It’s so much fun to play this show as an all-girl high school production because we get to suck as an acting choice. Lester wants most of these songs to look poorly put together or overdone and we are more than happy to oblige. Following Esta’s death was a duet between Pip and Ahab. Then came a scene that involved Ishmael and sailors at the Spouter Inn. This provided some much needed exposition. That’s when I’m offstage, probably changing costumes in time for “Primitive”, complete with shrunken heads and “Beyonce booty shaking”. Lester decided that this was the number that the school girls worked real hard putting together. We all added our own choreography and that make sit a special moment for each of us. It’s also why it’s so hugely performed. The dance is wild. We’re jumping and chugging, throwing our hands up and beating our chests in defiant ritual. The puppets, worked by Mark and Cedric, steal the scene. Not to mention Katie, who put her mouth around a pipe, simulating a smoking action. Let’s just say that it’s not all she’s simulating. After running the new numbers in sequence, we were finished at 11pm. Sail on!

July 12, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)
It was good to get back to work today. I’m really eager to get this show blocked so that we can get as many solid runs in as possible. The show is so brand new that no one can tell what it’s going to look or sound like until it’s all put together. From 12:30 to 1:45pm we worked on the music that we couldn’t get to last week. We sang through “Jonah Fell”, “Pequod”, “At Sea One Day”, and the rest of “Building America”. Kevin consistently praises our swift, efficient work in learning the notes. It’s instant music once we put all four parts together. Our cast is superb, and I can’t reiterate that enough! When we moved back to the rehearsal space, we continued where we left off. Another duet with Pip and Ahab occurs (“A Sinking Man”), however this time Esta returns from the dead, followed by her ghosts (me included). We do a silly flashlight gag and collectively run out of breath at the end of the number. How Lester comes up with it, I’ll never know. After that song, we worked on “Jonah Fell”. If you’ve ever seen a televised Baptist revival, you’d relate to this spoof. Frank Viveros plays Father Mapple, the preacher with one hell of a riff. As the congregation, we get overcome by the spirit and fall to the ground. I have a whaling (no pun intended) moment myself as I attempt to share some of the spotlight with Mapple. What can I say? It’s gospel at its finest! Next, came “Pequod” which is probably one of the prettiest songs in the show. Then again, that may not come across since we are crossing the stage in slow motion carrying boat cut-outs on sticks and miming scenes from “Titanic”. After “Pequod”, we moved right into “At Sea One Day”, which is my friend Mark Catlett’s big number. He’s extremely creepy as the prophet Elijah, but he just looks plain silly imitating Michael Flatley: Lord of the Dance. Yes, we are River-dancing in this song. We couldn’t stop giggling. It seems we have no professional foot cloggers. Kate, our choreographer made a good point, though. She said what makes the number so funny is that even though we obviously can’t perform the steps perfectly, we should have such a serious, stern look on our faces that reveals the commitment we put into it. I don’t know if everyone understood her comment, but I hope it works out. We didn’t have enough time to perfect the piece, but I’m sure we’ll pick it up on Thursday. We can’t rehearse tomorrow due to Mikado’s matinee. At least I’ll have more time to memorize the script and song lyrics. It’s time to get serious, even though the process is hysterically funny. It feels like we’re running out of time, but we still have 2 more weeks. I think my schedule is off or something. Oh well! As long as I show up on time, right? Sail on!

July 14, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)

