The Resurrection Of Everyman

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THE RESSURECTION OF *EVERYMAN*

by

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B.A. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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ABSTRACT

In March of 2005 I was a cast member in Mad Cow Theatre’s production of the Morality drama *Everyman*. This classic tale on the condition of human dying is regarded as one of the greatest dramas of the Medieval period and is one of the first plays in the English language to be put into print. This thesis is an actor’s journey into the history of Medieval theatre, the challenges of producing *Everyman* for a contemporary audience, and the techniques of acting implemented in the creation of allegorical characters. Medieval drama, like *Everyman*, is still relevant in today’s world because it addresses universal themes of friendship, material wealth, and reverence towards death. It is the story of the human being, the power of beliefs, and the fear of death. This thesis reflects a group of artists’ desire to give an audience the gift of insight into their common selves.
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INTRODUCTION

The secret of drama is finding every man in yourself. Come to think of it, that’s also the secret to love, grace, forgiveness. Heck, it’s the secret to life.

Proper credit for the above quotation cannot be given. It was found scribbled in one of my numerous notebooks. The date suggests, and my own memories concur, that this thought came to me through a man by the name of James Newport. Whether or not the quotation bears his originality or comes from another source is not clear. Newport could not be reached for clarification. What is more interesting than the quotation’s source of origin is the manner in which it affected my life. Newport, a friend and teacher, was proctoring an improvisational workshop at SAK Comedy Lab in Orlando during September of 2004. The workshop focused on the aspects of improvisation and theatre that deal with human connection. Though I do not recall the specific circumstances warranting this insight, I will never forget how it made me feel.

I had found myself in a personal struggle to make a very big decision. I had been asked by Chris Gibson to join his cast at Mad Cow Theatre in Orlando performing the sixteenth century Morality drama Everyman. The risk of taking this exciting opportunity meant losing valuable time studying and performing at the University of Central Florida. Never one to make decisions lightly, I found myself intensely frustrated by my own internal debate. Needing relief, I decided to focus instead on my lesson plan for the following day. I was teaching a workshop on improvisation and was not prepared. I began searching through old notes to find some ideas for exercises and I came across Newport’s quote. At that moment, it felt like an omen directly from God. There it was. My decision. Find the Everyman.
I chose to join the cast at Mad Cow and decided further that my performance in *Everyman* would become the subject for this thesis. In addition to using my performance as a vehicle to express the knowledge of acting techniques acquired in my master’s training at UCF, I wanted to explore the idea of reviving a classic text for a contemporary audience. Certainly audiences have a respect and appreciation for classics texts such as Shakespeare and Sophocles; but how would they respond to a Medieval Morality drama, identified commonly by its perception as being a tool for preaching Christian dogma? Was there a way to show a twenty-first century audience that this four hundred year old play was more than a one hour lesson on the Catholic faith? What universal themes did *Everyman* present that encourage people to regard it as classic?

This thesis reflects my personal quest to find Everyman within myself and my attempt to theatrically present my ideas to an audience. I studied the history of Medieval drama to create a foundation for my exploration. Next, I examined other productions of *Everyman* in relation to Mad Cow’s and compared the obstacles actors and directors faced when producing the play. Finally, I brought the best of my technique and applied it to the several characters I had been chosen to play. The endeavors of my artistic process were recorded in a journal included as the fourth chapter of this thesis. The culmination of this work presented here attempts to show that *Everyman* is as accessible to an audience today as it was centuries ago. This is because the main theme of *Everyman* is universal and important. The theme is simple: someday we will die, and all of the things that we think matter most will be rendered irrelevant. The only thing that truly survives the grave is found in our own good deeds.¹
Note

1 All direct references to the text of *Everyman* are taken from Kate Franks’ translation as found in the *Stages of Drama* Anthology. For those who may be consulting a different version when reading this, I will simply reference the line number of the quoted text and not the page number. A scanned copy of this script can be found in the Appendix.
CHAPTER ONE:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL THEATRE

The term “Medieval” has potential to conjure up several images in the mind. Ideas of castles and feudal societies, or cathedrals and religious rule have an appropriate place in our conception of the past. What is seldom clear when pondering Medieval history are the cultural attitudes, shared beliefs, and the overall mentality of the age as experienced by the people that actually lived during these times. Though common sense should tell us that those who lived during the Medieval age understood the universe (and their role in it) differently than we do in the twenty-first century, it is still difficult to filter out one’s own modern concepts of society and history in order to gain understanding and acceptance of what it actually must have been like to be alive and a part of this drastically different cultural age.

The study of theatre as a cultural institution, whether educational or entertaining in purpose, can be a tool in understanding cultural mentality. This is because the nature of theatre reflects the socio-cultural attitudes of the age and presents them in relatable symbols, images, and language. The theatre, therefore, is a useful tool for looking into and understanding the past. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the history of theatre in the Medieval age in order to gain a better understanding of the culture. A general examination of the origins, as well as staging and production techniques of Medieval drama will provide important background for the further study of producing historical texts, such as the Morality play *Everyman*, in contemporary society. Finally, a further examination of the history of *Everyman* will grant insight to the importance of drama in Medieval times and the significance of *Everyman* in Theatrical history.
Origins of Medieval Drama

Beginning with the fall of Rome and continuing until shortly after the first millennia, the theatre, or rather elements of it, “survived in at least four different kinds of activities: the remnants of the Roman mimes; Teutonic minstrelsy; popular festivals and pagan rites; and Christian ceremonies.”¹ It is impossible to determine specifically if the feudal societies cultivated the rise of Christian dominated cultures or if the Church usurped the power of the people in the name of God. Either way, what is clear is that the Christian church and the social concept of feudalism were the roots of the Medieval culture. Both provided a hierarchal structure to the nature of the universe and assisted society’s understanding of its relationship with God, the earth, and each other.

In its rise to cultural power, the Church adopted festivals and rites already in place (most of them in reference to ancient and Pagan gods) and redirected their purpose to reflect the teachings of the Bible. With these redefined celebrations and rituals in place, the Church began to introduce theatrical elements in the form of “symbolic objects and actions … [which] constantly recalled the events which Christian ritual celebrates.”² As seen through elaborate Palm Sunday presentations, a cross wrapped in a symbolic burial cloth, or specific emblematic references to Biblical characters, the theatrical conventions used by the Church “were extensive sets of visual signs that could be used to communicate with an audience that was largely illiterate.”³ These type of dramatic displays of the Church, typically associated with annual festivals, became known as Liturgical Drama.

Ecumenical Councils, an elaborate meeting of Bishops, Cardinals, and other clergymen, were used to establish rules of order, behavior, and ritual within the Church. Several of these Councils recognized the importance of Liturgical drama as a means to educate laymen into the
doctrine of the Church. Medieval parishioners and laymen were illiterate and the church services were still performed in Latin. Therefore, emphasis was placed on Sight and Sound as a means of communicating the message of the Church. Some argue that those in prominent and powerful positions within the Church and State, used their constituents illiteracy to suppress their social standing. Educating the laymen without having to teach them to read was a power play as well as a system for indoctrinization. In addition to the influence of Sight and Sound on Liturgical plays, further evidence of its use in the education of layman is seen in the introduction of music into religious services and the growing use of stain-glassed windows and paintings depicting specific stories from the Bible.

Around the late twelfth century, the landscape of society began to shift from strict feudalism to more centralized and industrial cities and towns. Cathedrals began to replace fortified castles as the dominating structure and civic center. Soon, schools and universities sprang up under the shadows of the cathedral. Until this time, Liturgical dramas were performed in Latin and in monasteries, and, though Liturgical plays continued to be performed, “after 1200 they ceased to play a significant role in the development of the theatre.” It was the later conversion of the religious drama from Latin into the vernacular that expedited the popularity of the theatrical form. Theatrical and religious festivals were moved outside of the cathedrals and staged outdoors.

The change of venue for theatrical production, combined with the change into vernacular, meant that religious dramas could become an important part of the layman’s culture and education. Additionally, laymen could perform the dramas themselves in an effort to take a greater ownership of their beliefs. Guilds of craftsman would collaborate to produce annual celebrations, creating dramas and parades that related directly to religious ideas and could last
for several days. The growth of guilds by the year 1300 had led directly to the decline of feudal
landowners and the rise of self-governing towns. With towns came more universities, which
began replacing cathedrals and churches as the central source for education. Literacy was slowly
growing among the population effectively challenging the “church’s dominant role in society.”
This era of the late Medieval period reflects a period of societal change. Unfortunately, as Oscar
Brockett points out, there is not much surviving information about the specific influences on
theatre:

It is usual, therefore, to consider the years between 1200 and 1350 as a time of transition
during which vernacular play assumed the position of dominance previously held by
liturgical drama. We know little about the transition since so little evidence has survived.
the long accepted view was that vernacular drama came into existence through a gradual
process in which individual short liturgical plays, having first been moved out of doors,
were brought together to form long plays which were then translated into the vernacular
tongues and performed by laymen.

Whatever the cause, the effect is clear. With the help of the craftsman guilds, the second stage of
Medieval drama would take shape in the form of the Cycle Play.

Scholars point to the York Cycle as the earliest of these unique Medieval dramas.
“Evidence of the existence of a Cycle at York dates to 1376 … although it is likely that the play
was being performed considerably earlier than this.” Cycle plays became popular in other
larger towns and strong civic communities, hence the Chester, Towneley, and Wakefield Cycles.
The Cycle play was characterized as the dramatization of several Biblical stories on pageant
wagons. The wagons were financed, built, and maintained throughout the year by the separate
guilds. Each wagon staged a Biblical tale, from the expulsion of Adam and Eve and the wisdom
of Solomon, to the teachings of Jesus and the inevitable Final Judgment of God. When carted as a long processional throughout the town, audiences were exposed to a chronological dramatization of Christian history. The Cycle plays “aimed to show, in the course of a day (or over three days as became the case in Chester), the whole history of the universe;” furthermore, “Cycle plays offered people a ready access to religious narrative and the articles of the faith….”

These theatrically unique experiences in York and other locations, were popular and successful forms of drama lasting well into the sixteenth century.

Both the success and demise of Cycle plays could be attributed to their ability (or lack thereof) to adapt to changing social attitudes. Toward the end of the fifteenth and well into the sixteenth century, the rumblings of reformation within the church began to spark significant changes in religion and politics. Protestant moves to suppress the Catholic-based Cycle plays led civic communities to “make serious efforts to adapt their plays to meet the objections of the reformers.” The immediate effects of the Cycle plays on other forms of Medieval drama are found in its didactic nature and in the exceptional advancements in stagecraft and production value, the latter of which will be discussed in further detail at a later point in this chapter.

The third and final phase of what is commonly considered Medieval drama is the Morality play, a near kissing-cousin of the Cycle plays because of its didactic and dogmatic nature. “These … dramas appeared in the fourteenth century as religious plays, but were later secularized and became one of the principal links between the religious and professional stages.” The use of allegory had become popular in literature, both secular and religious, and was adopted by the Morality play as its typical dramatic form. For example, the seven virtues (i.e. prudence, justice, faith, hope, etc.) and vices (i.e. pride, lust, anger, envy, etc.) of the Church could be played out on the stage as the ultimate interpretation of good versus evil.
In addition to the common use of allegory among Morality plays, images of death and Man’s journey toward destruction reflects a social attitude “increasingly concerned with death and [the] afterlife”.¹¹ As Greg Walker notes, “The medieval self was thus fundamentally conflicted, and it was the business of the Morality drama to explore that conflict and influence its resolution.”¹² Like the Cycle plays, Morality dramas faced criticism, and in some cases censorship from Protestants and Reformists. However, the unique universal nature of the allegorical character also allowed the Morality drama to survive in more secular environments.

As the popularity of these plays spread through England and France, they were gradually taken over and performed by early professional theatrical troupes. The effect is most notable in areas such as staging, costumes, and scenic elements, all of which grew more elaborate and distinct. Whether tied specifically to a church doctrine, a reflection of the secular ruling class, or in some cases philosophical and informative in nature, the Morality play’s allegorical nature remained a strong dramatic convention for the transformation of ideas and social points of view. The allegory as a dramatic convention also marks “a movement away from biblical characters and events to ordinary humans in their everyday surroundings. Consequently, they paved the way for the great secular plays of the succeeding period.”¹³ The Morality play represents the final stages of Medieval drama. Although dying gasps of Chamber Rhetoric and Interludes tried to revive interest in religious drama, the weakened and diminished power of the church authority, brought about by the Reformation, failed to resurrect any significant form of drama after the Morality play. Eventually, most forms of religious drama were suppressed by Reformists, and theatrical troupes, seeking professional success and social respect, abandoned religious subjects for more secular stories examining the human condition.
Staging and Production of Medieval Theatre

Scholarly studies primarily examine the historical, cultural, and literary aspects of Medieval theatre. Though often neglected by scholars, the advancements in stagecraft during this period are equally as important. As Medieval theatre expanded from Liturgical dramas to Morality plays; from inside churches to large town festivals -- the aesthetic and technological value of productions grew artistically and innovatively. The relevance of examining the staging and production aspects of Medieval theatre in this chapter will become apparent in the second chapter as it attempts to address the problems of staging Medieval productions in a contemporary environment.

The seeds of Medieval theatre were fertilized within the walls of the Church, and the first blossom of this growing artistry became Liturgical drama. The elaborate and gothic cathedrals built in town centers during the tenth and eleventh centuries became the playhouses where Liturgical drama would take the stage. The episodic scenes would play out on different stations, or “mansions,” around the inside of the cathedral. Each mansion had the appropriate props, costumes, and set dressings needed for that particular section of the Liturgy, “and the performers moved from one mansion to another as the action demanded.” Liturgical drama still survives in the Catholic Easter tradition of “Stations of the Cross,” and although some churches have replaced the theatrical elements with more technological advancements (such as DVDs), the idea of the ritual is a reminding reflection of the use of dramatic storytelling to educate people.

Because of the clerical emphasis on “sight and sound,” music played an important role in the production of Liturgical drama. Choirs of boys or clergy would have served as Greek style narrators, and a convention of scenic transition as actors moved from mansion to mansion within the cathedral. “Costumes for these dramas were usually church vestments, to which were added
realistic or symbolic accessories.” In addition to the costumes, every aspect of the Liturgical drama, including stage directions, pantomime, the actor’s tone of voice, properties, and scenic elements, were church sanctioned. Performances followed strict rules outlined in church manuals. The experience of the Liturgical drama would have no doubt been intimate as well as stimulating. The choir music filling the halls of the cathedral, the actors playing in elaborate costumes mere feet from the audience, and the ambience of reverence and ritual must have had a profoundly visceral effect on the average Medieval spectator.

As noted earlier, the linguistic change of theatre from Latin to the vernacular was also signified by a change of theatrical venue. Liturgical dramas moved outdoors and were incorporated with civic rituals, eventually leading to the conception of the Cycle plays. The expanse and innovation of stagecraft in the Cycle plays are primarily due to the influence of the various craftsman’s guilds responsible for construction of the pageant wagons. “One interesting byproduct of the medieval theatre was the development of a large number of relatively realistic special effects.” Stage machinery, trap doors, elaborate rigging, and moving scenery are examples of the elements of stagecraft advanced and enhanced by the guilds. They were incorporated into the processional pageant wagons, as well as some of the fixed outdoor stages (also called mansions), and served to assist the actors in movement and provide an element of spectacle for the audience. The most common example of this is found in the representation of a fiery hell with intricate machinery that had to be operated by up to fifteen backstage technicians to achieve its full dramatic effect.

For the processional pageant wagons, costumes took on an important role of distinguishing different actors as the same character. The York Cycle, for example, includes several scenes from the New Testament involving Jesus Christ as its central character. Because
each scene was played on a different wagon, a different actor was needed to portray the Christian
messiah. To avoid confusion, the costumes for each actor were identical and used as a symbolic
representation of the character. For the fixed stages of Cycle plays, and some pageant wagons,
the symbolic nature of the costumes bordered on church propaganda. As Oscar Brockett notes:

Most characters were dressed in garments resembling those worn by their counterparts in
medieval life. For example, Roman soldiers were attired in medieval armor, and Jewish
high priests wore robes that recalled those of catholic prelates. Many of the biblical
characters closely associated with orthodox Christianity, though historically Jews, were
dressed in Catholic clerical garb … God was costumed as an emperor or pope, and
angles wore church robes to which wings were attached. Supernatural characters also
usually wore masks.¹⁷

The era of outdoor Cycle plays, though still requiring church approval, was considerably less
restricted by clerical protocol and allowed for greater dramatic interpretation of biblical stories.
The effect on the audience was enormous. The Cycle plays were communal and civic in nature.
They represented a coming-together of a community and tied the rituals of belief into the rituals
of society. Audiences had a greater sense of being a part of the experience because several of
them probably helped in the painting a backdrop, the allocation of a costume piece, or the
provision of livestock to be used in the production. Members of the community would be able to
recognize friends and neighbors portraying famous biblical characters instead of members of the
clergy. “If Christ was shown being crucified by local people using the tools that they themselves
had made, the religious message that we are all in a real sense responsible for Christ … would be
all the more effectively presented.”¹⁸ Like the Liturgical dramas, the Cycle plays were produced
for the purpose of the reaffirmation of faith for the Christian constituents to which it was
presented. Cycle plays exceeded Liturgical drama by expanding the idea of theatre as a communal celebration which, when produced as festivals, could benefit the commonwealth of the entire town.

For several unclear and widely speculated reasons, the third phase of Medieval drama, the Morality play, offers limited specific evidence of stagecraft and production values. Scattered and fragmented texts provide minimal insight to exactly how these plays were staged. Perhaps this is due to the thematic nature of Morality play and its use of allegorical characters. The reduction and simplification of stagecraft and costumes could have been an attempt to emphasize the audience’s perception of the allegory as a reflection of themselves. Or, perhaps this elusive evidence regarding staging speaks to the advantage of the simple natured text of Morality plays. Surviving plays of this period seldom, if at all, prescribe specific properties, costumes, or locations. This means the plays could be adaptable to several theatrical environments. Morality plays could be produced out of doors, inside churches, on pageant wagons, or even small traveling stages -- all of which would meet the minimal production requirements.

*The Castle of Perseverance*, a Morality play emerging in the early fifteenth century, is a peculiar exemption to the idea of simplified staging. Records and surviving texts include detailed drawings of a unique outdoor stage that included a circular moat of water surrounded by the classic mansions and a castle constructed in the center of the circle. The entire space became the theatre, and the audience could view the play from within the moat (for paying patrons) and from without (for less wealthy lookers-on). Like *Castle*, other Morality plays such as *Mankind* and *Wisdom* enhanced the theatrical experience “with dances, processions, and secular music, [and] were more popular productions in their day….”¹⁹ Professional companies, producing their own Morality plays throughout England and France, often included elements of spectacle
reminiscent of the Cycle plays. In the special case of *Everyman*, historical evidence merely alludes to the use of conventional Medieval stagecraft. Several scholars point at textual references to specific locations (Everyman’s grave, or a scaffold to represent Heaven) and specific properties and costumes (Everyman’s book of deeds and penitential robe) as evidence of the type of stagecraft used to produce the play. However, there exists significantly small amounts of specific details of the production values. This contrasts the scores of texts and drawings that survive the longer lasting Cycle plays.

Several historians do agree that although the production values of Morality plays were relatively simple compared to the Cycles, the symbolic relationship between the allegorical character and the costumes used by the actors was of great value. According to Brockett:

The emphasis on allegory was reflected in the costuming of such characters as Mercy, Kindred, and Good Deeds, abstractions that had seldom been seen in the cycle plays. The dress of allegorical figures was often very imaginative. …Vanity was covered with feathers of many hues, and … Wealth was decorated with gold and silver coins. In the plays of religious controversy, each side drew on allegorical conventions and dressed its adherents as the Virtues and its opponents as the Deadly sins. Morality plays lack the innovation of Medieval stagecraft, especially when compared to the work done by the Cycle guilds. However, they exceed their predecessors in the advancement of character, plot, language. Produced well into the sixteenth century, Morality plays most likely influenced great Elizabethan writers such as Marlowe, Johnson, and Shakespeare. The production of Morality plays became increasingly more professional and in some cases increasingly more secular in theme. True to its name, Morality plays offered its audience
educational, sometimes indoctrinated, insight on socially acceptable moral and ethical human behavior.

**The Summoning of Everyman**

Now that the ideas, themes, and origins of Medieval theatre have been painted in broad strokes in reference to the historical and production aspects, it is finally appropriate to narrow the focus of this chapter to a specific discussion of *Everyman*. Arguably the most recognizable of the Morality plays, *Everyman*’s popularity with historians notably rests on the idea that it “is among the earliest plays to have survived in a printed rather than manuscript form.” ¹²¹ The earliest printed texts of *Everyman* are found in England around 1510; however, it is widely agreed upon and endlessly noted by scholars and historians that a Dutch version of the play, known as *Elckerlijc*, existed as early as 1495. The debate of authorship has been examined thoroughly and has produced interesting distinctions in the differences between the two plays. “*Everyman*, unlike *Elckerlijc*, is every irregular in the matter of verse-length, verse-forms, and rhymes.” ²² Further still, it is also suggested that the English version transcends “both classical and modern concepts of dramatic form.” ²³ This leads some to the conclusion that *Elckerlijc* superior in its poetic and lyrical quality, while *Everyman* succeeds by implementing simple dramatic structure. Both versions of the play appear to have been successful in their didactic purpose. Regardless of ongoing scholarly speculations and theories, it is clear from the text that *Everyman* remains similar to the Medieval dramatic idea of didacticism and use of allegory, yet it is unique in its presentation of common Medieval themes, its distinctly lyrical and versified text, and its productive adaptability. First, Greg Walker provides an effective and concise synopsis of *Everyman*:
Everyman is surprised at the height of his powers by Death, who allows him a brief respite to settle his affairs before he must succumb to [the] mortal dart. Failing to find help from the bastions of his worldly life [allegorically represented by Fellowship, Kindred/Cousin, and Goods], he turns eventually to his long-neglected Good Deeds, who points him towards Knowledge and Confession as the means by which he can set his spiritual account in order…. Through Confession, penitential mortification of the flesh, and the crucial intervention of Priesthood …, Everyman is eventually in a fit state to face his Maker and Judge. Finally, as he … approaches his grave, his physical and mental faculties desert him: First Beauty and Strength, the Discretion, Five Wits, and finally Knowledge, until he returns to the earth with only Good Deeds for company. 24

Essentially, the play is a treatise of human dying, and attempts to instruct its audience the appropriate ways to prepare for life’s final journey.

Medieval drama, especially the Morality play, is commonly concerned with the idea of death. It is a unifying thread of Medieval drama; the recognition of which defends the notion that the Medieval culture was one obsessed with the idea of death and the afterlife. As Simon Trussler posits, “For well over a century before the writing of Everyman, contemplation of physical decay had been the dominant perspective, and there was widespread trepidation that the world was nearing its long-predicted end.” 25 Famines, climate disasters, plagues, and warring nobility fueled the paranoia of death that clouded the Medieval mindset. Death’s common presence, as both a theme and allegorical character, would have been considered familiar, perhaps even expected, by Everyman’s original audience. What remains unique to Everyman is the presentation of Death as a character. Unlike typical Morality plays, Death is one of the first characters to appear. Instead of being representative as the ending of life (or the play), Death
serves as God’s messenger, warning Everyman to seek salvation. In this sense, Death offers a second chance at a life eternal for the protagonist. This contrasts every other Morality play of this time which presented Death as the purveyor of damnation, symbolic as the end of one’s life and typically the end of the play. Trussler feels that this transition of theme reflects a changing social understanding:

> By the turn of the sixteenth century, worldly pleasures were becoming more accessible to all, and the promises of new discoveries and a New World were beginning to beckon – so maybe the cautionary presence of Death in *Everyman* is as much in consequence of a life now lived with greater relish as of the old obsession with macabre.  

Also indicative to the idea of restructured social attitudes, is the almost out-of-place presence of a ‘discourse on priesthood’ (Lines: 780 – 820). During this section, Everyman leaves to receive the holy sacraments (notably the title character’s only absence from the text), while Knowledge and Five Wits present commentary of the current roles and abuses of priests. Five Wits asserts that priests remain Holy important, and only through them can the body and soul be prepared to enter Heaven. Indeed, Five Wits considers the priests’ place in hierarchal order as “above angels in degree” (line 797). Knowledge counters this exaltation of clergy by pointing out the sinful abuses of power by priests: “Which God their Saviour do buy or sell, / Or they for any money do take or tell / Sinful priests giveth the sinners example bad” (lines 807 – 809). Knowledge even levels accusations that priests have fathered illegitimate children and committed other mortal sins such as lust, greed, and envy. The ‘discourse’ comes to a brief ending upon Everyman’s return, and Five Wits concludes with hope that Everyman found one of the decent priests.

There is no parallel reference to this dialogue existing in the Dutch *Elckerlijc*. That fact, combined with English translation’s anonymous author, could suggest that this section of the text
is a call from within for church reform. Reformist ideas and theologies, heralded in late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, spread quickly throughout Medieval Europe challenging Catholic doctrine and assisting in the destabilization of Church power. As if in-tune with this social consciousness, *Everyman* is the first to embrace and present reformist positions in a theatrical form. This, in addition to the changing views of Death, are examples of the ways in which *Everyman* enhanced the exploration of the common themes found in Morality plays.

Although considered by most to be linguistically inferior to *Elckerlije*’s lyrical verses, *Everyman* remains significant in its distinct use of poetry and verse to express its message. Most unique to the structure of verse and rhyme throughout *Everyman* is the apparent lack of any singular defining structure at all. Theatrical contemporaries such as *Wisdom* and *Mankind* make regular use of stanza-forms to emphasize allegorically good and bad elements. When compared the use of structure by other Morality plays “the versification of *Everyman* looks [like] a slipshod affair.”27 There are some easily identifiable structures, such as the opening speech presented by the Messenger. This soliloquy heralds the dramatic action of the piece and is presented with “a strange but emphatic rhyming scheme – a succession of couplets, each followed by a third line whose rhyme completes that unit of thought yet is also carried through the whole speech.”28 Succeeding soliloquies, typically attributed to Everyman as he progresses on his journey, seem to follow rhyme schemes that they themselves establish. Further examination of the use of language and verse structures can be found in the second chapter. At this point, it is only relevant to assert that *Everyman* uses a near-modern abstraction of poetic verse form, significant because it allows the focus to remain centrally on its message.
The adaptive nature of *Everyman* has much to do with the simple and direct nature of the text as well as the ambiguously defined locations and properties. The play is relatively short when compared to the five-act structures of Elizabethan theatre. Still, at near one-thousand lines (and requiring, on average, one hour to perform), *Everyman* is par for the course in terms of the common length of the Morality play. A point of interest begins to arise upon examination of the characters’ participation. Just before the half-way mark of the play, seven of the seventeen total characters have finished their respective parts and disappeared all together from the rest of the play. This suggests to several scholars that *Everyman* could have had actors playing multiple roles, with plenty of time in between to change costumes and arrange any necessary properties. This is in sharp contrast to Morality plays performed throughout England and France, which often involved the elaborate choreography of as many as sixty actors, dancers, and vocalists. Because Morality plays were not typically associated with civic rituals (as were the Cycles and Liturgical dramas), they were less restricted in their content and able to adapt to changing social attitudes. Trussler argues that:

The moralities … were, confessedly, better able to adapt to (as also to agitate for or against) the changing theological imperatives of the English Reformation. Besides, not only were the mystery cycles once-a-year celebrations, they were also … essentially amateur – whereas the moralities were more closely linked with the emergence of a professional theatre, whose repertoire … embracing both sacred and secular offerings, was available for performance whenever and wherever and audience could be mustered.

In many respects, the lack of any definite historical knowledge of the specific staging or production arrangements used when producing *Everyman* supports the idea of its adaptive
nature. Though several scholars prescribe possible circumstances for production, their conclusions are drawn from an amalgamation of images presented from the text and the defendable examples of staging used by other plays produced during the same time period. Still, if *Everyman* is significant because of the ways it differs in from its contemporaries (specifically regarding use of verse-forms, staging, and adaptability), could it not also be equally unique in execution? Certainly, the need for a small cast as well as the absence of specific sets to be built or props to accumulate, meant that the play could be performed with a wide variety of artistic interpretations. In reality, it would seem, as far as *Everyman* is concerned, any scholarly presumptions in regard to staging would be at best highly educated guesses. It is perhaps more appropriate to consider that *Everyman’s* exploration of theme, irregular yet informative versification, and its adaptive ability, are the result of the author’s intent to keep the message of *Everyman* in the forefront of both audience and actor. The play seems to deliberately steer us away from theatrical spectacle and allows us to focus on the lesson.

The ultimate message of *Everyman* is simple, and central to nearly all Medieval theatre: “the isolation of death remains the ultimate reality to be confronted.” This theme is universal and timeless, for all living things are obedient to the laws of nature, and all living things will eventually succumb to death. If the theatre is truly a reflection of culture, tracing the origins of Medieval theatre and the themes of its most influential plays, helps illuminate knowledge of a society deeply reverent to the power of death and eternal life as expressed through Christian dogma. In many ways, this most powerful and provocative examination of the obsession with death is not so different from modern fears.

The acceptance and fear of death, as an individual or as a culture, may not be as prevalent in our minds as it was for Medieval societies. Still, this does not mean that the certainty of our
death escapes us. Any examination of current events consistently feeds us images of war, disease, and famine. In many ways, perhaps to our own discredit, we repress and subvert ideas of death and distract ourselves from the fear and uncertainty of what actually happens when we die. Advancements in science of all forms has only proven we as a global society understand nothing more about death today than we did centuries ago.
Notes

1 Brockett, Oscar G. History of the Theatre. 8th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 83.

2 Ibid., 85.

3 Ibid., 85.

4 Ibid., 87.

5 Ibid., 91.

6 Ibid., 92.


8 Ibid., 3.

9 Ibid., 5.

10 Brockett, History of Theatre, 109.

11 Ibid., 109.

12 Walker, Medieval Drama, 209.

13 Brockett, History of Theatre, 111.

14 Ibid., 89.

15 Ibid., 90.


17 Brockett, History of Theatre, 98.

18 Walker, Medieval Drama, 4.


20 Brockett, History of Theatre, 111.


22 Cawley, Everyman, xxvii.

23 Trussler, Everyman, xi.

24 Walker, Medieval Drama, 213.

26 Ibid., xxiii.


29 Ibid., xiii.

30 Ibid, xi.
CHAPTER TWO: 
EVERYMAN AND THE MODERN THEATRE

Any sampling of research on Everyman provides sufficient proof of its historical place in Medieval drama as well as its stance as a landmark in the global map of theatre history. The play is researched and criticized by scholars, studied and taught in the classroom, and yet it is seldom produced in the modern theatre. There are several simple speculations for this apparent lapse of production history. Professional theatres might find Everyman’s predominantly Christian didacticism and overtones of Catholic dogma as ‘too preachy’ for a contemporary audience. Also, its relatively short length, in combination with a structure that elevates its message over its entertainment value, increases the professional theatre’s challenge of justifying high or moderate ticket prices to a paying audience seeking escape over education. Theatre companies dedicated to preserving the heightened language of classic plays (and weary of choosing from Shakespeare’s canon) might sooner turn to more immediately recognizable figures such as Marlowe, Moliere, or even Wilde. This is startling when one recalls the evidence that supports the adaptability of Everyman to any stage. Regardless of the varied challenges, theatres of the twentieth century have produced a small number of interesting and notable revivals and adaptations of the Medieval classic.

The first of such twentieth century revivals occurred on a London stage in 1901, under the direction of the “experimental and often eccentric” William Poel.¹ Later, German playwright Hugo von Hofmann penned his translation, Jedermann, in 1911 for noted Austrian director, Max Reinhardt. This production, subtitled “The play of the Rich Man’s Death,” includes the addition of scenes providing insight to Everyman’s life before the introduction of Death. This
early conceptual prequel introduced new semi-allegorical characters such as Mother, Mammon, and Mephistopheles. It was subsequently produced in 1920 at the Salzburg Festival. Both the Poel production and the Reinhardt adaptation enjoyed moderate success in repertoire and on tour; records indicate that both were being performed in the United States as late as 1936.

Many consider *Everyman* to be an influence on several twentieth century writers. “[George Bernard] Shaw acknowledged that Ann Whitefield in *Man and Superman* began for him as a female equivalent to Everyman”2 Other connections drawn by scholars include the evolution of allegorical characters into the stylistic symbolism developed by German expressionism. Further still, the parallels present in “the images of humankind consigned to dustbins and wheelchairs in [Samuel] Beckett’s *Endgame* … are … reminiscent of the initial paralysis of Good Deeds in *Everyman*.”3 During the latter half the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century, more literal and less adaptive productions of *Everyman* were performed in England and the United States. The fourth edition of the popular anthology *Stages of Drama: Classical to Contemporary Theatre* notes two such productions: a 1973 University of Chicago production, and the 1996 staging presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company.4 The subject of this thesis is one of the most recent professional incarnations of *Everyman*. It was presented by Mad Cow Theatre in Orlando, Florida in March of 2005 and will be discussed in this chapter in comparison with the Chicago and London productions.

Modern productions of *Everyman* have presented directors with some very similar challenges. Further discussion in this chapter will focus on the examination of these modern productions and the common challenges of language, staging, and content. In addition, this chapter will explore the artistic choices different directors have made to overcome these obstacles. As understood from the first chapter, the language of *Everyman* becomes a challenge
because of its sporadic use of different verse-forms. Staging Everyman presents a different dilemma for directors since the original text provides very little information. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, challenges regarding the play’s predominately Catholic content must be addressed by directors who are producing Everyman for a contemporary audience that may have serious reservations and/or apprehensions to the play’s didactic message.

As these ideas are explored throughout this chapter, it must be noted that, for purposes related to this thesis, the concepts presented as possible solutions to these obstacles will be centered on (but not limited to) the artistic choices made and implemented in the Mad Cow production. It should also be noted that, because of my personal involvement as both actor and student, as the scope narrows toward Mad Cow’s production, the expressed point of view will become increasingly subjective and personal.

**Understanding the Language**

The manner in which Everyman’s author implements and explores language, verse forms, and rhyme schemes is quite profoundly modern. If indeed Elizabethan writers witnessed and were probably influenced by Everyman, they must have been excited by the way the conventions of language and verse were turned upside-down. The previous chapter briefly addressed some of the differences in language structure found throughout Everyman, but failed to pinpoint the specific challenges these differences present. It is possible to break down some of these challenges by first understanding what past scholars have observed about the nature of Everyman’s stylization.

In the introduction to the play A.C. Cawley presents thoughtful insights to Everyman’s obscure verse-forms:
The number of syllables in a line ranges from four to fourteen. The verse-forms are a welter of couplets and quatrains, together with occasional tail-rhymes, five-, six-, and seven-line stanzas …. There are more than a hundred imperfect rhymes: some are examples of assonance and some are due to corruption of the original text, but this still leaves several pairs of words which fail to rhyme, as well as end-words without companion rhyme-words …. Occasionally an iambic-decasyllabic or iambic-octosyllabic line occurs, but many of the longer lines can only be read as freely rhythmical verses …. In these verses the number of unaccented syllables between the stresses is variable.\(^5\)

At first glance, this disarming irregularity indicates the author’s inferior understanding of proper verse structure. However, Cawley and others, are wise to consider the unique versification in *Everyman* as a sort of ‘treasure map’ towards the underlying meaning of the text. Indeed, careful examination reveals that the differentiating structures could be representative of the author’s intent to infuse pacing and rhythm into the performance. The language has a specific purpose, and the challenge of the language lies in deciphering that purpose.

To a classically-trained actor (or any connoisseur of language), the idea of using the text like a treasure map as a method of discovering its meaning, as well as insight to character, is extremely important. According to Kristin Linklater, this “discovery through language … is not interpretation, it is reading the clues;” and once understood, an actor has the freedom to “use this ground as a jumping-off place for interpretive choice.”\(^6\) Though this investigative nature towards language is typically associated with the study of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights, the concept is equally beneficial to anyone wishing to gain a greater understanding of *Everyman*. 
The most prevalent use of structure can be found in the rapidly successive rhyming verses shared between characters involved in dialogue. Scholars of *Everyman* consider such verses a function to serve both the actor and audience. For the actors, the distribution of rhymes throughout dialogue provides insight to the pace and flow of the scene. An example of this can be found in the following exchange between Everyman and Fellowship (lines: 239 – 248):

**FELLOWSHIP:** Sir, I say as I will do in deed.
**EVERYMAN:** Then be you a good friend in need.
   I have found you true herebefore.
**FELLOWSHIP:** And so ye shall evermore;
   For, in faith if thou go to hell,
   I will not forsake thee by the way.
**EVERYMAN:** Ye speak like a good friend; I believe you well.
   I shall deserve it, if I may.
**FELLOWSHIP:** I speak of no deserving by this day!

The syllabification is inconsistent, ranging from seven to eleven syllables per line. To say these were iambic would be misleading, as the stressed syllables seem completely random. In the above example, the only line representing standard iambic pentameter is last one. Yet the rhyme scheme is very apparent; and the two characters playfully share rhymes almost as if it were a game of verbal call and response. This suggests that perhaps the syllabification is not important to this particular scene; rather, actors should pay attention to the rhymes in order to skillfully drive the pacing of the scene.

Careful attention to the structure found in soliloquies can show the actor the intended moment to “present pause for thought.” A powerful and moving example is Everyman’s prayer.
Examine lines 619 – 626:

O eternal God, O heavenly figure,
O way of righteousness, O goodly vision,
Which descended down in a virgin pure
Because he would every man redeem,
Which Adam forfeited by his disobedience;
O blessed Godhead, elect and high divine,
Forgive me my grievous offence!
Here I cry thee mercy in this presence.

Here the rhyme scheme is not as apparent, and the use of consistent syllabification almost non-existent. What is striking then is the use of punctuation. Essentially, the above passage is only two complete sentences. The heavy use of commas to break up the first series of thoughts elevates tension and creates a sense of building up and up until we come to the point: “Forgive me” at which point both actor and audience can pause to catch their breath. Interestingly, this structure is repeated twice more as Everyman continues his prayer.

For audiences, this deceivingly simple and ultimately direct expression of language might be at first surprising and later refreshing. Certainly, a well-prepared actor, through the use of *Everyman*’s unique verse, is able “to sustain a clear rhetorical and theological through-line, focusing [the audience’s] attention on the matter rather than the manner of its presentation.”\(^8\) Indeed, while the investigation of the language as a means to creative interpretation should not be underestimated, excessive focus can be detrimental to the expression of the text’s simplicity. Moreover, it seems obvious to assume that not all members of a contemporary audience will have such academic appreciation of the language. Cicely Berry, voice director for the Royal Shakespeare Company, points out that “there is a often a cultural resistance in that [heightened text]” has more “to do with educated speech and speech patterns, and … is therefore
Actors and directors must find a balance between studying the language for meaning, and presenting the language so that it can be accessible to a modern audience.

The importance of this balance was understood by Chris Gibson and Elena Day, co-directors of *Everyman* for Mad Cow Theatre. Their rehearsal process addressed the challenge of finding balance in the language by consistently reminding the actors to regard the text’s poetic nature. “Poetic writing gets at truth in a different way from that which is naturalistic” and viewing the play as an extended and dramatic piece of poetry can give an actor the advantage of exposing the latent images found throughout the text. Chapter Three will further explore how these images can be expressed through the actor’s movement and vocal choices in order to bring the richness of the text to life for the audience. In addition to using the play’s poetic images, Gibson and Day utilized specific exercises aimed at giving the actors the ability to understand the text in a more modern and naturalistic manner. Gibson explains:

> The ultimate challenge, of course, is in communicating [the language] …to an audience who does not have the benefit of analyzing the text. We overcame this obstacle by having the actors formulate the text into their own words during rehearsal, so that the underlying meaning of the written words became absolutely clear to those who would ultimately speak and respond to them. Finally, the actors would use the written words, infused with the understanding of their own substituted text.

As an actor, I felt the method behind this exercise was extremely successful. Instead of over-analyzing the text and questioning the author’s intent as it might have related to a Medieval audience, we were allowed to embrace the text with our own understanding of its meaning. This served two purposes: first, it enabled us as actors to take a greater ownership of the language; second, it facilitated the discovery of the universal truths *Everyman* presents. For us, the
importance of understanding and presenting the language in this way served our notion of the
play’s relevance to a modern audience.

The challenge of Everyman’s language structures is a large but not impossible one.
Careful study of the text and the structures of its rhymes and verses is a road map leading to the
discovery of the author’s attempt to infuse the play with meaning through pacing. It can also
uncover the simple beauty and poetry of the text. An understanding of this poetry and
exploration of its images can be an important tool for any actor wishing to present the text as
clearly as possible. It is also possible to overcome the language challenges by giving the text a
personal and modern meaning and using that to support the universal themes inherent in
Everyman. The use of scholarly study and application of abstract exercises to explore the
language could assist the actor by rooting him deep within the text. The actors’ confident
presentation of the language in turn promotes the audience’s comprehension of the play.

The Challenge of Staging

Before addressing the challenges of staging Everyman, a brief apology of sorts must be made. The term ‘staging’ has been used frequently throughout these chapters without a concrete
definition. To avoid further confusion as a result of this ambiguity, it should be understood that
the term ‘staging’ is being used to reference the implementation of style, or rather, all of the
artistic and conceptual choices made by directors, designers, and actors that influence the look,
feel, and presentation of the play. This includes the following; the physical theatre space where
the play is to be performed; the concepts of lighting, set, and costume design; the organization of
the actors’ blocking; and, in some cases, the choices made regarding casting. Attentiveness to
staging, as it relates to each director’s specific vision, is vitally important because its ultimate
goal is to present the audience with a play that is thematically concise, artistically interesting, and ideally entertaining. Staging, as a term that encompasses all the elements of production, is pertinent if we understand that many of today’s professional theatres view a play as a product to be consumed by an audience.

At the time when Medieval drama was first being performed, its staging was governed by strict rules put forth by church officials. Though typically less formal, the Cycle plays, and the guilds of laymen that produced them, were kept under the watchful eye of local clergy to ensure that the manner of presentation fit with the ideals of the Church. Morality plays such as Castle of Perseverance included drawings detailing the author’s concepts of how to stage the play. This is not uncommon today. Modern playwrights (Tennessee Williams for instance) commonly include lengthy and detailed descriptions of the set, costumes, props, and occasionally the characters’ attitudes. Publishers like Dramatists Play Service provide crude facsimiles of the ground plan from original productions.