Act 1 is complete! We finished the final two numbers: “At Sea One Day” and “Building America”. My character has finally made an appearance that includes some speaking lines. I had a difficult time playing the humor on one line. It reads, “I’m not the captain. He’s below deck (pause) sick.” Lester wasn’t pleased with its delivery and after trying to explain its intent, decided to add a musical drone to indicate the eeriness of the situation. I felt as if I had failed. I understood the direction he was giving, however, my brief position on the floor makes it seemingly come out of nowhere. I want to please Lester with my comic timing and impromptu creativity, but whenever we get to Starbuck’s moments, it’s like I’m being spoon-fed everything. He loves everything Katie, Tori, Laura, and TJ are doing. I go back to the straight man theory. I just don’t think my character is written to be funny. We’ll see how Act Two fares for me. I’m a little discouraged at the moment.
Once we completed Act One staging, we took a 10-minute break as stage management set up for the top of the act. We looked over our lines and blocking, then proceeded with a run of Act One. Not so bad for a week worth of blocking. I remembered my lines during the pre-show and managed to carry TJ with ease. Since we were rehearsing in the dance studio today, I had a chance to see what was going on in the mirror. This is always a good and bad thing. I don’t have to explain. What I did notice is how foolishly silly we all look. That’s a positive note, in case you’re wondering. It also helped keep me on track with some of the recent choreography, including “Primitive”, “I Live and Breathe”, and “At Sea One Day”. The run went quite smoothly until we reached today’s blocking, which wasn’t bad considering we just learned it. The mistakes I made had more to do with the music and lyric memorization than any of the staging. I think I started la-la-ing at some point. Sounded real good! Anyhow, the act ran 55 minutes non-stop which is pretty swift. However, we felt every minute of it. Kevin and Kate gave some notes, and Lester wanted to fix a spot that wasn’t working. Afterwards, we were dismissed early, while the boys worked musically on some Act Two music. I’m looking forward to Act Two. I become more and more involved and hopefully, more creative for my sake! Sail on!

July 15, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)

Well, I sorta, kinda made a character breakthrough today. I was having trouble committing to a certain Starbuck choice in Act One. Then, just yesterday, I was driving in my car, reviewing my lines (like every professional actor does), and it hit me. She’s not a bad actor, she just happens to become very committed to her assigned role. Her lines are frit with dramatic pauses, and it indicates that acting is her true calling. “I always knew I was a thespian.” Therefore, it is my intention to play the character overly dramatic and rich in soap opera melodrama. If anyone gets in the way of her performance, which includes upstaging her, they’ll be knocked down. I decided to start playing this objective in Act Two today, and I’m already pleased with where it’s going. The rehearsal itself was rather slow paced today. We only got through one 1 ½ songs, however, one song has three parts to it, which can be and was a process. At first, it was just Kevin and the cast from 12:30-1:15pm to learn the “Moby Dick Finale” and review “Shadows of the Deep” in Act Two. Then, Kate took over and blocked a good chunk of “Deck Dance”. At times, the staging seemed unclear and roughly quick paced, though I think Kate’s an excellent choreographer. Every number has been thought through and executes nicely within each style. When Lester arrived, we moved to the top of Act Two. We get to involve the audience once again. This time we are collecting money which will be donated to ‘Equity Fights AIDS’. We said we’d change the fundraiser instead to ‘Help Dick Fight AIDS’. We’re such a naughty group of actors. One of my favorite lines appears at the top of this act. I sat “My song is Act Two better be a showstopper”. It kind of foreshadows my big upcoming number, which I can’t wait to perform. Haven’t I said that already? Oh well, can’t blame a girl for getting giddy! After some school girl banter, we continue the Moby Dick production. We’re now on the Pequod, dressed in swimwear and dancing madly. As 1st mate, I have quite a bit more presence onstage. My melodramatic persona is working nicely. It may or may not come across, but it gives me a direction and purpose. What am I saying? Of course it’s going to come across. I’m a
damn good actor, and I have what it takes to bring a character (no matter how big or small) to life. Sail on!