From Medieval to Modern times, these indicators of staging have been present to facilitate the production and assist directors in the choices they must make. However, as we have learned from previous discussion, Everyman provides a notable absence of any specific direction regarding its staging. This becomes a blessing and a curse to most directors producing Everyman because the opportunity for creative artistic staging concepts is wide open. The challenge to the director ultimately becomes “how to balance its abstract and concrete elements, [and] how to make its experience at once particular and universal.” It has been strongly established that Everyman is adaptable to almost any stage, and because of this, the realm of creative possibilities in staging Everyman is endless. Considering this, it seems as though any theatre company, anywhere, could easily produce the play. It could be performed on Broadway,
with all the trimmings. A dedicated group of student actors might present the play on an open lawn. Without localized action present in the text, you can put Everyman in the round, on a proscenium, or an amphitheatre, using a stylized set or a bare stage.

This does not necessarily eliminate the challenge of conceptualizing an effective style of staging. Instead, the creative possibilities increase the temptation to be more unique or innovative than previous productions. The ‘over-stylization’ of Everyman (even those productions which boast themselves to be historically accurate) can lead to sacrificing the audience’s ability to follow the simple through-line of the play. The Royal Shakespeare Company’s intensely stylized 1996 production may have run into this trap of indulgence. Co-directors Kathryn Hunter and Marcello Magni placed the setting in a peasant community reminiscent of famished regions of Africa. They also included: a prologue featuring Everyman at wedding; a folk dance between Everyman and a female Death; and a troupe of random circus performers as Strength, Beauty, Discretion, and Five Wits. While these creative liberties are not necessarily, in concept at least, inherently detrimental to the play, several critics felt the execution of these concepts to be “out of place [especially during] the more serious sections of the play.”

It seems as though the need to be creative supplanted the need to tell a good story. Other cases have shown that elaborate productions of Everyman to be highly successful. Nicholas Rudall, director of the 1973 University of Chicago production, took the play out of the conventional theatre and returned Everyman to its Medieval roots by producing it inside the gothic Rockefeller Chapel. The enormous cathedral allowed enough space for a large octagonal platform. Surrounding this were smaller platforms of various heights, one for each allegorical character. The costumes were styled to represent Medieval persons from different social levels: Strength was a knight, Discretion costumed as a lawyer, and Good Deeds dressed as a young
maiden. The use of silhouettes and echoes were a result of Rudall’s incorporation of Rockefeller Chapel’s architectural effect on light and sound. The final product was a “highly ritualized performance … [that] clearly respected the play’s uncompromising look at the inevitability of death.” In both conception and execution, the University of Chicago production presents a fine example of using creative staging to support the theme of the play.

The Mad Cow Theatre production was decidedly minimalist in comparison to the Chicago and London versions. “Following the lead of the text,” Gibson says his and Day’s directorial choices, “opted most often for simplicity, universality, and efficiency … based on what most supported the structure of the play itself.” Set in the round in Mad Cow’s intimately small theatre, the stage was essentially an empty rectangle, save for small silver buckets in each corner. The buckets contained the few props used in the play, a book of accounts, a scourge, and Everyman’s penitential robe soaked with water. The idea was that the actors, in addition to playing several roles, would also become set pieces and provide sound effects whenever necessary. The five actors were costumed in simple, loose-fitting, pajama-style clothing, with a vibrant and primary color scheme. As Everyman consults with Goods, his costume is slowly ripped away, leaving him near-naked for the remainder of the show. Simple hoods, robes, and hats were efficiently added or removed as a means to distinguish characters. Day, with her experience studying at the Lecoq school in Paris and being an original member of Cirque Du Soleil’s La Nouba, enhanced the play by incorporating abstract movement and acrobatics into the play’s staging. The overall effect was a highly visual production that critics suggested was “austere, elegant … [and] striking.”

Mathew MacDermid, writer for the on-line magazine Talkin’ Broadway, comments:
Mad Cow Theatre Company's exquisitely staged production … comes alive with a mostly abstract production involving intriguing rituals and a stunning group of young actors who speak the verse as beautifully as one would hope …. It is the staging …that really brings this medieval masterpiece … into the 21st century. Gibson and Day have given the allegories a modern approach while never allowing the original intent of the play to suffer ….

Our production at Mad Cow was successful because, through good direction, the cast was able to balance the creative staging while still communicating the universal concepts of Everyman.

Unfortunately, due to the subjective nature of art, the effectiveness of these productions differ for each audience member or critic alike, and therefore the success of how they approached the challenge of staging can only be painted in broad, analytical strokes. Still, examining the staging choices on a purely factual basis reveals some interesting similarities worth a brief mention.

The London, Chicago, and Orlando productions all used small casts, doubling and even tripling parts for some actors. All three also cast Good Deeds and Knowledge as females. Directors of the mentioned productions also took issue with the ‘discourse on priesthood’ section of the text (see Chapter 1), where Everyman exits to be sanctified, leaving Knowledge and Five Wits to discuss the virtues and vices of priests. Rudall felt this section was “self-serving … written in its time for the priests, but removed from our context.” Gibson agrees, adding that the “exchange was heavily dogmatic, and it seemed to be an unnecessary break in a very solid rhythm created by the rest of the play’s structure.” While Hunter and Magni at RSC chose to cut the section, Rudall and the team of Gibson/Day kept it to retain the integrity of the text.

Similarly, they chose to tackle the problem by actually keeping Everyman onstage and filling the
scene with action. At Mad Cow, Everyman receives his unction from two players using soft singing and ritual action. Placed at center stage, Knowledge and Five Wits discuss priesthood while simultaneously preparing Everyman’s grave. The University of Chicago production used candlelight to create silhouettes of Latin-chanting monks performing Everyman’s last rites.

The three productions examined in this section have shown how different directors used staging to bring Everyman’s universal themes out of its Medieval constructs and into a modern world, attempting to make the message accessible to a contemporary audience. The critical views of how these productions applied creative staging to Everyman support the idea of the play’s adaptive nature. They also expose that the true challenge of staging Everyman is harmonizing creative choices with the classical text without sacrificing the power of the play’s simple message.

Religion, Ritual, and Reconciliation

The final challenge to overcome in producing Everyman is the play’s predominately Catholic content. Wise professional theatres need to be aware of their constituents. In fact, many contemporary audiences might have serious apprehensions to paying money only to be assaulted by the play’s dogmatic message. After all, if they wanted to spend an hour listening to a specific religious message, they could just go to church. Indeed, the idea that Everyman spoon-feeds religious ideas to an audience seems to be more taboo to a twenty-first century audience than a play featuring full-frontal nudity. Critic Al Krulick speaks to the possibility of an audience’s reservations towards religion:

There is no getting away from the interminable repetitive austerity of the script…. The language of Everyman soon begins to wear as thin as the drone of a too-long Sunday
sermon delivered by an earnest but boring pastor. The dogma is relentless … if one is not already predisposed to the theology which the play attempts to inculcate.20 While it is easy to disregard the dominant Christian themes as merely a result of the Medieval culture in which the play was written, it is also argued that author’s intent was to utilize religious consciousness to explore the universal human condition. How then should a theatre company approach the thin line between religious and human themes?

The 1906 William Poel production came to an efficient solution to this problem, “as evidence of the prompt books shows, he cut anything remotely controversial.”21 This seems ironic considering Poel often referred to his production as an authentic restoration of the Medieval drama. Some directors, wishing to produce an accurate revival, justify the religious contexts as a history lesson for the audience. Still others, such as the 1996 Royal Shakespeare Company’s production, attempted to hide the references to religion amidst its conceptualized staging, effectively shrouding the substance of the piece with the style of the production. These different reactions to religion are based in the common conclusion that “if the play is to move an audience, it must be set in a recognizable world.”22 As the 1973 University of Chicago and the 2005 Mad Cow Theatre productions show, embracing the religion of Everyman does not inherently mean the play must spew dogma. A moderate reconciliation of the universal human and religious themes can be expressed by focusing on ritual.

The idea of ritual spans the history of human interaction regardless of specific class, race, culture, or religion. From Amazonian Shamans using ceremonious psychedelics to Tibetan Monks practicing disciplined meditation, or an ordinary blue-collar American obsessively perusing his morning newspaper, the integration of ritual into our lives seems to be a primal human response to the search for meaning and order in the universe. Though modern
psychologists downplay the importance of ritual by regarding it as superstition, and note that “all people are addicted to patterns of behavior,” the presence of ritual cannot be denied. Parishioners of a church, spectators at a sporting event, and audiences of the theatre are actually participating in a similar communal ritual of shared experience. “Ritual is a part of all of our lives, regardless to the extent that we are aware of it,” and the use of this knowledge as a foundation for reconciling Everyman’s religious and human themes, is an intelligent step in the right direction. Claire Sponsler explains why rituals have a powerful effect:

What rituals offer to the individuals who perform and watch them is the chance to participate in a shared experience that can lead to a sense of empowerment and even redemption. …Rituals rarely test beliefs; they do, however, display beliefs …. For this reason, rituals generally promote … understanding of the nature of the world and the people in it.

Embracing religion and theatre as similar modern human rituals can illuminate the universal truths in Everyman. The recognition of these universal truths, in our hearts and in our minds, erase the boundaries that disconnect us from our common humanness. This is what makes Everyman as important to a contemporary audience, as it was for the Medieval ones.

Understanding this importance, the University of Chicago and the Mad Cow Theatre used staging as a means to express ritual. Rudall placed Everyman in an authentic cathedral. The play combined candlelight, chanting monks, medieval-inspired costumes, and Christian symbols to give “the feeling of a church ritual.” Gibson and Day took the idea to another level using ritual as “the guiding force in staging the show, [and] also as our main tool for exploration in rehearsal ….” Two workshops, presented by Gibson and Day prior to the beginning of the official rehearsal process, centered on exploring the facets of ritual. After brief discussion,
actors (Sarah French, Kimberly Grey, Damany Riley, Terrence Yip, and myself) used the theatre space to mime some of their personal, if mundane, daily rituals. We played out our daily regular rituals such as; Riley’s reverent prayer towards Mecca; Yip’s comically cold shower; French’s endless routine of dental hygiene; Grey’s morning journal writing; and my own personal obsession with video games. First each ritual was broken down into five distinct movements. These movements were then repeated adding a new gibberish vocalization each time. The cast was instructed to heighten and explore the vocal and physical choices to the point of being absurd, and the exercise seamlessly morphed into a group dance. Voices harmonized, and tribal beats were pounded on the floor as our separate expanded rituals melted into one another. The exercise, taking on a life of its own, reached crescendo and eventually ended leaving an electric feeling in the theatre.

Born of both directors’ desire to create an ensemble cast, exercises based in ritual (like the one mentioned above) were used throughout the formal rehearsal process. The cast ceremoniously participated in warm-up exercises, then began each night with an improvised vocal and physical ‘jam session,’ and concluded the evening with five minutes of yoga and meditation. Early rehearsals took place in the Don Asher building, a storage facility reminiscent of a dungeon. Dim lighting, a result of too few working electrical outlets, added a sense of mystery, which served to enhance the transformative power of our ritual explorations. The sense of ritual, which was created and defined throughout the rehearsal process, helped inform the rituals that would become the main action of the performance.

In bringing ritual to the final performance, “we made a conscious choice to focus on the nightly ritual that the actors underwent of resurrecting the production -- of bringing it to life -- and of letting it die at the end.”28 This mindset led directly to the inclusion of the semi-
structured tribal song and dance (based on the ‘jam sessions’) to begin and end the show. Some expressions of ritual were very direct, and often related to the Christian rituals specifically mentioned in *Everyman*. Confession, played by Yip and myself, adorned with dark hoods and speaking in low monotones, walked in slow circles around a kneeling Everyman. As Everyman receives his unction, autonomous priests (French and myself) anoint his head and chest with oil while alternating between speaking Latin phrases and singing soft arpeggios. Other rituals were not as obvious, such as the hand-shake greeting between Everyman and Fellowship and playful balancing acts during the Kindred/Cousin scene. Every night for the curtain speech, Gibson would jokingly ask the audience to join him in the ritual of turning off the cell phone. From the second the actors and stage manager arrived at the theatre, every moment of the evening, both on the stage and off, related to some ritual or another.

The intense focus on ritual helped actors and audience overcome any apprehensions to the Christian didacticism, not by subverting the content, but by embracing its human roots. Ultimately, *Everyman* is not a Christian play, it is a Human play set within the context of Christian rituals. Strip away the religion anyway you wish and you will be left with the same universal message about the human condition and the fear of death.

It takes a brave company of artists coming together in the spirit of theatre to produce *Everyman*. I do not prescribe this chapter as a methodology or discipline of performing Medieval theatre. Rather, it is merely the critical examination of the common challenges contemporary productions of *Everyman* have faced. Different directors have used several approaches to the obstacles of language, staging, and content. Understanding these approaches, their successes and their failures, shows that *Everyman* is a challenging play but should not be avoided. Indeed, its challenges should be met with artistic passion and theatrical integrity.
Whether the performance is a commercial success or not no longer begins to matter. What becomes important are the rewards that come from the discovery of the beautiful poetry in *Everyman*’s verse, the expression of creativity through stylized staging, and the reverence of recognizing that the true content of the play tells the story of all humanity. Certainly, that is a concept any contemporary audience will understand.
Notes


2 Ibid., xxx.

3 Ibid., xxxi.


7 Trussler, *Everyman*, xxix.

8 Ibid., xxviii.


10 Ibid., 33.

11 Gibson and Day’s responses to an email questionnaire regarding their directorial choices can be found in Appendix A.


13 Ibid., 191.

14 Ibid., 173.

15 Gibson. Appendix A.


18 Field, *Stages of Drama*, 189.

19 Gibson. Appendix A.


22 Field, *Stages of Drama*, 190.


24 Gibson. Appendix A.


26 Field, *Stages of Drama*, 188.

27 Gibson. Appendix A.

28 Elena Day. Appendix A.
CHAPTER THREE:
CREATING ALLEGORICAL CHARACTERS

As an actor, I am aware that there is an abundance of methods attempting to discipline the technique and process of effective acting. As an artist, I remind myself that all of them are relevant. The important thing is having a broad working knowledge of varying methods. Sometimes an actor finds himself in a creative crux, unable to assimilate and maintain consistency in the craft. Gathering ideas from any method can open an actor to worlds of discovery. My personal process as an actor is like Everyman: simple, direct, and adaptable. In approaching Everyman, I felt confident that my vocal, movement, acting, and improvisational techniques were strong enough to support the directors’ demanding concepts. Better still, I was compelled to push them to the limits and excited by the possibility of learning new techniques from Elena Day. As mentioned earlier, Day studied with Jacque Lecoq; and his methods would prove to be a large foundation for our work in creating allegorical characters.

Lecoq observed life and acting in relation to the moving body. His work utilized masks, mime, movement, and gesture to give performances “the essence of life, which [he calls] the universal poetic sense.”¹ For our work in Everyman, the challenge of relating Medieval allegorical characters to a contemporary audience was understood through the concept of finding the universal poetic sense beyond the allegory. While Lecoq heavily influenced the final product of Everyman, it was not the only technique applied during the rehearsal process. This chapter is an examination of my process as an actor and the techniques of my craft in relation to the multiple characters created for the performance of Everyman at Mad Cow Theatre. I will discuss what concepts were applied to the creation of Fellowship, Kindred/Cousin, Goods, Confession,
and Beauty/Strength/Discretion and what personal choices were made for each. Also included are observations about the power of a good ensemble. Several concepts discussed here were based in Gibson and Day’s assertion that poetic images can be lifted from the text and translated into vocal and physical choices to create characters.

In some regards, this chapter is a more formal and academic presentation of thoughts expressed in my journals. Recorded during the rehearsal and performance periods of the show, the journals (transcribed in the following chapter) have potential to appear to some as unorganized musings absent of any true artistic process. I do not find this particularly true, though I will admit; the journals are my own failed experiment in a writing style known as Gonzo Journalism. This chapter attempts to more clearly present the ideas used in creating these allegorical characters and show the different methods relating to my personal acting process.

**Fellowship**

After being commanded to undertake his mortal journey by Death, Everyman turns first to his Fellowship to plead for accompaniment. Fellowship is partying his life away with music, drinks, and women. Welcoming Everyman and seeing his despair, Fellowship promises that he will remain a true friend even “if thou go to hell” (line 243). Upon learning that Everyman’s request involves a literal trip to the grave, Fellowship retracts his pledge and abandons Everyman to continue his indulgence in food, drink, and fleshly lusts.

Fellowship was the first character that we all felt had an opportunity to directly connect to a twenty-first century audiences. Until this point, the allegories of Death and God were characterized by abstract images. Death, played by Terrence, marched confidently around a dark
stage wearing a hood. God was portrayed as three bright lights shining into the audience while Terrence and I performed a series of choreographed acrobatics in the fog. While these images were interesting and their symbols easily understood, they were abstract and had no direct relation to anything contemporary. Fellowship on the other hand was a twenty-first century character.

Gibson’s concept was to play Fellowship as the ultimate poser. Fellowship is the guy you know who always has to buy the best clothes and then tell you all about them as if you really care. He talks on his cell phone during dinner. He professes friendship as long as your friendship gets him what he wants. Selfish and inconsiderate of others, Fellowship lives life in the fast lane with no reverence of spirit or consciousness of mind. To him, life is a party to be swallowed up as rapidly as possible. Everybody does or has known someone exactly like this. In my brief lifetime I have had the pleasure and the pain of knowing too many people of this immature manner, so at least I had a solid place from whence to draw ideas. In addition to using examples from my life to create the character, I also used the text and a study of language to influence some of my choices.

While playing with the language, several attempts were made by Riley and myself to speak the dialogue as a hip-hop song. The rhythmic nature of the words lent itself well to this idea, however the side effect was that the style doubled the pace of the scene and much of the sense was lost. We tried at first to slow it down, but then the style was lost. Finally, we resolved to have the rest of the cast supply beats and music as they ‘partied’ with Fellowship. Having the music as an undertone accomplished both the idea of keeping the scene rhythmic and also allowing it to be understood.
Physically I kept a lot of Fellowship’s energy in his hands. The hands become an outward expression of rhythm and by leading with them, influenced the shape of my body. It felt very natural to use wild gesticulations and let my hands do most of the talking. The idea was based in part on a conversation I had with my friend James Dunn from Chicago. He was trying to teach me how to improvise rap songs, also known as ‘free-styling.’ Frustrated because I could not get enough words to come into my head fast enough, James told me to wave my hands around and, “pull the words out of the air like the gangster rappers do.” Though I still failed to ‘kick a mean verse’ that night in Chicago, I did find that the idea worked great as a physical image to play with while developing Fellowship. Letting my hands take the energy also led to Everyman and Fellowship’s ‘ritual handshake’ at the beginning of the scene.

I made simple vocal choice for Fellowship. Because the scene is so early in the show, I wanted to make sure that I had saved enough vocal strength for some of the more challenging choices in the second half. In addition to following the rhythm of the language and rhythm created by the ensemble, I first attempted to say each line starting at a high pitch and ending five or six half-notes below that by the end of the line. The problem with this was that I kept dropping out. The last words of each line, crucial to the rhyme scheme, were not being heard clearly. Because I liked the way shifting pitches sounded, I still needed to find a reminder to still pick up the last words. Leading with the hands provided a solution. On the last word of each line, especially if it was a shared rhyme, I added a quick hand gesture that served as a psychological trigger to pick up those ending words.

Everyman’s meeting with Fellowship was a high paced scene with several comic moments. I think Fellowship was easily recognizable as an allegorical symbol serving the purposes of the story and as a character that audiences could recognize from their own life. The
entire scene had a very modern and free-flowing feel to it, and was the first solid example of the directors’ concepts to bring *Everyman* into a more contemporary context.

**Kindred/Cousin**

Having no luck convincing Fellowship to join him in dying, Everyman approaches his kinsmen for help. Kindred and Cousin, shared by all four actors, were portrayed in Mad Cow’s production as a simple country family. The two boys wrestled playfully while the women plead for Everyman to get to the point. Much like Fellowship, their fears prevent them from joining Everyman in death and their excuses for doing so (“I have a cramp in my toe!” line 374) provide fodder for comic relief.

I had a very hard time with the Kindred/Cousin scene. The concept was similar to that of Fellowship. Both scenes adapted the relationships to be modern. This was to serve the purpose of giving a twenty-first century audience a familiar milieu in order to draw them into the play. However, in the case of Kindred/Cousin, I think the directors sadly mistook stereo-typing for allegory. Day wanted the scene to be about a family of ‘hicks in the sticks’ who speak with thick Southern drawls through their slacked jaws. The simple country folk hee-hawed at Everyman’s misfortunate journey; one of the yokels even tries to sell his own sister to Everyman. The idea got laughs from an audience, and was successful therefore in drawing them in and helping them get comfortable with the language. I just think it could have been smarter.

Originally, Terrence and I were not going to be in this scene. However, Gibson and Day had no way of getting us off stage without breaking the fluidity of the piece, so we were slowly worked in. At first we merely wrestled around and beat each other up while the dialogue took place until Kim (playing a motherly Kindred) would scold us, at which point I knelt down to
become a bench. Kim would sit on me while Terrence would wash her feet and the rest of the scene took place with that blocking. It did not work. The final solution was reached by reassigning the dialogue to include Terrence and myself. Instead of freely wrestling, we performed another sequence of choreographed acrobatics. To me, the acrobatics were distracting. Worse yet, they seemed like an elaborate and unnecessary set up to make the “cramp in the toe” line a one-line joke. While upside down balancing on Terrence’s knees I bent my right leg towards Everyman and delivered the line wiggling my toes in his face.