July 17, 2005 (6-11pm)

Today was the day! We made it to “Whale of a Tale”, but that’s not where we actually started. We started at the whale hunt. Laura Oldham, who plays Stubb, joins me in this “Heave Away” section of the show. There’s quite a lot of harpooning, rowing, and whale torture involved, and it’s all mimed by the cast; whales and all. Laura and I decided to take matters into our own hands when we realized we had nothing to do up on the platforms. Therefore, we added our own choreography which included butt bumping, stair climbing, and yes…Greased Lightning! It’s a whole bunch of fun, however difficult the lyrics are, and we’re still not pulling focus from the whale kill happening center stage. Following the hunt, is my stand-off with Captain Ahab. I was relieved once Lester had us upstage each other in the dialogue because it’s exactly the direction my character is going. I felt reassured in the other choices I am making. The scene is brief, but an excellent lead-in to my upcoming number. Once we started staging “Whale of a Tale”, I became really focused. Kate gave me a sense of what she wanted. The style is that of Elvis Priestly and soul-train doo-wop. The gun which I pull out of my pants at the top of the songs switches to become my microphone. The choreography has a stroll, lots of 3 step turns, and some guitar-like arm swings. I’m also doing Elvis’ backward strut and knee pops. Kate’s allowing me to play with the staging so that it becomes my own. She also complimented me on my ability to quickly grasp the style and steps, which felt good. I wish I could see what’s happening behind me. I hope the audience really takes to this number.

After we finished, I was more than ready to re-join the ensemble. I was mentally tired from feeling the pressure of the piece. I would rather take it home to work on in the mirror rather than running it over and over in the rehearsal space. My mind was everywhere. I couldn’t even remember some of the words which I wasn’t expecting during my solo. Luckily, after “Whale of a Tale”, they decided to stage Ahab’s solo number which included him and six other dancers. I was out of rehearsal by 10pm. This rehearsal was quite productive. It feels like we’re back on track and next week is going to be even more so. Sail on!

July 19, 2005 (12:30-4:30/6-9pm)

Today is not my day! I don’t know. I’m feeling depressed and tired. Lo and behold, this is the day Nick has decided to stop in on rehearsal. When I get this way, there is certain effect on my energy. I feel unmotivated and useless. Gosh! I get a knot in my stomach. It makes me want to cry just thinking about it. The rehearsal went well, I guess. We reviewed “Can’t Keep Out the Night” and “Whale of a Tale” and then, we moved on. Lester blocked my “to kill or not to kill” scene and complimented its humor. Then, I dropped the gun in a heat of passion and broke off a piece of plastic. I’m so clever. The gun and I are having problems. For one, it’s been in my pants for the remainder of the show. I have to find a way to get rid of it or I’ll go crazy. Let’s see, what else did we block? There’s the “Love Will Always- Reprise” and “The Rachel” (whose music/lyrics I do not know), “The Squall”, “Shadows of the Deep”, “Bones”, and “Heave 2”. We got a lot done, but Lester thought we looked like zombies who couldn’t
comprehend the tiniest details. Well, at least I wasn’t the only one feeling miserable. I had a bit more energy after the dinner break. We staged “Shadows of the Deep” which required celebrity imitation. The guys are obviously doing the boy band while the ladies take on “VH1’s Diva’s Live”! This includes Celine, Britney, Tina, Mariah, and Babs. I’m playing Tina Turner. All I have to do is her signature shake and the audience will get it. When the boys come out, we switch over to love-sick groupies. That’s where I faint. Good times! Technically, I can stay on the ground with my eyes closed for quite some time, but the show must go on! We didn’t actually get to finish blocking Act Two, but we’re so close I can taste it. Yes, this was the crappy rehearsal. We all get one, right? I had the chance to sit back during rehearsal when things were being worked out and take in just how annoying some theatre folk can be. There was no focus. I may not have participated to the best of my ability, but at least I paid attention. Okay, no more “Negative Nelly”. I’m off to get some sleep. Sail on!

P.S. I had a costume fitting today. Awesome!

**July 20, 2005 (12:30-4:30/6-9pm)**

We finished blocking the show. Yippee! It’s always such a realization that, “Wow, we’re actually going to mount this production”. I am a different person today; ten times better, really! We started at the end of the show because all we had left to stage was “Ahab’s Death” and “Finale”. Kate choreographed a silly “West Side Story” ending and we were all so pleased. It’s such a strange ending; not very book strong, however, the music seems to wrap everything up nicely. There’s this one boy in the show. His name is Cedric. He wanted me to mention him in my journal, but I’m sure I would’ve gotten around to it anyway. He’s so talented and his personality soars over the cast. Where was I? Once we finished blocking, we ran Act Two to the best of our ability. Collectively, we’re having a difficult time retaining the lines and lyrics in this act. Personally, I have lot more to say in Act Two, but I have my stuff together (with the exception of “Heave Away”). The act ran smoothly, otherwise, and we were released for dinner. When we returned, we went over notes from the Act Two run. Then, we worked through Act One. Lester later commented on how we ran the show “ass-backwards” to some degree. The act went well, with only a few minor bumps a.k.a. “At Sea One Day”. The good news is that we’re working through the entire show tomorrow. These runs were a good way for Lester, Kate, and Kevin to see what needed to be tweaked, changed, etc. They were also necessary for us to see where we were lacking. Homework! We didn’t finish Act One, but we really tightened some spots that were beginning to steal focus and look sloppy. Today was also the day Lester began telling some of the actors to pull back. We knew it was coming, however, to what extent? Laura, who plays Stubb is getting the brunt of it. She has great comic timing and really sparkles in her numbers; however, it’s so over the top that people might miss some pertinent info. It was a long day. I’ll give it that! Sail on!

**July 21, 2005 (12:30-4:30/6-9pm)**

We wasted zero time getting started today. Lester wanted to finish working Act One, work Act Two, and get in one full run by the end of the day. The rest of Act One was complicated because they added a piece of the set consisting of three largely stacked
crates. Our blocking had to be shifted so that we could use them properly. The entire Act One Finale is so *Les Miserables* and yet, it’s the lamest song in the show.

On to Act Two- what makes working through and making changes so difficult in this show is Kate’s lack of communication. It’s still almost impossible to understand her. I heard through the grapevine that she doesn’t write anything down. I know that we all have our own methods, but this is tough. I even asked where she was in the song and she acknowledged that she did not know. It’s simply a waste of time because it takes so much longer to fix things. Anyhow, Act Two took less time fiddling with because it was so recently blocked and detailed. Lester is starting to pay more attention to my character. He will make suggestions that hint at my character, although, I think he is generally pleased with the development of Starbuck. Besides, he has other things to worry about.

When we returned from dinner, we had out first real run through of the show. You wouldn’t believe how wiped we are after the show. It is so physically exhausting, and we haven’t even added the sets, costumes, and lights into the mix. Hydration is key in situations such as this. The odd thing is that I’m not losing weight like I did during last year’s summer stock. At least I don’t feel I am. Ever since I moved, I haven’t been back to the gym which probably accounts for much of it. It’s not across the street anymore. Well, if time permits, I need to force myself back. Good physical shape will help my energy, confidence, and future castability (if that’s even a word). Back to rehearsal- the run went really well. We have a show, indeed! Here’s what my notes looked like:

- “Whale of a Tale”- they lost some words (it’s coming soon, mutiny, and moment of truth)
- Don’t pause before the line “madness” because of timed underscoring
- Everything else was group logistics; spacing issues and such

P.S. The playwright Russell Ochocki came to tonight’s rehearsal. More on him later!