Still, I had a job to do as an actor, and, personal feelings aside, I had to create a character to be added into Kindred/Cousin that served the story. I opted to make acting choices that would offer the least resistance. If a simple country yokel is what they wanted, well, that was pretty easy to do. For Kindred/Cousin all I needed was to make whole body feel like it was slouching forward. I kept my jaw loose and my eyes wide open. Throw in a Southern accent, a couple “h’yuk h’yuk’s” and I was done. This is making it sound as if I put no effort into this character. I assert that not a lot of effort was needed to fulfill the directors’ vision, and at moments where I tried to add extra characterizations I was instructed to pull back.

Physically, it was a fun scene. Though I felt the acrobatics to be out of place, learning them and performing them was rewarding to me. I had to rely on the principles of balance learned in movement classes and was excited to be able to teach Terrence how to feel the subtle shifts of balance in the body. The first position involved counter-balance. Terrence and I would stand shoulder to shoulder and while holding hands lean as far away from each other as possible, using the weight of the other person to balance us on our way down to the floor. Sometimes we could get as far as our arms could reach and then pull each other back to standing. Other times the sweat from our palms broke the grip and we ended up falling on the floor.
The second position was easy and fun to do. As I stood in a mid-squat, Terrence would stand on my knees while the two of us held hands. While he stood upright, I could balance him by shifting my weight downward and he could counter-balance me by slightly leaning backwards. Although it was hard to get into, this was one of the easiest positions to hold for an extended period of time.

The final position had Terrence lay on the ground and balance me upside down above him. This was done with Terrence on his back with his knees up. Then I would put my hands on his knees and lean forward until he caught my shoulders. From there it was like doing a headstand, a position with which I am quite skilled. The position was also easy for Terrence, he merely had to provide a strong base with his knees and lock his arms so as not to strain his muscles. It was during this display of balance that I delivered the “cramp in the toe” line that I had come to loathe. Terrence and I would spend a lot of time before and after rehearsals (and warming up before shows) simply holding our balanced positions for as long as possible.

Overall, the scene truly did work. It was silly and even a little ridiculous, but it got a positive response from the audience every single night. Though I did not think the choices were very creative, through acrobatics and simple character choices, the scene did produce the desired effect. It serves the notion that, though an actor may find the concept of a scene to be flawed, the actor must always trust the director and perform with as much truth as possible. The audience understood the message and the language and got to laugh in the process. Presenting this scene and Fellowship in these very contemporary worlds helped eliminate the notion in the audience’s mind that Everyman was an old play and that it might be hard to understand.
Goods

The last of his earthly companions, Everyman seeks the advice of his Goods. Presented as three abstract representations, Goods (moving slowly to the rhythms of coins being shaken in a bucket) reveals that he has deceived Everyman. By overstating his importance in the world he has convinced Everyman to put more faith in earthly treasures than treasures of the spirit. The fact that Everyman will die soon pleases Goods, because for him this means more time can be devoted to snaring other living beings in this trap of materialism. Stripping Everyman of his jewelry and clothing, Goods laughs a near-naked Everyman out the door.

This was one of the most abstract characters to appear in our production of *Everyman*. Shared by Kim, Terrence, and myself; the character of Goods originated from ideas that Elena shaped and molded from Lecoq exercises. To begin with, the entire cast did a free writing exercise in which we tried to list everything that we personally owned. After one minute of writing, we stopped and read our lists. We were then asked to imagine all the things on our list, and everything on everyone else’s list, piled high in a junk yard. Our worldly goods seemed so trivial when put into that context. The next step was imagining all these old broken items tumbling down in piles on top of more and more junk. For me, it was images of broken televisions piled on car parts piled on a vast array of sofas and loveseats.

This exercise reminded me of something Michael Chekhov wrote, that the “more intently you look into your image, the sooner it awakens in you those feelings, emotions and will impulses so necessary to your performance of the character.” Imagining everything I own in a huge junk pile, and the recognition of how little material goods actually mean, aroused great emotions within me. I felt a sense of inevitability. I felt the doom that comes with knowing that none of this matters. My televisions, my books, even the computer I am using to write this -- in
the end none of it means anything. It will be a flicker of a fading light. These were some of the emotions I in turn tried to arouse in the audience while performing this scene.

However images were not only used to spark emotion, they became the foundation for exploring the physical side of Goods. Still using our junk pile image, we began moving around the space. First our bodies jerked as if we were the actual junk pieces falling on top of one another and crumbling into small piles. Then we moved as if our body parts were made of different pieces of junk. I had a television for a stomach, long exhaust pipes for arms, couch cushions for legs, and old musty books for a head. Finally, still operating under these images, we began moving to a rhythm, only able to progress one body part with each beat.

For me, the final product or this exploration resulted in one of the most compelling scenes in the play. At the introduction of Goods, the three of us moved as our images to the sounds of Sarah shaking coins in a bucket and then slamming it down hard. The effect was a rhythm that went “cha-cha-cha-cha-cha-CHANG!” Once in our places at different corners around the space, Goods and Everyman began their dialogue. Everyman moved to and from each one of us and as soon as he got too close, we would tear off a piece of his clothing. Sarah also provided the sound effects for this by tearing a cloth in half every time another object was removed.

Of all the characters, I think Goods was the best example of exploring images in order to find Lecoq’s ‘universal poetic sense.’ Fellowship and Kindred were very wonderful concepts, but in execution became more caricatures than actual characters. Goods expressed the allegory through abstract movement and supported the images and symbols it was meant to represent. Coupled with the live sound effects and the symbolic removal of Everyman’s clothing, the
allegory of Goods was, for me, the most moving and most powerful presentation of *Everyman*’s message.

**Confession**

After witnessing the poor state of his Good Deeds, Everyman recruits Knowledge to help him make his account. Knowledge’s first advice is to seek “Confession, that cleansing river” (line 569). Confession is very understanding of Everyman’s lowly state, and advises him to seek penitence to God through violent scourge “to remember thy Saviour was scourged for thee” (line 598). Confession warns that Everyman should hurry, because time is short and this is the only path to true forgiveness.

Confession’s role in *Everyman* is very brief, yet significant to mention because it was the only character I played that began with no initial directorial concepts. In fact, both Gibson and Day felt stuck with Confession and did not really know what they wanted to do with the character. They let Terrence and I make all of the initial choices and then shaped and formed our ideas to fit into the structure of the play. Our explorations focused mostly on how to put the language of the monologue into the forefront and let the physical side of the character be as simple as possible.

Early ideas included an elaborately blocked scene where Terrence and I would move side to side around Everyman, always keeping our backs to him until it was time to say the next line. This turned out to be too complicated so we eventually settled on walking in circles around a kneeling Everyman while speaking in very low and soft tones. The idea to speak in unison at the end of each line and other certain phrases was actually a mistake that turned into a miracle. Terrence had a lot of difficulty memorizing the text, and during one rehearsal Gibson asked me
to fill in the parts of Confession that Terrence had not yet committed to memory. I underestimated Terrence’s ability to memorize and wound up saying several of his same lines at the same time. Both Gibson and Day loved the effect and so it was adapted and incorporated into the show.

Confession was a very simple character, yet one of which I am proud. With no prior direction or concept, I was allowed to create the character completely from scratch. This gave me a greater sense of ownership than any other character. I did not use any fancy physical images or powerful voice techniques. Instead, the simplicity of the character became its power, and the language was allowed to take center stage.

**Beauty/Strength/Discretion**

Conceived in the Mad Cow production as one character with multiple personalities, Beauty/Strength/Discretion (hereafter referred as BSD) tags along with Five Wits to represent Everyman’s personal faculties. As others before, they swear their allegiance to Everyman and promise to see him to the grave. When faced with the reality of Everyman’s death, Beauty decides its not pretty enough, Strength chickens out, and Discretion wisely follows Strength as one by one all three leave Everyman to face his death alone.

Of all the characters I had the chance to play in *Everyman*, none required the full use of my acting abilities, the focus of my technique, and the power of my creativity more than BSD. The character was an enormous challenge, and I found myself using every resource and every technique I could discover to create something that would have a lasting impact. Selfishly, I hoped that if audience members were conversing after the show, BSD would be one of the highlights of discussion. For me, it was a tour de force in acting, movement, and vocal
techniques. Even though in concept BSD was only one character, I had to create three characters. Then, like a black hole compresses mass, squeeze all three personalities into one body without sacrificing what makes them distinct.

One of Day’s original concepts was for BSD to be a masked character. I developed this idea (as evidenced by several drawings in the next chapter) into a three-masked character. The intent was that each mask would represent Beauty, Strength, or Discretion and I would use whichever mask was speaking as a focal point from which to lead the body. This concept was later scrubbed after the decision that no masks would be used at all in the performance. Instead, I worked to find images for each that I felt would best represent the original idea of the masks. To do this, Day and I worked on what she calls “physical refrains, or specific, repetitive, non-quotidian movements that identified the character.” These refrains could then be cycled through one another as different aspects of BSD were needed to complete dialogue.

The refrains were based heavily in images, Strength being one of the easiest. It was no great leap of acting logic to associate Strength with muscles and incorporate that image into movement. With the body flexed and the legs bent in a half-squat, the physical aspect of Strength used heavy and direct movement. For Discretion, the idea of a tall and wise judge became the primary image. With hands folded in front of the chest, Discretion’s energy moved upwards, starting at the base of the spine and continuing up out of the top of the head. Even with this upward energy, the feet remained planted flatly on the floor. This way Discretion could remain very grounded. If I found I was having trouble with the physical side of Discretion, the thought of wearing small round spectacles and having a long gray beard seemed to help as a psychological trigger to put my mind into the proper focus.
Beauty went through several physical incarnations before Day and I felt we had reached something solid. The temptation to play Beauty as a female was great, yet we wanted the character to be as genderless as possible. The early physical refrains we explored involved keeping the body in a shy profile and slowly opening up towards Everyman as Beauty would speak. Still, Day insisted that it was not working and asked me to think of the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Though it was not the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, the first image that popped into my head was a waterfall I had seen while hiking the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon. I had trouble finding a physical refrain based in the image of falling water and what I later discovered and latched onto was an image of a waterfall frozen in time. I imagined thousands of gallons of rushing water all holding still in mid-air. I could walk through the water and feel its properties on my skin. I pictured myself walking through the water and how it affected my body. I cannot say objectively whether or not this was ‘beautiful’ but the image worked, and chasing that image led me to find an effective physical refrain.

I wanted the vocal aspects of BSD to be as strong as the physical ones. Simply using a different character voice for each personality was not good enough for me. I insisted that my vocal choices express an intellectual and aesthetic level that would effectively support the physical choices and images. I found this level through applying a few vocal theories put forth by Arthur Lessac. Using the physical energies established in the refrains, I strove to add compelling vocal choices that would be “a creative and controlling influence upon the dynamics of these energies.” Going back to the text as a guide, I was able to discern and exploit Tonal, Structural, and Consonant energies into my vocal choices for each of BSD’s personalities.

As with the physical choices, ideas for Strength came more easily than others. Scanning the text, I picked up on several repeating tonal sounds in Strength’s dialogue. Words like
‘forsake,’ ‘weep,’ and ‘faith,’ and the phrase ‘spend your speech and waste your brain,’ are examples of what Lessac refers to as “Y-buzz,” a resonant tonal quality in the voice found through specific vowel sounds. The vowel sounds (designated in bold above) were so prevalent throughout Strength’s dialogue that once I became aware of this fact, my conclusion to play the vowels as a vocal choice seemed obvious. The vocal choice worked so well in enhancing the physical that I decided to explore other vocal energies with Beauty and Discretion, if only as an exercise that might lead to other discoveries.

In further explorations I found that Structural (sustainable vowel sounds) and Consonant (playable percussive sounds) energies were almost equally distributed throughout the dialogue and language of Beauty and Discretion. Of the relaxing vowel sounds representing Structural energy and the rhythmic playable Consonant energies, neither seemed to dominate the speech to the degree that Tonal energy dominated the language of Strength. The choice would have to be made kinesthetically after exploring all sides and deciding which one felt right. In the end, I chose to play the Consonant energy in Beauty because the emphasis on rhythm gave me a sense of youthful radiance that, for me, supported the physical image of walking through still water. Incorporating Structural energy into the vowels helped Discretion achieve an authoritativeness. For what its worth, the vocal and physical choices I ended up using for Discretion always made me feel like Orson Welles in Citizen Kane.

Overall, I was extremely proud of my work in creating BSD. It by no means stole the show, and, all selfishness aside, I am glad for that. I do believe it was the strongest of all my characters in Everyman and became a fine representation of my ability to implement knowledge of the voice and the moving body. Finding the universal poetic sense inherent in Beauty, Strength, and Discretion was not an easy task. I relied on technique and discipline throughout
the exploration to arrive at discoveries that were honest and supportive of the directors’ concepts. By that measure, BSD was a success.

The Power of Ensemble

A majority of the successes of Mad Cow Theatre’s production of *Everyman* should be credited to the directors and actors for creating a strong and fluid ensemble cast. The sense of interdependence allowed our creative minds to exert a level of synergism that, though not necessarily tangible, was necessary to capture the energy needed to drive the play. My experience doing improvisational theatre led me to several psychological theories concerning a phenomenon known as Group Mind. As if actors are given ESP, Group Mind allows a total absorption of several individuals into a singular moment, wherein concepts of time disappear and spatial awareness is heightened. Actors can predict another actor’s next move and literally feel their presence even if they are several feet apart from each other. Peter Gwinn, a former teacher of mine, wrote:

> An established Group Mind is like an out-of-body experience. Suddenly, you can see that you are not just you, but are a part of a greater entity. You feel a sense of excitement, a sense of belonging, and a sense of importance. A team than can achieve the Group mind will do great group work.⁶

This mindset is essential to ensemble, and was essential to the cast of *Everyman*. Without it, our creativity would have been limited by our egos. But submitting that ego to the group allows the levels of communication to deepen and for true exploration through play to begin.

The ritual nature of the rehearsal process was a major factor in facilitating the growth of the ensemble. While both directors came to the process with specific ideas for the show, neither
director was married to their concepts and consistently deferred creative choices to group votes. This created a sense of belonging and ownership and of shared responsibility among the cast and crew. Before each performance, cast members would take turns leading group warm-ups. Additionally, the cast was encouraged to get to know each other outside of rehearsals, and we often did so by having dinner at one another’s homes. I would never prescribe the above ideas as tried and true ways of creating an effective ensemble. They worked for us because all members of the group agreed in wanting to be as cohesive as possible. This combated the lack of an important factor in creating Group Mind: Time. Any collaboration of people, given enough time, can achieve Group Mind.

In fact, creating an ensemble and working towards Group Mind is something that happens every day in many ways and is not always related to theatre. Some examples are business meetings, student projects, film crews, and even married couples. The single determining factor that must be accomplished is to have the individuals involved completely surrender egos for the sake of the group. This facilitates the growth of the Group Mind and in the realm of theatre, creates ensemble. The power of ensemble simultaneously consumes and provides vital life energy. I firmly believe that, even if the cast boasted the most amazingly developed allegorical characters ever created, without a working ensemble, the experience of *Everyman* would have been a shallow one.

In many ways it felt as if the cast was a NASA space-shuttle crew. Like scientists and astronauts, our cast seemed like five specialists in acting, and we brought together our refined set of skills for the ultimate goal of producing powerful theatre. I would describe my part in the crew to be a Mission Specialist, or in this case, a Character Specialist. My skill set includes an understanding of how to discover and execute physical and vocal choices to create a character
that serves the story. *Everyman* was challenging because creating several characters was a test of my skill and training. It was rewarding because I felt like I passed. I relied on my technique and my passion to guide my choices and in doing so accomplished the mission of creating several interesting and compelling characters as well as connecting outside myself and into an ensemble.
Notes


2 Gonzo Journalism, pioneered by writers such as Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe, attempts to erase objectivity from the event being witnessed. The ‘reporter’ opts instead for observing and elaborating his or her own subjective point of view in an effort to recreate the mood of the event as opposed to merely the event itself. Some people might just call this “brutal honesty.” Because of its associations as being anti-establishment, the style is not very popular in academic circles.


4 Elena Day. Interview. Appendix A.


CHAPTER FOUR: 
ACTOR JOURNALS

The following journals were recorded by hand during what I refer to as the Groundwork, Rehearsal, and Performance aspects of my artistic process. While writing these journals I attempted to capture the absolute Truth of what I was feeling at the moment of writing. I feel this reflects my own raw and personal approach to the craft of acting. However, several of those journal entries were not grammatically sound and were unfit for an academic publication. Therefore, these journals have been edited for clarity, spelling, and grammar, in an effort to reflect a more academic style. I do feel strongly that editing a raw process flirts with the integrity of what really happened and has potential to provide an inaccurate description of the abstract nature in which I work.

Groundwork


I have decided that my role in Mad Cow Theatre’s production of Everyman will be a thesis role. This thesis, as of yet, has not been officially accepted. That does not seem like a reason to not begin a journal. This journal is something I would be doing for Everyman regardless if it were my thesis or not, and seeing as rehearsals are officially one month away, this is the time to kick off the process.

If this journal is to serve, for thesis purposes, as a reflection of my thought process, it needs to be noted now that not all entries will be as coherent as this one. My brain is a playground--and as
with many show journals of the past, these pages will give insight to the organized chaos that is my thought process and patterns.

Also, there will be drawings. Lots and lots of drawings.

Email from Chris Gibson (director)

1) Between now and 1st Workshop (Jan. 3) pay attention to rituals. Include thoughts on three (3) specific rituals you experience.

2) Watch a child playing at Christmas time. Take notes and be specific.

NOTE: I got this email a few weeks ago and have done the work in another journal which I will copy in here sometime soon.

I also need to journal on the following paintings I saw today at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska:

1) *Angle of Music ???* (look up title) by Francesco Ribalta

2) *Old Man and Death* by Joseph Wright of Derby

3) *Allegories of Vanity* by Jean Devaldesleal

4) *Fame Conquers Time* by Scarsellino

ON RITUAL – Chris emailed the cast a link to dictionary.com and the definition of ritual.¹ I would like to point out here the wide application of the word “ritual” and its meaning from religious ceremony to everyday behaviors.

Christmas time was a perfect opportunity to observe and take part of Rituals, particularly of the religious context. As I began to deliberately observe the rituals of everyday practice, I realized there are several Rituals we practice everyday and are probably unaware of their importance or
existence. Rituals such as making your bed, brushing your teeth or exercising before you sit down to write a thesis, are all examples of the smaller, non-religious rituals we practice everyday. Before I get into that, I will discuss the three rituals I observed and commented on as part of Chris’s assignment.

1) HUGE EMBARRASSING FAILURES (H.E.F)

The above is the name of an improvisational group in Nebraska that I helped found and performed with. On December 12th, I returned to Lincoln, Nebraska to do another show with my old troupe. I was worried that my return could be detrimental to the energy and focus of the group -- they seemed to have their own groove, and I had mine and how would they mix? Luckily we had Ritual for that. There are a number of Improv “warm-up” games that are perfect for harmonizing the energy of a group and creating a collective brain – so to speak. One such is a game called “Patterns;” another is “Give and Take.” Perhaps the best of all is a game I helped invent three years ago called “Gushi Goi” – and I was happy to see it had become a pre-show ritual. H.E.F. has always been known for our expertise in Long Form Improvisation, a series of scenes based on one audience suggestion and explored on deep thematic levels. The Harold is a structured long-form improvisation that uses an organic opening to begin allowing the group to explore ideas to be used for scenes. This opening, using physical and vocal means, is the Ritual which kicks off a good long form. There is often repetition of key phrases and a building of energy.

So, that’s one Ritual.

2) IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Church? and Ritual? No way! Do those even go together? Duh. Okay, sarcasm aside, ILC is my home church in Iowa. This is the place where I was introduced to ritual all the way back to my
baptism. The Christmas service falls under the most basic orders of ritual—one in particular has not changed for as long as I can remember. At the midnight service on Christmas Eve, the congregation ends the service by turning out all the lights (except the Eternal Flame) and members of the congregation light hand-held candles that have been passed out before the service. We then sing “Silent Night” with the candles being the only light—symbolically to represent the darkness of the world before Jesus and the “stars in the sky” which “look down where [Jesus] lay.” When the song is over, the lights come back on, candles are blown out, and the service concludes with a rendition of “Joy to the World.” While I have come to expect this religious rite, and although my own beliefs are no longer exactly those of the Lutheran Church, the ceremony is still meaningful and moving. Anymore, Christmas just doesn’t feel like Christmas unless I have take part of this ritual.

3) DAD’S MORNING COFFEE [refer to definition 2 under dictionary.com]

My father is a simple man. He grew up on a Nebraska farm in the 1940s and had no luxuries—not even indoor bathrooms! He has often said about life – “Sometimes getting into a rut is the only way to get down a muddy road.” To some he may seem boring—doing the same thing every day—as I grow older, I realize the wisdom he owns by keeping his days simple and stress-free.

I cannot think but of a handful of days when my father has woken up, usually an hour before the sun, to make a quick pot of coffee and sit down to read the newspaper. When I was in high school, he always made sure to leave me a cup of Joe and would place news stories of interest at my place at the table. He does this everyday without fail. Although since his heart attack and surgery, the coffee has switched to decaf – the ritual is the same.

This Christmas break, I made a point to wake up with him, and spend those few early morning
hours with hot Folgers, newspapers, and small talk. I asked him why he insisted on such a ritual. "I’ve just always done it this way,” he replied, exemplifying his simplicity.

If I could take a guess, I would assume the morning ritual provides for his mind a sort of trigger, an “okay, time to start the day” sort of function – a motivator.

Knowing my dad, the answer is probably a lot more simple than that.

DECEMBER 31, 2004
Assignment #2 – Watch a Child Play at Christmas.

This was easy. I have a nine-year-old niece, Brianna, and a soon-to-be five-year-old nephew, Austin. And I love watching them, just to catch a glimpse of their innocence and the honesty that comes from being a child.

Christmastime is a good time to watch them too because they are so full of excitement.

Early Christmas Eve morning I was watching Austin play with Matchbox cars on a small piece of fabric on which I had drawn city streets and buildings as a kid. His absorption into his world of play was total. The cars, to him, were real and even though they often defied the laws of physics --racing around turns at thousands of miles per hour -- his imagination carried him away. His body was completely free of tension and I could not believe that he could squat for as long as he did with out really having to adjust his body.

Figure 1: A rough drawing of the child's physical posture.
Who can sit like this with no tension for over forty minutes!? Not me.

My observations ended soon hereafter because I began playing with him, and got lost myself in the car races, chases, and crashes.

Brianna, like me, is a quiet observer, and she’s sneaky too. Five times on December 23, I was in the living room reading, and she crept up in order to carefully examine her presents. She checked for size, shape, and “shakability.” Her eyes were wide and curious, and then would suddenly furrow and narrow as she played detective. Then you’d see her light up, look at me, and say, “I know what it is” and run back downstairs.

The time soon came to open presents, but first we had to have traditional Christmas dinner. The anticipation drove my niece and nephew CRAZY!

Austin picked at his food, constantly looking over his shoulder at the Christmas tree, then back at the table wondering how long these adults were going to take. Brianna, being older, tried to play it cool. She ate slowly and tried to behave. From my vantage point at the table, I could see though, her feet and legs were bouncing and kicking and swinging – she wanted to go! I would guess there is not much difference in a child waiting to open presents as there is in a child having to pee really bad. It’s a classic example of what Kate Ingram calls Radiance Energy.

JANUARY 2, 2005

First entry of the New Year. Yay! Rehearsal unofficially begins tomorrow with a “meet and greet” and movement workshop. Double Yay!

The Old Man and Death 1773
Last Tuesday – Dec. 28 – my dad and I drove to Omaha, NE to the Joslyn Art Museum to see a traveling exhibit called “The Old Masters”. The exhibit included over 200 paintings ranging from the Renaissance to Baroque. Many of the works were from the same period that Everyman would have been seen and reflect many of the same religious and worldly themes. My favorite of the collection was The Old Man and Death.

In this painting, Death comes in the form of a naked skeleton carrying an arrow. The landscape is naturalistic and rural.

To paraphrase the description next to the painting

--The Old Man is walking home carrying sticks when Death comes to him. Afraid, he reels in horror begging for more time which Death grants by holding the arrow away from the old man.

This description ties directly to Everyman by asking “How will we react when Death comes?”

For most – fear. For some – joy or relief.

Figure 2: A rough drawing of the body posture of the Old Man.

Two major things struck me while observing this painting:
1) At one point, while standing away from the painting, the Old Man and Death were blocked by another Museum go-er. My dad remarked, “Look now – you can only see the landscape of the painting, it looks so sublime and pretty.” When the anonymous observer passed revealing the two figures once again, my dad said, “Now it’s provocative.”

2) For a long time I watched other people observe this painting and the two paintings on either side. For the latter, people approached with curiosity, examining the details (one was a painting of the Trojan Horse, the other-- two women on a hill top). But every time someone came near OMaD – they stepped backwards! and would observe the painting back on their heels as if they themselves were fleeing the thought of Death. And this was not just some people, it was everyone – (every …man … snicker) – or at least every person I observed.

This, for me, speaks to the element of fear present in both Everyman and this painting. The idea is, like it or not, that we are all afraid to die. And that it is exactly this fear of Death that motivates nearly all of our human functions. We eat so we do not starve. We have fight or flight instincts. We procreate to preserve our species. Religions are founded on the human reaction to Death. Religions try to prepare us for Death or at least comfort us from its sting.

Alas, we all die. And nobody, Nobody knows for sure what happens then.

JANUARY 3, 2005

1st Workshop

1. warm up
2. meet and greet
3. “Ritual” discussion
4. “Ritual” activity
5. “child” discussion
6. “child” activity
7. Mill/Seethe & “Ritual”
8. Cool down
ASSIGNMENT – memorize opening speech, pay attention to rhyme scheme

JANUARY 4, 2005

Now that the first workshop is over and I’ve had time to process it and let my body recover (so out of shape – blech!), I need to find a way to organize my reflections from last night. I wrote down everything we did, so maybe the best way, for now, is to briefly explain each exercise and then reflect on that, one at a time.

1) warm up.
Pretty standard. A lot stretching and a lot of yoga. It was led by Elena Day of Cirque du Soliel. I felt very out of shape -- which is strange because I did a lot of stretching and walked two miles every day over break. This show will undoubtedly feature lots and lots of movement. So the best thing I can do is keep active until the next workshop.

2) meet and great
Got to know everybody’s names. There are only five people in the cast so we are all going to be playing lots of multiple parts, which is awesome. Terrence, Damany and I are the males, and Kim and Sara are women. Elena and Chris Gibson are directors. This little time out was good – it’s the start of an ensemble – which, depending on how well the ensemble works, will be the big X-factor in this show.

3) “Ritual” Discussion
We talked about the three rituals we had observed. That’s pretty straight forward. Chris noted that the ideas of Ritual will be very important to this production, so our observation of such should be an ongoing process.
“Ritual” activity

Chris had us choose a mundane, everyday kind of activity that we could do as a ritual.

I chose playing video games.

We mimed the activity, repeated it for several minutes, and then did it for one another one at a time. Chris then asked us to stop and think of our Ritual in five steps. Mine was way longer than five steps so I cut it down to:

1. pushing the ‘on’ button
2. unwinding the controller
3. changing the TV channel
4. fluffing a pillow to sit on
5. sitting and waiting.

These seemed to work well because they had very clear and definite moments as well as separate and clear movements. This came in handy as we began experimenting with exaggerating the movements, making them bigger and smaller. I was easily able to fully explore each separate moment -- to the point where they sort of became new, abstract moments all to themselves. (I think that was the point of doing it this way.)

Next came adding a vocalization. We were instructed to add a sound at the beginning and end of each movement. I chose a sort of “ah – hah!” sound, but not sudden – drawn out like “aaah HAAA!”

Again we played with the levels of exploration and then again did it for one another. It was really cool how these mundane things had been transformed into these intricate, absurd, abstract little rituals of their own. It was hard to recognize what some of them had started out as – Terrence’s shower ritual now resembled a Kabuki warrior committing suicide.

Then we took a break.

5.) “Child” Discussion

We discussed our observations of children.
6.) “Child” Activity

After spending a few moments on the floor relaxing and clearing the mind, we were turned loose to play as children. This came easy to me as I am usually in a “play” mode. I found it hard to play with others and that is a sort of direct connection to my childhood where I preferred to be alone with my imagination rather than play in large groups. Some people explored the space and I immediately began playing with anything I could get my hands on. Chicken wire, hangers, muslin, a piano--all became my toys. I built a fighter jet, a cape, and a later a fort. After the fort was completed, others wanted to come in and I found that I was pushed out of my own fort! I did not have much time to express my feelings of anger and disappointment because the group quickly began a game of Red Light / Green Light. Then we stopped.

I felt successful in this exercise in the area of Discovery. Child-like play is full of discovery – quick discoveries and moving from one to the next. It is a good exercise for the imagination. And although my “child” was shy – this was also a nice step toward bringing the ensemble together.

7.) Mill / Seethe “Ritual”

Now this rocked. Continuing with our “child” energy, we milled around the space, still exploring – and at the sound of the bell we returned to our vocal/physical Ritual from before – making it as BIG as we could.

I found I had wonderful control of my body in this case, and was able to move very freely. Additionally, during the milling I was using different body centers to move me around. Also, during the Ritual, I experienced great freedom in my voice – I felt the voice throughout my body, almost as if it were traveling from my groin, up my spine and very powerfully resonating
through my chest and open mouth. The effect on my body was visceral and my voice responded with clear tone supported by my breath.

An interesting thing happened, as we continued: our Rituals began to sync up. Soon we were vocalizing and moving at the same times. You could feel the synergy that it created among us -- there were no leaders or followers, only group energy pulling us along.

For only being together less than three hours, I think that is an amazing achievement.

8) Cool Down.

More stretching. Felt good.

Overall:

This was a successful workshop because I came prepared. Although I felt out of shape, my body and voice responded with freedom and strength. I was able to access an energy that came from the group, rather than just myself.

Again, the ensemble and the group mind will be the most important factor to success in this show, and I think we have a good head start.

Rehearsals

JANUARY 18, 2005

Excited for rehearsal tonight

At rehearsal:

This totally feels like Jerzy Grotowski

My spine feels great.

I had visions of the entire play set in the Old West. Bizarre. Funny Story! Elena went to start music for our war?; in my head I said “here comes ‘Carmina Burana’ “ and sure enough.
Kim and Sara think a buffet is “divine.”

Damany and I got a plastic bag to stand up.

Suddenly glad I was never popular in high school.

Red Fox Lounge?

break is over …

After Rehearsal-

Okay, I’m thinking a bit more clearly now. Sometimes I forget that people will read this and I have to be coherent sometimes. Sometimes.

The workshop tonight was very good. Grotowski would have loved it. Tucked away in a space inside the Don Asher Building, we piled rugs and stretched a drop cloth canvas across it -- it made a beautiful 12 x 12 ft. playing space. There was something very magical and secretive about our found space. It was raw --and that was empowering and not intimidating.

1.) Warm Ups … were basic and good. Physical only, no vocal – granted I could have warmed my own voice – but I didn’t. I got a good stretch and felt limber, even through my tension. The space was cold and felt great!

2.) Mill / Seethe

This was technically part of warm ups, it is also one of my favorite exercises.

EXPLANATION:

The cast of five walks around the space, naturally, feely and trying to keep the entire space filled. It sharpens my spatial awareness, especially when we begin playing with tempo. It helps me focus on the whole. While I can only notice those immediately close to me, the purpose of the exercise is to train your senses to be hyper-aware; it is an opening of the senses. Like nose spray … for your mind!
This transitioned into exploring the space and naming everything we saw, then renaming it something that it’s not. The old improv skills kicked in and I found while renaming items, I would hear someone else in the room (i.e. “leaf”) as I would move to the next object. I did quick word association in my head (“leaf” to “table”). Good to remind myself to always take off my partners.

3.) Images

Elena walked up and said, “Watch this.”

Then she crumpled a piece of note book paper, threw it on the floor, and, with child’s abandon, observed the paper ball settle into the floor, slightly unfolding from time to time.

Then we partnered up, each pair with a sheet of notebook paper. Crumple. Observe. Then I crumpled Damany and he did his image of the paper. Switched and I did it. Repeat and play with the object. I blew Paper Damany around like wind.

I think you get the picture. This process of observing an object, playing with it, understanding its properties, then using those images and translating them into physical exploration, also explored: elastic, ping pong ball, plastic bag, and wire.

This is where it gets good…

Then it was WAR! … sort of.

Our shapes / substances/ what ever you want to call them … went to war. Only now the three guys had to act as one cohesive organizm and the girls, together, as a separate organism from the guys.

SO – Damany, Terrence, and I started out as elastic, stretching, and snapping at Kim and Sara, the plastic bag. The bag covers elastic which morphs into wire, cutting itself free. The bag morphs into two ping pong balls and ties elastic in a knot and we die. So sad.
Not really. This image exercise was a blast. It was reminiscent of “elements” from Chris Neiss’s class. Images can be a powerful tool for creating character – they are the right mix of analyses and imagination. Especially knowing I’ll be playing multiple characters, the specific images I work with will help define each one.

I’m tired. I’ll finish this tomorrow …

JANURARY 19, 2005 … early morning.

God bless coffee.

That battle scene yesterday was really fun. It was physical and playful, it was group effort, and it felt very connected. I felt connect to the group – reacting off them and responding with that image in mind.

After a break, we worked on text. We went back to the mill/seethe and spoke the Messenger speech in unison and then back to the battle using the text. This was unsuccessful because I was the only one fully memorized, others were paraphrasing, which Chris nailed. Personally, I agree with him that the language of this piece is important and has to be letter perfect! The language isn’t as foreign as it feels, it’s poetry and has rhythm—the rhythm of the 15th Century.

Finding the rhythm will unlock the secrets of the language.

JANURARY 24, 2005

1st Rehearsal]

KIM not SARAH

BECKETT for a BACKDROP

Begging for MORE LIGHT
JANUARY 26, 2005

It’s been a couple of days. I wanted to wait until today to journal since the last two rehearsals have just been simple read-throughs.

OH! Elena said that Cirque du Soleil will be coming on Sundays to teach acrobatics. Awesome!

The parts have been assigned and I am a little disappointed because I was under the impression that we would all be playing Everyman at some point and now it is just Damany. I know that conceptually it will be clearer to the audience so that’s okay. I am still going to be playing SIX roles, not counting the Messenger or the Doctor (which is everyone) and in a lot of ways that is better than just one or two.

Chris seems very unclear about what he wants. I hope that clears up soon because I hate feeling that a director has no vision.

Fellowship ➔ brief note – this is the 1st real “character” I play. I had an image of a hand, I’m not sure what that means yet, I just know it’s something to work with.

As far as the ensemble goes ….

I feel like the outsider. I have left the last two rehearsal disappointed, I don’t feel a sense of trust amongst the cast.

The problem is:
Is it my ego?
Is it my insecurity?
Is it all in my mind?

It really can’t be too much of 3 because I really feel it in the energy in the rehearsal space. It’s everybody else … and me. I know sometimes I can be intimidating and yet I try to shake off my day at rehearsal and simply remain open, vulnerable, humble, and ready to work.

It is a matter of trust, really. Last night while reading through we were asked to make a choice, any choice, for the characters – just to have something.

Now, it should be mentioned here that I am WAY more comfortable with the language of the piece than anybody else, so making choice in addition to reading this almost foreign text was natural.

Now, we read, and I make choices, and everybody just stares at me. Like, “what is he doing?” I felt like a fool.

I felt as if the lack of trust made my choice unsupported and therefore I looked ridiculous.

And when I say “I felt” I am only half talking of my own emotions and half about the feeling of the energy in the room.

It made me feel separated.

And that’s not good for ensemble.

But …

Basta! It’s in my journal which means it is now officially in my past. Today is new, tonight’s rehearsal will be new. Forget it and focus.

Put a smile and go back there and continue to just be open. Maybe if I continue to trust, I will
earn their trust. It shouldn’t have to be that way … but what can you do? If it remains a problem, I’ll take it to the director privately. Until then, I’ll assume that my own insecurity is the culprit.
Figure 3: A sketch I made of ideas for physicalizing the Beauty, Strength, and Discretion characters.
JANUARY 8, 2005

I lay the entire blame for my recent mood swings, paranoia, and lack of sense on the recent full moon.

Ideas are beginning to flow although I am still hesitant to release them. Two days off will be good.

The exercises from Thursday night with Kim and Sarah were nice. I know that while in scenes, I am open and playful. The girls are starting to play along. A part of me wishes that we wouldn’t rehearse separate. Over the past two nights, the cast has been separate.

Wed: Damany, Kim, and Sarah worked on text and voice of God, while Terrence and I worked under Elena, doing images of the same God speech. That bothers me. Because if we are to be an ensemble, we have to stay together! Yes!? My theory was proven when we tried to put the two together: it was a mess of colliding energies.

The second night, Damany and Terrence worked on Everyman/Death while Kim, Sarah, and I worked images of Fellowship, Pleasure, and Goods. As I mentioned, the exercise and growth were better and so it was when the two met.

Perhaps we are starting to mesh with Chris and Elena’s process. I’d still prefer to stay together.

Play together.

JANUARY 31, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

Okay, so pretty much everything that I had wished last entry to happen, happened: playing together, not separate.

It was awesome. Hesitant at points, and awesome. The Fellowship scene went nice…it had ideas.
Those ideas will surely grow and change, and they should. What was established was the sense of playing together.

Whatever verbs I play with on Fellowship should all be related to hands:

i.e. to Point, to Hold, to Flip-Off, to Slap, to High-Five …

yet they should be verbs acted upon by the body. Just something I can play with tonight.

Bonus: Elena liked my drawing.

I dig the Goods Scene.

Chris wanted us to use the image of Jabba the Hutt from the Star Wars movies, and this worked well for me, though I want explore other images for this character as well.

I asked Brooke what Laban properties Jabba has. I said he was Heavy, Direct, Sustained: a Push. She agreed, adding there was also Heavy, Indirect, Quick: a Wring quality.

This is good, it is another thing to play with

→ Where will Push and Wring take me?

→ Play verbs as hands and body.

But first, and probably most important, I need to go read/review lines.

Rhythms are happening.

Structure is appropriate.

Release is essential.

Where is the rhyme

(in the rhythm?)?

We reviewed and expanded on the Fellowship and Goods Scenes. There was more specific direction from Chris, which truly, helped me feel free to play.

Lines are tricky, and I owe it to myself to devote more time to words.
I had many joys in the sense and play of Rhythm. From an improvised song and drum circle, to moving the body (using the Push/Wring) whilst Sarah used coins and fabric to establish rhythm. I pretty much just gave away a bunch of the show.

Lastly,

Breathe

Release

Breathe

Release

Breathe

Release
Figure 4: Another drawing of B, S, D and ideas for images to play with.
FEBRUARY 1, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

Took a nap. Felt great.

TUESDAY RE-CAP:

great rehearsal
BSD and images
working alone?
sense of excitement
coat of many colors

where is the doom?

Tuesday’s Rehearsal was immense progress. Elena was the only director and we blocked scenes T – V and actually up to W,X. (See script notes for juicy details!)

I am happy and proud Elena liked my ideas (drawing) for Beauty, Strength, Discretion [BSD]. We worked with those images and the idea that the three characters are actually one character with three “personalities.” Elena gave me really good images to play with and I agree with her that Beauty is not as strong as the other two and that I need to really * snap * between them quicker.

I also got to play with fabric for a “costume”. I wore it like a poncho at first until I found out that head hole was big enough to wear like a toga/dress.

Figure 5: An odd attempt to draw myself wearing the fabric.
Terrence’s Five Senses were amazing. I feel like the two of us raised the bar. I hope we keep at it. Energy always seems low. I wonder if it’s the space. There is a Medieval Charm to the dusky dungeon of the Dan Asher building. The tile, carpet, canvas “stage” is like a dojo. I am sure to bow to it before and after I leave. And always there is some nightly vacuum that steals energy; for me I sense it when we fail as group to be bold.

I want to play games and play games.

I must give myself that freedom.

It’s okay to be weird.

Dare to be stupid.

Jump off the cliff into DOOM

FEBRUARY 3, 2005

Blah. Tonight was real low energy for some reason. I think I may be intimidating to my other castmates. Every rehearsal we have a RITUAL where we improvise a song and then go into the opening Messenger speech. So tonight Chris told us to “really go nuts” and “get carried away by the music and rhythms.” So I think my castmates must feel weird if they just dive into something like this – me, I have no problem. So while I’m just letting myself go crazy and primal, acting like a complete animal entranced by the rhythms, everyone else is starting to just stare at me.

Now, a part of me thinks that they should be taken in by my energy and start to let themselves go – and since they are not than maybe I have gone too far. Then Chris said that I was doing exactly what he asked and reprimanded the others. That made me feel a bit insecure because I didn’t want to be singled out (for good or bad). That does not a good ensemble make.
Then I think, “well maybe I should just pull back a little” and a voice in my head goes off saying “NO! Do not bring yourself down, bring everyone else around you UP!” So that’s what I gotta figure out how to do.

I suppose the answer is the ol’ cheesy “Stay true to yourself” kind of stuff.

I’d really like to be the first one off book. But I have no idea when I’ll have time to memorize anything since I am leaving for UPTAs tomorrow.

We shall see!

FEBRUARY 7, 2005

Rehearsal tonight was cancelled due to Kim and Sarah being sick and my being completely exhausted from UPTAs. This is a good thing. I need rest. Badly.

Tomorrow night is a line rehearsal which should be beneficial. I’ve only had minimal time to study lines because I had been doing all of the driving to and from Memphis.

Here’s my current Quandary ➔

Acting Style.

I don’t know exactly what fits here. What should I bring to rehearsal, what do I need to rehearse? So far there’s been a mix of Commedia, Shakespeare, Acrobatic, and Dance. I go to study a scene and my instinct tells me to consider Given Circumstances, and motivated gesture and sub-text. Problem is, none of those things really fit. They certainly weren’t in the acting technique of the 15th Century, and the way the text is written, there is no sub-text. These Allegorical characters speak their mind, they hide nothing.

I suppose the answer to no sub-text is having a strong Point of View – which is similar to sub-text but not the same (in my point of view … haha.)
So many of my lines are the same – even between multiple characters. They all seem to say:

“Hey Everyman, my friend”

“I’ll never leave you”

“What, you want me to die with you?”

“See ya later.”

Point of View will help me find variety.

The Meisner “truthful, honest, and real” acting doesn’t really apply here. Parts of it do, however the real success in this will not depend on how strongly connected I am to my scene partner, but more on the Physical character, the representation of the allegory.