**July 22, 2005 (12:30-5:30pm)**

Our first designer run was today, and we had an audience that consisted of designers, crew members, technicians, and *Cats*. Yes, some of the cast members from SMT Downtown came to see the rehearsal. Nick Wuerhmann (one of my thesis committee members) was there, but he could only stay for Act One. We were so excited to perform for people. It’s a different energy because the humor is coming across new ears and perspectives. Before we began the run, Lester wanted to work the top of Act One. He wants more chaos from the school girls as we enter from the house. I can’t wait to hear the rock music that underscores our entrance. Talk about mood music. At 2pm, we began the run. Lines were still shaky and we had to make a couple of stops along the way, but we made it all the way through. Personally, I had a really productive run. My character has an obvious journey and I believe it’s coming across for me, the actor, as well as those watching. The butch school girl transition to Starbuck is the clearest I can make it right now. I enjoy finding new ways to explore Starbuck’s performance. There’s definitely room to grow, but I can’t help but feel that a full run of the show is where it’s going to happen. I can’t fully articulate the excitement I get in creating this character, so please forgive me for stumbling over my words. Lester commented on farce and how it differs from every other form of theatre. He said that in a drama, you want something; in
a comedy, you really want something; and in a farce, you really, really want something. What great motivational words. Lester talked to me about my character’s progress today. He said that I was slowly floating to where Starbuck needs to be, but he wants me to just get there. Starbuck enjoys playing a man. She likes having power over others. I need to make her a more aggressive leader. That’s all I needed to hear. Obviously, I’ve been feeling out the character as she moves through the show, finding moments in the show where she can really shine. Now that we’re running the show, I can fully focus on the arc in my character; possibly make important decisions based on her involvement in the “Moby Dick” production. This next week is going to be crucial development for me. This, I know. Sail on!

July 23, 2005 (3-6pm/7:30-10:30pm)

I’m getting some really great feedback from my colleagues in and out of the company. Kevin Wallace, our MD is really pleased with my work ethic and my instrument. He said he is psyched to work with me again sometime in the future. I expressed my gratitude and generosity towards working with him. He also told me that Chuck Hoenes came to see yesterday’s run, and he and Kevin discussed my performance. Chuck was impressed which means a lot to me, considering he will be directing me in Always Patsy Cline this fall. It’s good to know that my work doesn’t go unnoticed.

Today’s run was less energetic and fulfilling because we didn’t have the audience reaction any longer. However, technically, we were able to smooth out what we didn’t get to work yesterday; such as scene and song transitions, choreography, and lyric memorization. I was also able to connect stronger with my character as a whole and pay attention to her growth throughout the show. I worked really hard on her sense of pride and her tough exterior. It’s amazing how subtle changes can be made without any new bits or lines being added. By the way, “VH1 Divas” are history. A lot of the girls were upset, but I was cool, with it. I’m having a really good time doing this show, and being able to see progress, not only in myself, but the entire ensemble. The strength that this show holds makes me want to show it to the world. I guess I’ll have to settle for Daytona. I also have a feeling Russell, our esteemed playwright is pleased with what we’ve created. I haven’t had the chance to talk with him, but I can’t begin to tell you how productive and how fortunate we are to have him in attendance. What makes it work is that he has some really good things to say, however, he doesn’t get in the way of our production. That and I think he truly respects Lester and his artistic vision. Well, who doesn’t? Right now, the cast has put aside any differences and we are all working hard to get this show ready for the space through on Monday. Sail on!

July 24, 2005 (12-5pm)

Today was our final run in Goddard rehearsal hall or shall I say, our final chance to focus on that part of the production we are responsible for (the acting, the singing, and the dancing). I liked the approach Lester took this afternoon. He knew that we were tired and that we were about to come into a very hectic tech week. He chose to focus on character relationships. He really polished each and every moment. He tightened what was working and had us back off from what wasn’t. We were basically getting our show, our hard work performance ready. We went through the show and found our trouble spots. Then, we fixed them. Kevin made sure our lyrics and harmonies were right on
some of the tougher numbers, like “Shadows of the Deep” and “Heave Away”. Kate helped Kevin, our costumer, with some spacing issues. He had brought some of the bigger costume pieces from the shop so that we could try them out in the choreography. He also gave us each costume change plots that we need to study and comprehend ahead of time, so that there are no foul ups. There are honestly a bazillion costume pieces. I don’t blame him for getting a head start before dress rehearsals roll around.