The concept for the play almost calls for a style all its own, and I haven’t exactly adapted to that just yet.

I know I’ll find it by immersing myself in the physical representation of the allegory – with a dash of POV to spice things up.

Stay open, stay alive. That’s my mantra for this week.

FEBRUARY 8, 2005

Tonight was a line rehearsal.

No Directors, just stage manager, David, and the cast. We read through once, and sped through once, then worked several short group scenes.

I feel tonight was particularly beneficial on several levels.

1. It was good to have a low-key relaxed rehearsal after a weekend on the road to and from Memphis. It allowed me to reconnect with the cast. It was nice to know I was missed.
2. Great for lines. Just hearing them, running them again made me so much more comfortable with the language. It helps me – makes me confidant that I will have no trouble being off book by the 15th – which will be another line rehearsal.

3. The speed through was really good. We all noticed how the rhyme scheme was more present in the speed through. This is something we haven’t paid much attention to lately. Tonight: Relax, prep for tomorrow.

FEBRUARY 10, 2005

Past two nights have been good work. Mostly review – and we worked on my scenes a lot, which made me very happy. I knew Fellowship needed help, and now I truly sense that it’s finally going in the right direction. Chris gave me the image of Justin Timberlake, not as a boy band singer, but as, and I quote, “a stupid white boy pretending like he’s got real street credit. A poser.” That image worked well.

I was able to hold onto my image of Fellowship being HANDS, only now they are flailing gangsta Hands! Fellowship has also come far in having a strong and evolving Point of View.

Side Note: I am excited to move into the space on Sunday! It will be a brand new energy, which may be weird at first, and ultimately very good.

FEBRUARY 14, 2005

Oh NO! … I am SORE. Last night we had an acrobatic workshop a Polish guy from Cirque du Soliel And …

ow.
Here’s what we did:

Figure 6: Stick figure drawings of the acrobatic positions taught at the workshop.

And then we held these positions for about ten minutes a piece, to gain a sense of the balance needed. What was amazing was how little muscle was actually needed when you finally found the balance. And this guy would shrug his muscles and say “It’s easy” or “You can hold an elephant. Easy! Go!” ….yeah…easy for him.

Then we moved to the space to do a crash through of the show which went quite well. We’ve got A LOT to work on, and the important thing to remember is that we have a solid foundation to begin that work.

But now … off to study lines.

FEBRURAY 15, 2005

I’ve been trying to get the other aspects of my life in order. School, Personal, Professional. And I’ve been working hard on lines and so there’s not much to really journal about. Lines are good, in the head, often in the wrong order …. Off to rehearsal to see how well I am.

called line 15 times.
worst section: Beauty, Strength, Discretion

Okay not bad … need more work.

2\textsuperscript{nd} time through – called line Once!

😊

Yesterday, during acrobatics, Terrence totally stomped on my testicles … like really hard .. and they still hurt! I should probably go to the doctor.

SPEEDTHROUGH!!!

[end of Tue. Feb. 15 rehearsal]

Notes to Self:

- refer and add to Research Journal
- interview on tape Chris, Elena, Alan and maybe a priest.
- keeping hammering lines, do not rest until absolutely perfect. 100% all the way.
- set a meeting with Thesis Committee
- talk to Alan Bruun about internship.
- stretch and condition every day or will break your back in acrobatics.
- Rest! Relax! Read! Release!

FEBRUARY 16, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

Three days until my birthday. By then I’ll be in Chicago.

Elena said tonight we’ll be working primarily Messenger, God, and Kindred/Cousin. This means I am pretty much off the hook for lines. It gives me extra time to really get everything nailed down. BLAM!

that was the nail. … 😊

--rehearsal break--
Did some acrobatics, ran Fellowship with Damany. Then we blocked movement, specifically for the Messenger. Um. It was okay. It feels a bit as if Elena just chose things at random, there is no reason for any of it.

Chris made some great points about language:

…”take time, make perfect sense, go too far, play with and use words. Set them up and knock them down.”

Chris makes sense, and his direction is clear and (usually) justified. Elena, I just don’t get her mind at all. Maybe if she would explain why she made certain choices (especially in the choreography of Messenger), I would feel better about the whole thing.

→NOTES (Messenger through Death)

…..David’s Note: Here I choose to include a scanned picture of my rehearsal notes from this night. This is an example of where I feel strongly that the typed word cannot capture the emotion inherent in my hand-writing. This is a classic example of how my brain comprehends things:
Figure 7: How my brain works.

- Notice space, environment, people
  - Play = Second = DISCOVERY (of music)
  - "stay saith" ~ fill whole space

-> to self: I wish I could see what we look like >>>

- Fellow/Strength/Beauty = change character = change
  - "blood RED"
  - secret Warrens - I 'suffered'
  - bowles builds builds
  - CUMBERED = RICHES! 

Just After:
Something happened tonight.
This is starting to kick some serious ass.

> love the words
>>> Be A Part <<

go too far
FEBRUARY 17, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

The Mad Cow Space is so much nicer than the Dan Asher Dungeon. I hope tonight’s rehearsal exhibits the same growth as last night. Last night was indescribable. Things … just clicked.

POST REHEARSAL:

Well …

This was just goddamn frustrating.

Good

but frustrating.

Now Terrence and I have some lines in Kindred, Cousin – which is cool.

But Suddenly

FOR NO REASON

Terrence and I break into acrobatics ..! ? ! ?

and we are “directed” to “not take focus”

What the …!?!

Now – to be sure – I’d be totally cool with this if the directors could at least give us a reason

WHY!!!!

Errrrr.

FEBRUARY 20, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

Just flew in from Chicago, haven’t given this show a single thought.

That is a good thing -- I needed a break because from here on out there is no rest. None.

Damn.

Ran scenes T – Z. Not bad. I only forgot one line. By direction took BSD deliberately slower in
order to make them more clear. I liked where this went, it gave me time to really get in the skin of each of those three characters.

REMEMBER: grab the bucket of dirt for Kim before Priesthood.

Self-Note: This play is turning very Avant-Garde very quickly and to what purpose I know not yet.

Self-Note: Some day in the future I am going to teach a High School Sunday school class and we’re going to do this play. And it’s going to be intense and amazing.

Notes from Christ and Elena:

rise when you get the signal from Sarah. Come in as neutral character.

Specificity when Everyman loses his faculties. “We’ll work that,” says Chris

Left shoulder with Beauty, and slow down Discretion and try not to look so damn meek.

Resting position when not “on stage”

Self-Note: switch … Beauty / Structural energy

Discretion / Radiancy

to ➔ Beauty = Radiancy

Discretion = Structural

This is working. Can Water be Radiant? I think so!

AND …. back to work!

After Break ➔ did the scene with BSD leaving Everyman at the grave, and it was good.

Much clearer and just better. Good thing!

Self-Note: re-draw ALL characters

Some More Notes:

Strength … don’t actually “push” him down.
(I wasn’t…that’s called good acting!)

Self-Note: my ulcer is back.

Find a comfortable / energized “off stage” position.

RUN – THROUGH here we go!

After Run Through

Late ~ no notes tonight.

Felt good though …

I’m sure Chris and Elena

will trash it. They’re good at that.

FEBRUARY 21, 2005 - Before Rehearsal

Still need to get notes from last night.

Hunter S. Thompson died today. Suicide? That’s not right.

I’ve figured it out ➔

Chris wants to direct because he loves Theatre.

Elena directs because she’s on a power trip.

Self-Note: You know what’s going well? The Acrobatics! I still don’t understand why they are in certain places, but technically they are cool.

and now…LAST NIGHT’S NOTES

[General] pick up cues.

[Messenger]--much more energy, intensity!! Think about what the audience sees. Balance the stage. Pause at work “ending.”
[God]--careful not to make noise and keep body engaged. Faster into lookout position. Laughter begins on “riches.”

[Fellowship]--don’t wear thing on head (this is a dumb note)

Whoa, they said “Good Job” to me. This is a first for the whole process, or so it feels.

Stare down Damany and Volume UP

Good, keep kicking ass with this.

[Kindred]--quite messy. (cause its full of terrible ideas) Pay attention to the Action/Reaction. It is messy and probably worst scene of the night. (Yet no real notes, interesting.)