Before we had our run through, Lester commented on some of the actors’ habit of marking. He did get a little upset, and understandably so. I can see if some of them were marking because they were getting sick or they had to sing a lot throughout the show, but that wasn’t the case. Some of our actors, and I’m not going to name names, have been marking for the last couple of weeks, whenever they see fit. I’m sorry, but I don’t see the point. If you can’t take care of yourself and endure singing for long amounts of time, then you are in the wrong profession. I’m sure smoking up the night before really helps your situation too. I’m glad Lester said something. It’s getting too close to show time. The run was really good for me. I believe Starbuck has truly arrived and I’m beginning to take comfort in her mannerisms. I can’t wait to get on the set. You can only picture a whaling ship for so long before you actually need to see it for real. I’m glad we have a break beforehand, though. I need some time to let everything sink in. DBCC, here we come! Sail on!

**July 25, 2005 (Tech)**

Wow! What a set! The story is coming alive and it’s going to be amazing. Ken Goldstein, our scenic designer has done a spectacular job changing a rough all-girls school into a gaudy high school set with a whaling ship. Today was a long day. We had to re-stage a lot due to sightlines and the number of people on stage (which is a lot). I accepted that this isn’t our (the actors) day due to technical issues that need to be addressed, so I minded my own business and stayed focused. That is, until I had a minor frustrating moment with the set that I sort of took out on Lester. I have to climb a ladder attached to the scaffold, hold onto a rope with one arm and swing out. That’s fine, but I couldn’t do what Lester wanted visually. I mean I couldn’t figure it out physically. I snapped for a moment, jokingly, but I think it might have been taken the wrong way. I went up to Lester later on to make sure there were no hard feelings. It turned out I couldn’t do the movement because I had walked up the ladder starting on the opposite foot. Minor frustration…we all have them.

I did finally have a little one on one with our playwright, Russell. He said I was doing a great job. He asked me to try delivering one of his lines a few different ways. If he didn’t get the reaction he wanted, he’d simply cut the line. The pressure was slightly on. I didn’t want a published playwright to cut a line because I couldn’t make it work. That’d be embarrassing, even if the line is a random stinker. Fortunately, Russell was pleased with my delivery and the line stayed in. It actually got a rather consistent laugh during the run. Russell’s personality certainly came out during dress rehearsals. He decided last minute to add a speaking bit during Pip’s boy-band number “Shadows of the Deep”. The speech had that “baby…I love you” vibe to it. We were rolling on the floor the first time we heard it. It’s kind of nice having the playwright in the audience. Sail on!
July 26, 2005 (Tech/Dress)

Today was complete chaos, especially backstage. It was our first dress rehearsal and we ran around like chickens with our heads cut off. I have to hand it to the costume crew and stage management. They warned us ahead of time what to expect. They assigned dressers to people, had the costumes plotted out on paper and pre-set all over the theatre. However, we had to stop during the very first costume change which just so happened to be our star of the show, Ms. Pees. She complained how it’s impossible to do the change in that amount of time. Instead of trying, she just stopped. I learned today that Katie’s favorite word is “hold” because she used it incessantly today. During one of the holds, I was off to the side talking to one of fellow actors. She complimented me, saying how consistent I’ve been throughout the rehearsal process. She said I was always focused and my character was really solid. It was nice to have my work ethic recognized by my peer. It’s something that usually gets overlooked and that’s fine. I simply perform each task to the fullest. You hear so many times how a good working attitude gets you far in this business. I certainly hope that’s true. It did get me into the equity dressing room.

As we worked through the show, we hit a lot of speed bumps. There was one quick change I had to make in 15 seconds and it wasn’t happening. Russell came to the rescue, adding a monologue for Katie that would stretch the time out. There’s something that doesn’t happen every day. We made it through the show and had time to do a full run, which we desperately needed. It was a little difficult to re-focus my energy on the run because we’ve been working so disjointed the last couple of days. However, once we got going I felt my character really cozying up to the stage. Even though we’re pulling all-nighters trying to get this show up and ready for Thursday, I am filled with adrenaline and excitement. Two more days and we’ll have our audience. This is what theatre is all about! Sail on!

July 27, 2005 (Final Dress)

The final dress rehearsal has arrived. We started with a good solid run. Lester wanted us to focus on getting any last minute kinks out of the way. If we had to stop we would, however, we never did because we’re just that good! The cast and crew have become so close at this point. We’re together on and off the stage and there’s a mutual energy that goes into our performance. Everyone’s so talented, bringing something special to the show. I’m still fighting not to break on many occasions. Lester told us to stop adding at this point. We can’t make this show any more than it what it already is. If we add new bits then we run the risk of losing the specificity of others. I think Lester is happy with the production. He wants an audience just as much as we do.

Our final dress was fantastic. We actually had some box office and family members in the audience and they were having a blast. We tried not to play directly to them, but there is audience participation which we put to good use. Technically, the show was really tight. Every set piece and prop is completed and in its place. All quick changes went without a glitch. It’s hard to believe a professional theatre can manage to put on a bad high school production. It’s very believable, visually. After the run we sat out in the house like we always do and awaited our notes from Lester. We were tired. Anyone could see that. Lester pushed us on with words of encouragement and few notes.
The rehearsals are over and it’s been one hell of a ride. I can’t wait till tomorrow. I’m going to bed. Sail on!

**The Run**

The run is going so well. It’s as if the audience can’t help but laugh. This show just lays it all out on the table; however, it never reaches a level of crudeness. Although no one wanted to admit it, we were worried we’d lose the audience by Act Two due to the unconventional nature of the story. Instead, everyone I’ve spoke to has praised the show and its talented cast. The response to my performance has been terrific. People comment on my “booming voice” and my consistent character. I also get a lot of questions like “Are you really carrying him”? The more we perform the show it seems the more fun we have. We try desperately not to break character, although the opportunity has presented itself several times. It’s just that everyone, including myself are really grasping onto their characters. We’re not adding any new bits. The show just seems to be growing somehow. It’s strengthened throughout.

Now, if I had to pick a favorite performance it would be Tuesday, August 2nd. That was the night our peers a.k.a. the cast of *Cats* came to see it. They absolutely loved it! We fed off their laughter and energy and it became such a successful performance. If anyone were to understand the naughty humor and over the top farce acting, it would certainly be other actors. There’s been a real bond among the company. Everyone is super supportive of one another.

My character gets stronger with each performance. I need to refrain from being masculine outside of the theatre, though. Life has been imitating art as of late and my manners are kind of rough. I think my character is easily recognizable or stereotyped in this show, which makes my job easier because the audience can relate to me. I’ve been told I have just the right mixture of man and woman in my role. Very rarely am I in your face in terms of sexuality. I have remained focused on my character’s struggle for the spotlight and perfection.

I’m going to be sad to see this show go. Being a part of this production has reminded me of the purity of acting (kind of hard to believe). What I mean is that we simply got to “play”. That’s why it’s so disheartening to learn that some critics and general public consider this an absurd show, giving it low-quality expectations. If only they knew the time we had bringing Moby Dick to life. If only they could appreciate the talented many who dedicated their art to this process.

*Please note- This journal is an informal and conversational log that shows my rehearsal thought process and/or journey.*
APPENDIX C: “WHALE OF A TALE” SHEET MUSIC
Below you will see the 2002 version of Starbuck’s solo “Whale of a Tale” from *Moby Dick! The Musical*. Since this show is fairly new and owned by MTI, the music is not in print. This song was pulled from the musical score and there are imperfections. For one, the notes and lyrics are handwritten rather than typed. The pagination is misaligned which breaks up the song quite a bit. It’s also missing special dynamic markings that the composer may have wanted to include. As a musician, you tend to look past these glitches because everything *you* need *does* happen to be on the page. It is up to you and the director to learn the notes and interpret the arc of the song. Believe me, the longer you work with musical scores, the easier it becomes.

This sheet music does have a greater purpose than simply showing off its mediocre appearance. It serves as a guide for the musical analysis that was presented in Chapter 5 of the thesis. You can follow along measure by measure, phrase by phrase to understand points I was trying to make. I find that once I finish an analysis, and look at the music again, there is more to comprehend. It’s no longer just a sheet of paper with ascending and descending notes. The music tells its own story. See for yourself.
LIST OF REFERENCES