[Goods] --“yet in my mind a thing there is” → That is the line we should begin to move into our positions for Goods. Keep it out of corner as much as possible so you don’t crush Sarah. The spills … timing, timing, timing…needs work! Further with character (gruff, fat mouth)

~~~~~~~~wind comes in sooner ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

[GoodDeeds]--(well, here I’m just a wall … so …)

[Confess]--no snapping. (yes!) Look to each other to always keep together.

&!@$* what! They’re just Stopping!

not finishing notes!?!

FOR NO REASON!!!

ow my brain.

I was starting to get it, and now I don’t again.

Strangest Directors ever.


Some Notes on Death

~KNOW Death’s lines so you know when he’s done and can laugh at him.
Reactions look good.

Keep your eyes on Death (so he doesn’t chase you.)

“worldly goods also” \(\rightarrow\) run away!

Figure 8: An example of how I use images as language.

**RUN-THROUGH POST THOUGHTS**

That was dandy

except for the very end we were a little disconnected. Oh well.

Fellowship was Awesome!

BSD needs to tighten up and just be clearer.

I still hate the Kindred/Cousin scene.

I love Goods. When we do it, I hear this funny music in my head.

For a change … I am pleased!

**NOTES on RUN-THROUGH**

[General] good job! 😊

[Doctor]--start rhythm on ground, not vocally. (Cool) connect outward. Fire ... less walking, just burn. Feel free to take more time walking in and not so far into corner.

[Angel]--let the girls sing until my lines. Be more welcoming to heaven.

\(\rightarrow\) Don’t let physical images become liquefied. Keep using them and being them.
Self-Note: when I “speak Latin” I’m saying…New Christ Order, Dog Baby Christ, Inadequate World, and Kill the Dog …. Hey, it’s the only Latin I know.

[BSD]--Good. Now it can go faster.

FEBRUARY 22, 2005

Hunter Thompson is Deep Throat! And I am Lono. BOW Before Me!

Did good on lines last night.

By they way, watch out – it’s a full moon again!

My costume rocks. I want to keep it always. Makes me look HOT.

I am so very tired. So tired. But seriously, what have I to complain about. I could have had my house and family destroyed in a Tsunami.

So I really shouldn’t complain.

Ride the Snake.

Buy the ticket, take the ride.

Exhaustion tends to work in my favor, it leaves me vulnerable and drops creative and mental blocks. Hi Yai!

LAST NIGHTS NOTES (continued) (finally)

(am I putting too much opinion in here?)

(should I care?)

[Messenger]--connect with group. Slower hands on heart. Arrive in ending line quicker.

[God] --“suffered” through hands. And open that up more to be seen. Into Mansion Pose quicker, start on “charity” and face the corner.
[Death] --n/a

[Confession]--putting up the hoods, “Lo this is Confession”

[BSD]-- don’t actually touch Everyman when you take his faculties.

TUESDAY NIGHTS RUN THROUGH

This blew.

   No energy.

   Elena opening sighs in disappointment in the middle of scenes. And I can hear her whispering, “oh god no.” Maybe I’m just sensitive. The run still sucked.

TUESDAY NIGHT NOTES

higher energy. (duh)

stronger mocking, laughing in Death’s face. And head up when hiding from Death.

Self-Note: Kindred and Cousin is still positively the worst scene ever. Ever. Come on! It’s in a Southern accent. The only way it could be more stereotypical would be to have Terrence do everybody’s laundry (he’s Asian). It so ridiculous, detrimental to the piece as a whole, and near blasphemy of the theatre.

don’t get up so soon before Confession.

BSD  good pace, don’t lose clarity.

Beauty leaves, nice with not touching.

Angel – needs to make sense, even though intoning.

Listen to each other.

Chris wasn’t here. That made it hard for me because I respond well to his direction.

FEBRUARY 23, 2005 - Before Rehearsal
To Do:
1. update research journal
2. Draw Pictures
3. go to the doctor
4. sleep for God’s Sake!

There is good energy in the room tonight. And there is a nice floor, somewhat padded, certainly better than the hard wood.

**TONIGHT'S NOTES**

Self-Note: not terrible; low energy but technically solid.

stop acting (I was having the same thought)

Self-Note: now we have structure, specific moments. Now we must ATTACK it! OWN it!

warmer on entrance. 😊

eat this thing up! EAT IT! (yes!)

Kill Terrence, say line, then music.

**DON’T FORGET BOOK!**

Well, I thought it went well, but apparently we as a cast “fucking sucked,” Elena said. Those were her exact words. Words, which I believe were effective in communication her point of view, however detrimental to the cast’s development of trust in her as a director.

**FEBRUARY 24, 2005**

Didn’t do a damn thing on yesterday’s To Do List. (argh 😓)

But I got a new pen. How do you like it?

I keep wondering if my thought process is thesis-worthy. I am trying to be less random – at the same time I don’t want to make excuses for my process.
This is the way I work.

Remember Tonight:

Energy all around, but especially on the floor!

move Goods position

BOOK!

Timing, timing, timing

Louder Fire Noise!

Maybe if we do real good tonight, we will cancel tomorrow’s TBA rehearsal. It won’t happen, but hey, a boy can dream, can’t he?

can’t he?

can’t he?

damn.

Some Thoughts

Remember to just BE the characters. (goes back to “stop acting” note)

I have to believe I am

Beauty, Strength, Discretion,

or else they will never work. Sometimes it’s Blind Faith.

If B,S,D, were verbs:

flow = Beauty

push = Strength

lift = Discretion

THOUGHTS AFTER RUN:
that was awesome.

Only three line Notes (no repeats ☺)

BSD was stronger.

Energy was good. We had a really good warm up.

WE OPEN IN ONE WEEK! oh my.

FEBRUARY 25, 2005

I’m almost half way through this journal. That’s near fifty pages. Shucks. That really doesn’t
seem like a lot. I guess I sort of thought I’d have this think chock-full by opening night. Hmmm.
This is the most consistent journal I’ve kep in a long while, so there’s something. I still have the
entire month-long run to keep journaling. That will add some stuff. I don’t even know why I’m
worried about that, honestly.

Okay .. warm up and run time!

AFTER RUN

Feels great. Alan & Mitzi (Mad Cow owners) came. I don’t what they thought, and I’m a little
worried. The run was good, so in that I’m happy. I feel very confident about this show and I’m
starting to get real excited.

This show has a lot of abstract moments and concepts, and the audience will either get it or not,
no in between. If I simply commit 100% to what I need to get done, everything flows. Alan says,
“Find the breath. Enjoy the glory of the body, spirit, and glory of human community. Keep I
simple and allow your beauty and humanity to shine through.”

He’s awesome.

NO LINE NOTES TONIGHT! (Well, I had one, but it was because I got skipped.)

Christ says, “Show was technically perfect, but had no soul. We were competent, not masterful.”

We must become an organism.

Play. Breathe. Live. Be!

Elena leaves today. She won’t be back until after we open. This is a good thing.

Let the journey be honest. LIVE IT.

FEBRUARY 27, 2005 - Cue to Cue / Dress Tech

Rahr!

After Q 2 Q:

gonna run the show (twice?)

    sooooo hungry.

This show is going to rock. I had my doubt and frustrations, and now that things are actually
coming together; it feels much better.

RUN TIME!

My my. That fell apart!

    Oh well.

First time through with tech and costumes, so really … not bad. There were some major train
wrecks – with simple things where we already know better. Sometimes, that’s just the way it
goes. Better now, than opening night. In a way, it’s good to mess up on the little things to remind
us of how important they are, and how crucial is the need for FOCUS.

I am really starting to think that this ensemble is tight.
Ensemble is one of the hardest things to create; its main ingredient is time, next comes event.

We’ve now had good dose of both, and the non-verbal communication, the Group Mind has started to show itself.

We’re laughing a lot more.

We are enjoying each other’s company and presence. We care about each other, this past week it’s all grown a lot deeper, not just your basic “I’m in a show with you” kind of caring. We are gelling. And when we love each other, we love the show and then the show ROCKS!

And that’s the power of ensemble.

THOUGHTS ON SECOND RUN THROUGH WITH TECH

Very nice. Much … more connected.

Some thoughts: For the large amount of physical work that was done during rehearsal – it seems hardly any of that has made it to the final product. Seems like as waste. Only because, yes we as actors have all that behind us, under us, and inside us; I wonder if the audience will see it. And also, we did some crazy cool stuff in rehearsals, and it’s not in the show. It’s like this: several times in this journal, in conversations with friends, etc. … I have mentioned how physically taxing this show is, how tired I am – when they see the show will they say “Boy! Now I know why!” or “You call that physical!?”

You know what I mean?

no?

whatever.

Gotta Work On:

- Bring back a little more “gangsta” into Fellowship character.

- “Make no moan” gag. Connect with Terrence.
- Review lines.
- Spreading the snow.
- Remember to end lines UP and not falling or trailing off …
- Clear up the BSD voices … think about vocal energies, pitch, rhythm and characterization.

I Feel Very Strongly That:

1. I have the best sense and understanding of the language of anyone in the cast.
2. This show is going to be a success because Elena is gone and can’t interfere.
3. I have brought my own sense of play to rehearsal every night. I have given all of myself.

FEBRUARY 28, 2005 - After run

Hmmm. That was all technique.

No Soul. No Heart.

As Chris said, “It was a play of no consequence.”

Everything was there, except the Passion.

I still feel (especially since yesterday) that I truly own the language. The words are in my head and they are starting, just starting, to come out of my true self.

This needs to be jacked up! Energy!

SOME NOTES ON THE RUN

→Soul, passion, heart – TAKE OWNERSHIP of they PLAY. Transform the space, invest, take risks. “The show needs to be ALIVE,” says Chris.

→This play is a Ritual.

A Ritual of life.
Make it available.

“Sacrifice your life in this play,” says Chris.

Connect emotionally.

What is the Heart and Soul?

It’s the difference between

Acting the Prayer

and Actually Praying.

“A ritual brings about change”

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~breathe~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

simpler / ify

just need to bring Passion.

you know that. so do it.

MARCH 1, 2005

I’m sitting outside for a smoke before the run. It’s cold! Brrr.

I feel good. I feel very warmed up despite the temperature. This is the last dress. Tomorrow is preview. Then open. Then we Rock!

Days like these I love theatre. I live it. Absorb it and (hopefully) let it explode out of me.

BOOM!

Time to step up and show what I’ve got. Prove to myself what I’m made of. No more time to mess around.

Breathe. Release.
After Run

Well …. That had no heart either. What the hell is getting in my way?

Where is my block? Answer: Me.

That’s the only answer. I must get out of y way, and stop acting. Chris thinks it was better and says (and I agree) that we need an audience. Although there, in theory, should not be a difference between rehearsal and performance – they require the same amount of focus and living and truth … There is a difference. It’s the energy. The feeding of actor to audience. That’s the wave we need to start riding. Audience cannot make all the difference, it cannot substitute for focus – it will make a positive difference.

MARCH 2, 2005
Last Dress / Preview.

That was good.

I forgot to journal beforehand. Oh well.

I am exhausted. That’s how I know it was good. The audience helped (Except for the guy talking the whole time 😒)

mmmmm. great.

Now I just hope my theory is not true. The theory that the last dress needs to be a disaster for the show to be a success. But –this was, technically not the last dress – it was indeed a performance. So great.

NOTE: Slow down. Breathe. (release)

Flow. Energy. That’s what we had tonight. There was a WAVE and we rode it like we owned it.
We **did** own it.

Every night I watch David the Stage Manager sweep the snow and I feel so bad. I want to help him so he doesn’t have to do it alone. I know its his job, still, what a lousy job to do alone.

NOTE: Scourge claps – need to **POP!** “Your hands gotta hurt when it’s over, that’s **your** sacrifice,” says Chris.

NOTE: Don’t make Doctor scary! Be Happy! Like Messenger!

“We have a show.”

It’s nice to have a preview so you get that initial performance anxiety out, that super hyper energy that happens. Now tomorrow we can settle into the saddle and just

----------------------------------R I D E-----------------------------------------

---Production Journal---

MARCH 3, 2005

Here we are. Halfway through the notebook and it’s opening night. Maybe it’s good to think that perhaps the process is only half-over. There’s a lot of growing that can be done throughout the run.

What a process, huh? It’s hard to think of those early days back in the Don Asher cave. We’re on our own now, we own the show. We are responsible now. Our passion and soul is in the driver’s seat.

Tonight we cut the ribbon on this fabulous, simple and classic structure we’ve built. We open our hearts to be lauded and crushed. There are more ups and downs and screw ups and fake outs and breakthroughs yet to come. And that’s the true glory of the Theatre.
It’s **ALIVE**

I did a few drawings this afternoon. Of the six main characters I play. I did not include Messenger, Confession or Angel.

The drawings – though a bit more cartoonish than I had intended--are an accurate depiction of the primary images that I’m working with for each. The Thought Bubbles are the basic subtext – a mantra for each, if you will. The cursive writing is just other notes and things I’ve discovered that are worth mentioning. And I’ve noted where each character’s energy lives.

I drew them before I wrote this, because I wanted to start the drawings after the halfway mark of the notebook. They are in pencil, and I need to maybe trace them in ink so that they’ll show up when I go to photocopy this for my thesis.
Figure 9: Drawing of the Fellowship character.
Figure 10: Drawing of the Kindred/Cousin character.
Figure 11: A drawing of the Goods character.
Figure 12: A drawing of the Beauty character.
Figure 13: A drawing of the Strength character.
Figure 14: A drawing of the Discretion character.
OPENING NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

House is now open. Rain is pouring outside.

I’m discerningly not nervous.

My body is warmed up.

Last night I remember thinking how this was kind of like Godspell. That’s the sense of PLAY I want to bring.

Fifteen to places.

Time to focus.

Breathe.

Release.

Breathe.

Release.

MARCH 4, 2005 – Before show -

Last night’s run could not have been better. Everything felt great and right and it flowed.

It had energy.

This has come along way. I have come a long way – from absolutely hating this production to slowly and surely falling madly in love with it. I love this play.

And I suppose on many levels that is the biggest lesson I had to learn as an actor.

To Persevere.

And even though there are bad Times, you have to keep pushing. Nothing changed about my work – I stayed strong and stayed true to myself. What shifted was the energy. And the focus.
It all became clear and intense and, like a laser beam, focused in the right direction to provide the most efficient response. Okay, that was a terrible metaphor.

Point is: This show rocks hard. I am proud to be a part of it. It’s magical.

-Post Show-

Very nice. Odd energy, no fog, and in the end of God it started kicking and kept going. The Scourge was amazing tonight.

That’s all for now.

More to come.

MARCH 5, 2005  - Before show -

I feel strongly that last night’s performance was superior to any other in terms of ensemble. The beginning was low energy, and in response – instead of turning inward, we tuned in to each other – looked outward, reached out for support, and found it with each other.

That is important!

That is Ensemble!

Brooke, Kevin, Rachel, and Janet saw the show and over some beers had very good criticism and observations. I was thankful for their honesty.

Tonight will be our 3rd Performance

I’m in the dressing room and the mood is static. Yet it is also Kinetic. I hope we can find a way to ignite each other once again. We are a powder keg, let’s find the fire.

Julia will be here, so hope we can have a drink and talk when this is all said and done.

I’ve been reading Guru a book about my hero, Del Close. It has left me a little sad. In a good, humbling way.
-Post Show-

Didn’t ignite. No explosions.

dud.

ploomp. splooosh.

and now Chris is in the dressing room, almost scolding us. I don’t think this is fair. He needs to let us alone. We know that we didn’t connect, and we now how to fix it. His job as director is done. It’s not his show anymore. This is not fair for him to be down here like this. We fizzled, yes. We did. I don’t think that warrants a dressing room post, back-talk …. Not that Chris is wrong in what he is saying … I just think the whole thing is out of place.

There was a whole audience that did not get what just happened. I could hear Julia’s son talking the entire time. That embarrasses me. Granted, we as actors didn’t hold the audience, so what can I really say? bum.

shake it off. get a drink. sleep. and come back tomorrow.

MARCH 6, 2005 - Before Show -

It’s a gorgeous Sunday. I feel shitty about having to bring people indoors to see theatre when they could be outside on a day like today.

Ugh. I feel terrible for some reason. For now, I need to get warmed up, relaxed, and focused.

Sundays are hard, Matinees are difficult. It’s a different kind of audience and I question if they’re ready for this kind of show. I wonder what the reviews will be like.

MARCH 7, 2005

I thought yesterday’s show as terrible. Chris said it was our best one yet.
Go figure.
Something we did do quite well was take our time. And we quieted down. For some reason we still feel a need to project and be big – but in that tiny space there’s no need, and it is too often too big and too much in the audience’s face.
Our performance was subtle and simple and perhaps that’s why Chris felt it was successful.
Personally I felt disconnected and in my head the entire time – mostly because I was still carrying baggage from the previous night.
Let go and get over it. That’s hard for me and frustrating because it’s hard.
Thank god I’ve got some time off.

MARCH 10, 2005
Had a good and needed break. Ready to get back into this! Got good – honest – reviews.

-Post Show-
Okay, so that was about 80% … the audience was small. Our dressing room was over run with Arcadia cast members and the overwhelming marijuana stench of Nick Sprysenski
That’s no excuse for a bad show, and in reality the show wasn’t bad. As Chris said afterwards, “We just weren’t listening to each other.” Very true. IN ensemble, listening is everything. I am secretly enjoying the talk backs on Thursdays and Sundays. I should ask if I can record them.

MARCH 11, 2005
Pre Show- This dressing room is packed. But hell, that’s the way it’s going to be.
might as well get used to it. Get focused, and try to sneak a peak when hot Jamie goes to get dressed. just kidding. not really.
Post Show-

   Best show ever. Period.
   Can’t say anymore.
   That was awesome.

(and only 16 people in the house)

The BEST!

And it was five minutes longer than any other show we’ve done.

Okay, no more. Too many words will ruin the good vibe.

MARCH 12, 2005 - Before Show -

Can it really be seven performances? The cool thing is that I was making new discoveries left and right last night.

   Discovery 1 = Fellowship has a huge payoff when I give Everyman all the status in the beginning.
   Discovery 2 = Kin/Cousin guy sort of floats/flutters upwards when he nods his head in approval!
   Discovery 3 = BSD is so much better if I can both listen with Patience, while pushing and driving to the end. This allows the pace to differ in the overall act of the show and keeps the death scene from dragging.

I can’t remember the rest – maybe they’ll come back to me – I was way too in the moment to really recall much of the show.

   That is a good thing.

Now … ON with the show!
MARCH 13, 2005  -  Before Show -
I thought last night was interesting. It had energy and passion. We as an ensemble were really connected and listening. Yet the show was boring as all get out. I was bored. There seemed to be silence and holes big enough to drive semi-trucks through.

It was dragging.

Well, today is a new day and a new show. That’s the true magic of theatre; it’s ability to be alive and new everyday. Of course, if it can be alive, it can also, and at some point must, die.

-Post Show-
Not Terrible.

Actually same as last night, I felt. And talk back was quick with not much at all said by anyone. Elena was back today. It was cool to see her, though, during the show I felt her eyes giving me notes. Oh well. I have her a big hug because, shucks, I’ve really missed her.

MARCH 16, 2005  -  Before Show
I am tired. My life is completely upside down. But ..........

I still have to hunker down and get warmed and focused. I’m sure I’ll feel better once I get down to the theatre and just take some time to breathe, and of course … release!

- Post “Show” -

So … I’m an idiot. My mother and sister and Brooke and Alan and Niki came to see the show tonight and guess what?

The special Wednesday performance is next week.

I suck.
I suck. What an idiot!

       God this is funny.

MARCH 17, 2005  - Before Show

I fell … good. Focused and very vulnerable. That seems like a good thing. Still a bit embarrassed about last night. Oh well, it was funny.

No, tonight should be a good show, for real. Vulnerability and exhaustion can only work to my advantage. And that’s really all I have the mind to say right now.

- Post Show -

Another good show with a small crowd. Energy and focus were there, it still seems to drag – right around Good Deeds and on from there. I’m no sure – no, I know what it is. It’s milking. It’s playing an unearned pause, I’m guilty of it, though I’m very aware of when I do it so I try not to. But it’s total milking.

The talk back was weird. Some Existentialist guy went on for ten minutes about nothing.

My request to record the talkbacks for Thesis purposes was denied.

MARCH 18, 2005  - Before Show

Cast is just crazy tonight. Laughing and giggling and joking. I think this is great! Stage Manager David and Chris say it is not conducive to good Group Mind and I whole-heartedly disagree. Just talking and connecting and laughing is being in the moment with each other. It’s more intimate that a good round of Zip Zap Zop.

So, tonight, will be good. We’ll probably have no crowd again, but oh well, we’re getting very used to doing it just for us!
-Post Show-

Best show ever! Seriously, I think my theory was right. We just PLAYED! We had fun. I know that reads to the audience in a positive way. We enjoyed each other, enjoyed the show, and enjoyed being in the moment. That helps keep the focus, keeps us connected and it, most importantly, keeps the energy.

MARCH 19, 2005 - Before Show -

This is going to be another fun show. We, as a cast, love each other. I haven’t sensed it so strongly before, it’s true. I feel the love. We suddenly feel like a family. This show could go technically horribly, and we would be there to pick each other up and have fun and be a success.

This is going to be fun.

- Post Show -

Right again ol’ boy. You know what? Again, we just had fun.

I found a place to add a forward roll and it worked quite well. I was proud.

And we had our first SOLD OUT crowd. That was really awesome. And they were very much into the whole show.

Great Energy + Great Audience + Great Fun = Great Show.

I’m worn out!

MARCH 20, 2005 – Post Show -

Bleh.

I didn’t even write a pre-show journal.

Everybody is tired. We all slept in the dressing room before the show. The show went
surprisingly well beside all that. I really wish I’d been allowed to record the talk-backs, they are pretty interesting.

blech.

still tired.

and I have absolutely nothing to say. This has got to be the world’s most boring thesis in the world.

MARCH 23, 2005 – Before Show -

This is how I feel right now:

I’m in a strange Mood. I’ve had a rough day. But as my dad says, “Sometimes Life kicks you in the balls, so take it like a man.”

I will.

Alan, Brooke, and Niki are here tonight.

- Post Show -
Yay! That was a good one. And I got some nice feedback from Alan and Niki.

The show – was chock full of energy and I think that carried us when we were not listening. BSD was the absolute best it has ever been. I don’t know what I was doing – no! I do know, I was living in those images, very truthfully I might add.

At least … that’s how it felt.

MARCH 24, 2005 – Before Show -

My brother is here tonight. I really wonder what he’ll think of the show. I thin it’s cool that he came; he’s down in Florida to take his wife and kids to Disney. I told him not to come but he insisted. That’s really sweet.

I just feel very much on Auto Pilot, yet no in the sense that I’m going to phone it in.

    Let’s Roll.

    - Post Show -

Decent show. Quick. We cut about ten minutes – considering we’ve been adding time each night, the show is almost back down to its original 80 minutes. Kate and Tad were here; They were a big reason that the Talk Back tonight was a smash! I hurt my fingers tonight.

owie.

MARCH 25, 2005 – Before Show -

I’m in a weird humor. Melancholy. I’m depressed. I’ll kick out of it once I get into the show. I always do. It truly amazes me how well I’ve been able to focus. Once the show begins, I just click in. I’ve identified that as a problem of mine in the past. It leads to inconsistency in my
work. I don’t know what I do right but I do. It’s nice to forget about the world for an hour and half. I especially need it today.

-Post Show-

eh.

Some “Good” Friday.

No, the show was very good. Except when Terrence somehow lost me on the scourge, our claps were way off. Eh, Chris came to the show. So let’s go see what he thinks.

…

Okay then. He didn’t notice. He thought it was great. Works for me. I’m out.

MARCH 26, 2005 – Before Show -

I stayed up all night. At the beach, waiting for the sun to come up.

I needed that. The ocean.

I need more peace in my life right now.

- Post Show -

Phew. What a show. It felt, to me, very terrible. I was out of it. I checked completely out.

Talking afterwards the rest of the cast seemed to think it was one of my best performances. I was out of my head, I guess, sort of. My head was elsewhere, not in the show. Like, during the prayer, I am supposed to fall in a prostrate, praying position.

Yeah …

I forgot. And I didn’t even realize it until halfway through the monologue.

Yeah…

Not good.
Nobody seemed to notice, though. So there you have it.

MARCH 27, 2005 – Before Show -

Well this is it. Had a great brunch with cast and crew over at Kim’s place.

Good bonding. We’re all a bit sad. This has been a good experience.

Yes.

It’s not “over” for me, as I’ll still be working this thesis for another year.

and Chris said there IS a big possibility that we’ll tour this show next year at different Fringe Festivals and possibly Edinburgh. That’d be ice.

And we’re getting a DVD. Cool.

-Post Show-

Well. That’s it.

Great Show.

Probably one of our best. At least in the Top 3.

Christ and Elena had never seen the Kindred/Cousin forward roll.

* sigh *

I’m going to leave now. I hate closings, and I hate goodbyes …

This part is always the most difficult.

Farewell, Everyone.

JANUARY 18, 2006

The following entry does not appear in the original journal. It is an entry I had always intended
Everyman was a show that was conceptualized and produced with the idea of Ritual being its most important focus. During the course of rehearsals and particularly during the actual run of the show, I found myself falling into certain rituals that seemed to trigger my focus and relaxation and, I feel, assisted my performance. Even now, a year later, I can accurately recall my entire pre-show ritual, I assume this is because I was actively involved with this ritual for several weeks. Today, looking back, I am more aware of the strength I gave myself by having a ritual to follow. It was a means of focus and a psychological trigger for relaxation. Now, I will describe my daily ritual leading up to and through the performance.

**Two Hours To Places:** I leave my home on the UCF side of Orlando. I have my water bottle and a banana. I light a cigarette as I turn onto Discovery Drive which will lead me to the 408. On Thursdays and Fridays I listen to The Phillips Phile (a radio talk show). On Saturdays and Sundays I listen to NPR (usually A Prairie Home Companion). After the first cigarette I eat the banana. This was usually around the first toll. I continue on the 408 until the Rosalind exit, where I light another cigarette and begin to look for parking.

**Approximately One Hour and Forty Minutes to Places** After parking I stroll up the theatre and enter the main lobby doors. Mitzi Maxwell (Mad Cow’s General Manager) is usually at the Box Office desk and we chat, usually about the size of tonight’s house. She wishes me good luck and I enter Stage Right through the back-stage door.

**One Hour and Thirty Minutes to Places.** Stage manager David Ricklick arrives and we stand outside and smoke a cigarette together and have general small talk. On a typical night, we
see Damany arriving and let him in through the back door. After finishing our cigarettes, David leaves to do his pre-show duties and I head downstairs to the dressing room.

*One Hour and Fifteen Minutes to Places* I arrive in the dressing room, usually to find that Kim and Sarah are already there. I change my clothes and wear my costume pants and a t-shirt and head back upstairs to start warming up. Terrence, late as usual, is just arriving as I head up the stairs.

*One Hour to Places:* These first fifteen minutes are my personal warm-up time. While my routine sometimes changed to focus on parts of my body that carried more tension than others, the same basic routine was repeated every night.

- Floor work. Stretching the spine, back, hips and neck. Cracking the back. Rolling from side to side and humming and opening up the vocalization to loud moans and sighs.
- Breath work. Still on floor, breathing RDAG (Ribs, Diaphragm, Abdomen, Groin) and continuing sighs.
- Voice work. I go through Linklater Voice Pyramid twice while working myself to a standing position.
- Three Sun Salutations.
- Practice Acrobatics with Terrence.
- The group gets together and plays Zip Zap Zop and then we do the opening Messenger speech passing one word at a time. Then we play Kim’s Pillow game.
- That’s it. We head downstairs. I stay behind and sit in the Lotus position and take a few deep breaths and give honor to the space.
**Half Hour to Places – House Open:** We sit in the dressing room. Damany usually goes off to listen to music, Kim and Sarah finish hair and make-up. Terrence and I finish putting on costumes and Terrence plays the theme from Power Rangers.

**Ten Minutes to Places:** This is Hair Call for Terrence and me. We march down the hall to the Men’s Room and load up on hair gel and hair spray and spike our hair. I try to make mine look like Wolverine from X-Men. For some reason I think this is really cool.

**Five Minutes to Places:** Group gets together and holds hands in a circle. We talk openly about our worries for the night. We affirm each other that it will be a great show and take several deep breaths together.

**Places:** We stand backstage and listen to the curtain speech. I cringe every time Alan or Chris says “Turn off your cell phones or set them to Stun” … It’s the “Stun” part I just can’t stand. It’s such a lame joke. Every one laughs that I can’t handle it.

The cast stands in a circle holding hands with eyes closed and takes a few breaths. And then the show begins!
Note

http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=ritual
CONCLUSION

At the age of seventeen the theatre attracted me because the people associated with it seemed to have the same view of life as I did: as a journey to be confronted with bravery and reverence. Not coincidentally, this is the attitude with which I approached my work on *Everyman*. I was constantly in awe of the language and inspired by its beauty; and I bravely faced the challenges and pitfalls of producing a classic text for a contemporary audience. The journey, for me, became less about ‘finding every man’ in myself, and more about finding myself through every man, indeed through *Everyman*. It was about amalgamating all my knowledge on the techniques of acting, voice, and movement into a role that could demonstrate my understanding of these concepts. It was about deciding to take on a project simply for the satisfaction of doing something that I found personally challenging. Classical texts are usually outside my comfort zone. By taking on the challenges of *Everyman*, I was not only able to demonstrate my knowledge of techniques and the strength of my personal process, but also because of the challenges presented throughout the process, I was able to grow as an actor.

This thesis has taken a broad look into the history of Medieval theatre in order to gain perspective on its importance and on the culture in which it thrived. Theatre, as it was observed, was a product of the Church and used as a tool to promote social attitudes and beliefs that were considered proper at the time. Yet the theatre’s power to strike a human chord superseded the power to convert people’s belief systems. Indeed, several Medieval plays represent the common fears of human beings regardless of their place in history. *Everyman*, as a treatise on human dying, is such a play.

Producing *Everyman* in today’s society comes with several challenges. The language seems inaccessible to the modern ear. The didactic message of Catholic tradition has potential to
make audience members tune out. These issues can be addressed and overcome as long as the artist remembers to keep the message of the play in the forefront at all times. Using ritual, as Mad Cow’s production did, seems the most successful way of overcoming the challenges of Everyman. Rather than focusing on the play’s dogmatic points to illustrate religious differences, one should emphasize the power of ritual in creating the potential to illuminate the similarities between religions--indeed between all forms of communal human activity.

Using ritual throughout rehearsals and productions was extremely effective for the actors. We understood that group warm-ups were not just for readying the body or focusing the group; the ritual also served to sanctify the theatre space. The idea that all humans participate in rituals, whether aware of it or not, had the heaviest influence on all of the directing choices. Ideally, ritual would serve as a bridge connecting the audience to the heart of the play. Realistically, the bridge was out for most of the performances. The directors believed that the participation in the theatre experience would be ritualistic enough to connect the audience with the actors. While that might have been true for some audience members, more could have been done by the actors to reach out to the audience and invite them into the ritual. During the opening jam-session, a simple provocation of rhythmic clapping might have been enough to get the audience physically involved, and perhaps as a result, emotionally evolved as well. The distribution of small percussive instruments and the encouragement of the audience to ‘jam’ along could have provided an effective way to share the opening ritual amongst everyone in the theatre.

Several audiences needed no coaxing in order to become absolved within the ritual nature of the play. Many of these audiences were, however, arguably already predisposed to the Christian message of the play and therefore more willing to accept the play on the whole. One such audience, a local Baptist singles’ club, occupied over fifty-percent of the audience one
particular Saturday night. This audience did not need ritual as a bridge because there was no gap between them and the didactic message of *Everyman*. Ritual then, became a stylistic choice that served to enhance the play as it displayed their beliefs. At every mention of Jesus Christ, several audience members would shout “Amen!” and Everyman’s ascension into Heaven was met with a standing ovation celebrating one more soul claimed for God. In this case, the purpose of using ritual was defeated. Instead of having ritual illuminate the commonality of human beings over specific religious beliefs, the religious beliefs became the point of commonality. Though this is certainly not a terrible thing, the directors’ original intent was to break through religious boundaries and bring *Everyman* into a human light that did not rely on dogma to back its message. Ritual, as a concept to bridge the gap between the audience and the content of *Everyman*, was the right idea. However, considering that a majority of the audiences were relatively unresponsive to this ritual leads me to conclude that the execution of the concept was unsuccessful. At times, the message of *Everyman* was lost.

Perhaps, in regards to relating *Everyman* to contemporary audiences, understanding the brevity of the message is where most of the connections are missed. It is generally agreed that the main message of *Everyman* is that someday we must face death, and when that day comes the only things that matter will be the good deeds we committed while on earth. I believe a contemporary audience has no trouble understanding the first half of this meaning. Indeed, in a twenty-first century world we are aware of death every single day. Without being a complete hermit, it is impossible to shield oneself from the daily assault on our senses with images of death. Newspapers print page after page detailing the slow self-destruction of humanity. Televisions display wars, natural disasters, and other human tragedies in high-definition. Worse yet, these images (especially when regarding television) are dressed with fancy graphics,
suspenseful music, and the important words (“alert” “disaster” “warning” “death toll”) all appear in bold letters so that the masses will not mistake what they are watching for anything less than a crucial emergency. This obsession shows that contemporary society has not quite resolved the fear of death; the reactions and response to death have been shifted and in some cases, exhausted.

If our indulgent media has not awakened our deep-seeded human fear of death, then certainly our first personal experience of death will finish the job. At some point, usually through the loss of a loved one, (a grandparent or a pet goldfish) our fear will come to the forefront of our conscious mind and we must confront the notion of our mortality. The point that I am trying to make here is that nobody needs *Everyman* to tell a contemporary society that it must die. We have that part figured out quite well. What is important then is how contemporary audiences understand the second half of *Everyman*’s meaning. The only thing that survives us to the grave is our good deeds. This is the troubling message for most audiences. What is a good deed? *Everyman* only addresses the title character’s good deeds once, in less than three lines, when Everyman gives his worldly possessions to the poor. Cultural relativism, political correctness, and the endless preaching of tolerance have blurred the line between good and evil for a contemporary society. Indeed, the definition of “good” changes with each generation in every culture. The Medieval societies relied on the Church’s authority to instruct them on what could be considered a good deed and what could not. Everything was black and white, a deed was either good in the eyes of the Church, or it was not. *Everyman* presents the idea of a good deed in a strictly Christian context. Today the world is not as simple. Of all the universality *Everyman* uncovers, it fails to find a universal good deed. Contemporary audiences do not need to be reminded once more of death, but they could benefit from a more human understanding of
what makes a deed good in a world where the definition of such morality is increasingly subjective.

In conclusion, as an actor I feel comfortable positing that the Mad Cow Theatre production of *Everyman* was a successful attempt to present Medieval theatre to a contemporary audience. I put this forth being fully aware that, because of my personal involvement, my opinion is biased. The production was successful … for the actors and directors. Those involved in the creative process of *Everyman* found ways to grow through the language and stylized movement of the play. Simply being able to understand and then convey the language of *Everyman* qualified success in our minds. Being able to use the moving body and the human voice to create numerous allegorical characters that were abstract, yet full of depth, also provided the actors with a sense of accomplishment. Unfortunately, that is about as far as it went. That is to say, if I were merely an audience member, and had no previous ties to *Everyman* or the Mad Cow production, I do not believe I would have viewed the play as ‘successful.’ Instead, I imagine I would have noted the clever stylization and the colorful costumes. The use of movement and acrobatics would have nostalgically turned my head and I would have most certainly given due applause to smart directing and thoughtful acting. However, I anticipate my overall reaction would have been a slightly patronizing ‘well, wasn’t that nice?’ with a lot of questions regarding why *Everyman* was chosen in the first place.

I guess when thinking critically, I do not see a reason to cut out or even try to overshadow the Christian message of *Everyman*. When performing a Greek comedy or tragedy, directors do not cut the use of or references to Greek deities. They are essential to the story, just as the holy Christian trinity is essential to *Everyman*. The concept should be embraced, not deflected. In this manner, I think Rudall’s University of Chicago production is perhaps one of
the best modern presentations of *Everyman*. Placing the production in a cathedral was essential to embracing the Christian message. Combined with Rudall’s use of ritual, the Chicago production revealed *Everyman*’s human quality by going through the Christian dogma, not by steering around it. It seems as if the Mad Cow Theatre production was paved with good intentions, but failed to successfully utilize ritual as a bridge for the audience. I am not trying to prescribe here that *Everyman* should only be performed by Christians for Christians; I am attempting to point out that the universal message of *Everyman* is presented in relation to a specific faith and the ignorance of which can ultimately lead to the convolution of the lesson of human dying and the fear of death.

If indeed the secret of drama is to find every man in ourselves, our quest as actors (and audience) is not to change the presentation of the message to fit our contemporary beliefs, but instead to discover how our contemporary beliefs are exactly like those of the Medieval culture. The essential ingredient here comes from understanding the beliefs, embracing their beauty, and then finding a clever way to present them. It seems that when producing *Everyman*, professional companies concern themselves more with the stylization and staging and concepts and how they will produce the classic text and less with what the play will mean to believers of all different faiths. I suggest that creative staging (as seen in the Mad Cow and RSC productions) not be used at all, but instead, present an honest, accurate, and reverent portrayal of *Everyman* and let the power of its language and its message speak for itself.

On a final and more personal note, I have mixed feelings when I look back one year ago. As an actor I had a chance to grow and a chance to show off how much I had learned. I met new and wonderful friends and networked with other local actors and directors. My role in *Everyman* led directly to my internship with Mad Cow Theatre. Yet, those are self-serving reasons why I
enjoy my involvement in the theatre. Somewhere in the heart rests my altruistic and idealistic spirit, and both hope that somebody somewhere was positively affected by what they saw in our production of *Everyman* and were inspired to improve the quality of their life. I will never know for sure. Instead, I must rest on the idea that by being a part of this experience the quality of my own life was improved. In the end, when this thesis is long forgotten and my bones have been burned to ash, my lasting hope is that I will have done my best to bring light into this world for the short time I was around.
APPENDIX A: DIRECTOR INTERVIEWS
KNOELL: What challenges (if any) did you face in understanding the language of the play and how did you overcome them?

GIBSON: At first read, the text of *Everyman* does seem daunting. The main challenge in understanding the text lies in deciphering the altered sentence structure used to support the rhyme scheme. Once this has been done, the meaning becomes quite clear, and the beauty of the poetic structure is evident. The ultimate challenge, of course, is in communicating meaning through this structure to an audience who does not have the benefit of analyzing the text. We overcame this obstacle by having the actors formulate the text into their own words during rehearsal, so that the underlying meaning of the written words became absolutely clear to those who would ultimately speak and respond to them. Finally, the actors would use the written words, infused with the understanding of their own substituted text.

KNOELL: What challenges (if any) did you face concerning the structure and staging of the play and how were these dealt with?

GIBSON: The structure of *Everyman* is actually quite simple and efficient. There are no subplots or deviations from the journey of the main character (with one minor exception, which I will address shortly), so the structure supports moving the play to its resolution. The real challenge is in staging, as there are absolutely no givens in the text in regards to where or when the play takes place. Being a morality play which, in its original form, was most likely read
rather than staged, the author makes no attempt to guide the director in how the piece should be seen. This can be a gift for a director with a clear vision or viewpoint, but our piece was a co-direction. We had two directors with clear visions that often went in opposite directions. We resolved this by allowing the structure of the play to inform our staging decisions. We would look at our often differing visions scene by scene, and begin a process of elimination based on what most supported the structure of the play itself. Following the lead of the text, we opted most often for simplicity, universality, and efficiency. The end product was minimalist, but infused with the universal nature of the play itself.

The minor exception noted earlier was a passage following Everyman’s scourge in which he is instructed to receive his extreme unction. It is the only scene in the play, after he enters, that Everyman is not the central focus – in fact, the text notes that Everyman exits the stage. While Everyman is being anointed, a very odd dialogue occurs between Knowledge and Five–wits, as to the merits of priesthood. We felt this exchange was heavily dogmatic, and it seemed to be an unnecessary break in a very solid rhythm created by the rest of the play’s structure. We wrestled with the idea of cutting the exchange, but ultimately decided to retain it in honor of a text we had thus far presented unedited. In retrospect both directors would have made the cut to honor the rhythm of the piece over what was probably a politically motivated amendment to a very universal text.

KNOELL: What is a potential disadvantage to offering this play for a modern audience?

GIBSON: The main fear of offering this piece to a modern audience is that it will not be attended based on people’s preconceived ideas of the piece. Since the study of Everyman is practically ubiquitous in Humanities classes, many people have had a very poor first impression
of the piece. As mentioned earlier, the first read of *Everyman* is not usually a pleasant one. The text is dense, and the idea of reading a “morality play” is probably repugnant to the majority of modern students, as they have formulated their own morality and do not appreciate being preached at. Yet, for those who are willing to go beyond their first impressions, seeing *Everyman* performed can be a wonderfully transformative experience. It is, after all, not “just a morality play”, it is *the* morality play. It is perhaps *the most universal story ever written*, and as such, its truths and challenges are startlingly relevant to any audience, modern or otherwise.

KNOELL: Discuss Ritual, and why it was a major part of the concept for this production.

GIBSON: In attempting to narrow down our options of how to stage this production, the idea of Ritual kept coming back to us. The actions that Knowledge has Everyman perform for his penance are clearly ritualistic in nature, and soon we began to see the structure of the script itself as ritualistic. Ritual is a part of all of our lives, regardless to the extent that we are aware of it, so we decided to utilize Ritual as not only the guiding force in staging the show, but also as our main tool for exploration in rehearsal as well.

KNOELL: What did you hope an audience would take away from this production?

GIBSON: The goal in presenting a morality play is to offer audiences a way of dealing with life’s challenges. The challenges Everyman faces are the same challenges that every person throughout history has had to face. We wanted our audience to find not only a map to overcoming these challenges, but also to recognize the challenges’ universality – and in doing so to recognize the sense of community that we share as human beings. Finally, we wanted to offer our audience what Everyman receives as a result of his penance – a sense of hope in overcoming one’s misdirected energies, and a sense of oneness with the divine.

The following questionnaire was conducted through electronic mail between February 28 and March 3, 2006. It has been organized for clarity and edited for spelling.

KNOELL: What challenges (if any) did you face in understanding the language of the play and how did you overcome them?

DAY: I had a very challenging time with the language, and relied heavily on Chris's expertise in verse for clarification.

KNOELL: What challenges (if any) did you face concerning the structure and staging of the play and how were these dealt with?

DAY: Really the only challenge (aside from just coming up with images for each trial Everyman underwent), was the scene where Knowledge and Five Wits debated about priests. It was the only section we felt was out of place in the show and more didactic than theatrical. So we dealt with it by loading the action. Normally, Everyman should have been offstage for the function. We kept it onstage, added song/vocalization as part of it. We also gave Knowledge and Five Wits the action of creating what was to become Everyman's grave.

KNOELL: What is a potential disadvantage to offering this play for a modern audience?

DAY: That people will be thrown by the religious overtone and they will put up defenses against the overall message of the play: it is only our good deeds that we take with us when we die.

KNOELL: Discuss Ritual, and why it was a major part of the concept for this production.
DAY: The text itself holds within it many rituals - the cleansing and atoning that
Everyman undergoes are ritualized. But we also thought about the ritual of theater in a larger
context...the bringing together of people for this shared experience (thus the choice to stage the
show in the round). We made a conscious choice to focus on the nightly ritual that the actors
underwent of resurrecting the production - of bringing it to life - and of letting it die at the end.

KNOELL: What did you hope an audience would take away from this production?

DAY: I hoped they would take away the moral of the play...that the only thing we take
with us when we die are our good deeds. I also hoped they would be entertained by and visually
excited by the style of the production.

KNOELL: You studied with Lecoq. What exercises were particularly helpful during the
process and what ideas were implemented?

DAY: Basically, I was interested in making the text come to life, not only verbally, but
physically...to create physical metaphors for each scene. For example, for Goods we
physicalized inanimate objects like old, broken TVs, parts of cars, all the things we accumulate
that eventually wind up in a junk yard. We worked on balancing the stage as a group and being
perceptive to other's placement in space. The idea of the music/sound effects being created by an
artist onstage came from a structure used in Lecoq's teaching of Melodrama. Giving characters
such as Five Wits and Beauty/Strength/Discretion, physical refrains (specific, repetitive, non-
quotidian movements that identified the character) harkened back to mask work.

Yes, I used the word non-quotidian.
APPENDIX B: EVERYMAN SCRIPT
I present here a scanned copy of the actual script used during this process. It was photocopied from the *Stages of Drama* anthology. The translation is by Kate Franks.
DEATH: Almighty God, I am here at your will,
Your commandment to fulfill.

DEATH: Lord, in the world go run over all
And cruelly search out both great and small.
Every man will he set at the div'ly
And great pain it shall cause him to endure.
Before the Lord, Heaven's King.

Everyman, stand still! Whither art thou going?
Thou guilty! Hast thou thy Maker forgot?

EVE: Wouldst thou know?
DEATH: Yea, sir, I will show:
In great haste I am sent to thee.
From God out of his majesty.

EVE: What, sent to me?
DEATH: Yea, certainly.

Though thou hast forgot him here,
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere,
As, ere we depart, thou shalt know.

EVE: What dealeth God of me?

DEATH: That I shall show to thee:
A reckoning he will needs have
Without any longer respite.

EVE: To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave.

DEATH: This blind matter troubled my wit.

EVE: Then thy book of account with thee thou bring.

DEATH: For turn again thou cannot, by no way.

EVE: Turn again thou cannot.

DEATH: For turn again thou cannot, by no way.

And look thou be sure of thy reckoning.

And for God thou shalt answer and show
Thy many bad deeds, and good but a few.

How thou hast spent thy life, and in what wise,
Before the Child, Lord of Paradise.

Have ado that thou are in that way.

For know thou well, thou shalt make no attorney.

DEATH: Full unready I am, such reckoning to give.
I know thee not. What messenger art thou?

DEATH: I am Death that no man dares death,
For every man I rest and no man spared;
For it is God's commandment
That all to me should be obedient.

EVE: O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind!
In thy power it lieth me to save;
Yet of my goods will I give thee, if thou wilt be kind—
Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have—
And defer this matter till another day.

EVE: Everyman, it may not be, by no way.
I set not by gold, silver, nor riches,
Nor by pope, emperor, king, duke, nor prince;
For, if I would receive gifts great,
All the world I might get;
But my custom is clean contrary:
I give thee no respite. Come hence, and not tarry!

EVE: Alas, shall I have no longer respite?
I may say Death giveth no warning!
To think on thee, it maketh my heart sick,
For all endureth is my book of reckoning.

But twelve years if I might have abiding,
My accounting book I would make so clear
That my reckoning I should not need to fear.
Wherefore, Death, I pray thee, for God's mercy,
Spare me till I be provided of remedy.

DEATH: Thine availeth not to cry, weep and pray;
But haste thee lightly! that thou were that journey.
And prove thy friends if thou can.

For know thou well the tide abideth no man,
And in the world each living creature
For Adam's sin must die of nature.

EVE: Death, if I should this pilgrimage take
And my reckoning surely make,
Show me, for sainted charity,
Should I not come again shortly?

DEATH: No, Everyman. If thou be once there
Thou mayst never more come here,
Trust me verily.

EVE: O gracious God in the high seat celestial,
Have mercy on me in this most need!
Shall I have no company from this vale terrestrial
Of mine acquaintance, that way me to lead?

DEATH: Yes, if any be so hardy
That would go with thee and bear thee company.
Hie thee that thou were gone to God's
Magnificence.

Thy reckoning to give before his presence.
What, thinkest thou thy life is given thee.

no man dares death, who fears no man. lightly, quickly.
And thy worldly goods also?
EVERYMAN: I had thought so, verily.
DEATH: Nay, nay, it was but lest thee;
For as soon as thou art gone,
Another a while shall have it and then go therefrom,
Even as thou hast done.
EVERYMAN: O wretched falsehood, whither shall I flee,
That I might escape this endless sorrow?
Now, gentle Death, spare me till tomorrow,
That I may amend me
With good advice.
DEATH: Nay, thereof I will not consent,
Nor no man will I reprieve;
But to the heart suddenly I shall smite
Without any advice.
And now out of thy sight I will me hie.
See thou make thee ready shortly;
For thou mayst say this is the day
That no man living may escape away.
(Exit DEATH.)
EVERYMAN: Alas, I may well weep with sighs deep!
Now have I no manner of company
To help me in my journey and me to keep;
And also my writing is full unready.
How shall I do now for to excuse me?
I would to God I had never been begot!
To my soul a full great profit it had been;
For now I fear pain worse and great.
The time passeth. Lord, help, that all be wroght!
For though I mourn it availed naught.
The day passeth and is almost age;
I know not well what for to do.
To whom were I best my complaint to make?
What if I to Fellowship thereof spake
And showed him of this sudden chance?
For in him is all mine affiance,*
We have in the world so many a day
Been good friends in sport and play.
(Enter FELLOWSHIP.)
I see him yonder, certainly.
I trust that he will bear me company;
Therefore to him will I speak to ease my sorrow.
Well met, good Fellowship, and good morrow!
FELLOWSHIP: Everyman, good morrow, by this day
Sir, why lookest thou so piteously?
If anything be amiss, I pray thee me say,
That I may help to remedy.
EVERYMAN: Yea, good Fellowship, yea,
I am in great jeopardy.

*affiance, faith or trust.

FELLOWSHIP: My true friend, show me thy mind.
I will not forsake thee to my life's end
In the way of good company.
EVERYMAN: That was well spoken and lovingly;
FELLOWSHIP: Sir, I must needs know thy heaviness;
I have pity to see thee in any distress.
If any have you wronged, ye shall be avenged be,
Thou on the ground be slain for thee,
Though that I know before that I should die.
EVERYMAN: Verily, Fellowship, glanding.
FELLOWSHIP: Tush! By thy thanks I set not a straw.
Show me your grief, and say no more.
EVERYMAN: If my heart should to you break,
And then you to turn your mind from me
And would not me comfort when ye hear me speak,
Then should I ten times carrier be.
FELLOWSHIP: Sir, I say as I wilt do in deed.
I have found you true heretofore.
FELLOWSHIP: And so ye shall evermore;
For, in faith, if thou go to hell,
I will not forsake thee by the way.
EVERYMAN: Ye speak like a good friend; I believe you well.
I shall deserve it, if I may.
FELLOWSHIP: I speak of no deserving, by this day!
For he that will say and nothing do
Is not worthy with good company to go;
Therefore show me the grief of your mind,
As to your friend most loving and kind.
EVERYMAN: I shall show you how it is:
Commanded I am to go a journey,
A long way hard and dangerous,
And give a straight account without delay
Before the high judge, Adonai.*
Wherefore I pray you, bear me company,
As ye have promised, in this journey.
FELLOWSHIP: That is matter indeed! Promise is duty.
Nor if I should take such a voyage on me,
I know it well, it should be to my pain;
Also it maketh me afraid, certain,
But let us take counsel here as well as we can.
For your words would fear a strong man.
EVERYMAN: Why, ye said if I had need
Ye would me never forsake, quick nor dead.
Though it were to hell, truly.
FELLOWSHIP: So I said, certainly,
But such pleasures be set aside, the 100th to say.
And also, if we took such a journey
When should we again come?
EVERYMAN: Nay, never again all the day of doom.
FELLOWSHIP: In faith, then will I come there!
Who hath you these tidings brought?
EVERYMAN: Indeed, Death was with me here.

*Adonai, Hebrew name for God.
FELLOWSHIP: Now, by God that all hath bought, 
If death were the messenger, 
For no man that is living today 
I will not go that loath journey— 
Not for the father that begat me! 
EVERYMAN: Ye promised otherwise, parde. 
FELLOWSHIP: I knew well I said so truly, 
And yet, if thou wilt eat and drink and make good cheer, 
Or haunt to women the busy company 
I would not forsake you while the day is clear, 
Trust me verily. 
EVERYMAN: Yes, thero by ye would be ready! 
To go to mirth, solace and play. 
Your mind will sooner apply 
Than to bear me company in my long journey. 
FELLOWSHIP: Now, in good faith, I will not that way; 
But if thou will murter or any man kill, 
In that I will help thee with a good will. 
EVERYMAN: O, that is a simple advice indeed. 
Gentle fellow, help me in my necessity! 
We have loved long, and now I need; 
And now, gentle Fellowship, remember me. 
FELLOWSHIP: Which ye have loved me or no, 
By Saint John, I will not with thee go. 
EVERYMAN: Yet, I pray thee, take the labor and do so much for me. 
To bring me forward, for sainted charity, 
And comfort me till I come within the town. 
FELLOWSHIP: Nay, if thou wouldst give me a new gown, 
I will not a foot with thee go. 
But if thou hast carried, I would not have left thee so. 
And as now, God speed thee in thy journey, 
For from thee I will depart as fast as I may. 
EVERYMAN: Wither away, Fellowship! Will thou forsake me? 
FELLOWSHIP: Yes, by my faith! To God I betake thee. 
EVERYMAN: Farewell, good Fellowship! For thee my heart is sore. 
Adieu forever! I shall see thee no more. 
FELLOWSHIP: In faith, Everyman, farewell now at the ending!

(Exit FELLOWSHIP.)

EVERYMAN: Ah, shall we thus depart indeed— 
Ab, Lady, help—without any more comfort? 
Lo, Fellowship forsaketh me in my most need. 
For help in this world whither shall I resort? Fellowship herebefore with me would mercy make, 
And now little show for me doth he take. 
It is said, "In prosperity men friends may find, 
Which in adversity be full unkind."
I will give her leave to help you in that journey,
If that you and she may agree.

**EVERYMAN:** Now show me the very effect of your mind.
Will you go with me, or abide behind?

**KINDRED:** Abide behind? Yea, that will I, if I may!
Therefore farewell till another day.

(Exit KINDRED)

**EVERYMAN:** How should I be merry or glad?
For fair promises men to me make,
But when I have most need they me forsake.
I am deceived; that maketh me sad.

**COUNSEL**

**EVERYMAN:** cousin Everyman, farewell now,
For verily I will not go with you.
Also of mine own an unready reckoning
I have to account; therefore I make tarrying.
Now God keep thee, for now I go.

(Exit COUNSEL)

**EVERYMAN:** Ah, Jesus, is all come hither?
Lo, fair words maketh fools fasten;
They promise and nothing will do, certain.
My kinmen promised me faithfully
For to abide with me steadfastly,
And now fast away do they flee,
Even so Fellowship promised me.
What friend were best me of to provide?
I lose my time here longer to abide.
Yet in my mind a thing there is:
All my life I have loved riches;
If that my goods now help me might,
He would make my heart full light.
I will speak to him in this distress.
Where art thou, my Goods and riches?

(Revealed a Corner)

**GOODS:** Who calleth me Everyman? What, hast thou hate?

**EVERYMAN:** If be here in corners grasse and piled so high,
And where I am locked so fast.
Also sacked in bags, Thou mayst see with thine eye
I cannot a[ll] be packed this I say.
What would ye have, sayth I say.

**EVERYMAN:** Come hither, Goods, in all the haste thou may.
For of counsel I must desire thee.

**GOODS:** Sir, if ye in the world have sorrow or adversity,
That can I help you to remedy shortly.

**EVERYMAN:** It is another disease that grieveth me;
In this world it is not, I tell thee so.
I am sent for, another way to go,
To give a strict account general
Before the highest Jupiter of all;
And all my life I have had joy and pleasure in thee.
Therefore, I pray thee, go with me.

For, peradventure, thou mayst before God
Shew what thou hast aught of,
My reckoning help to clean and purify;
For it is said ever among
That "money maketh all right that is wrong."

**GOODS:** Nay, Everyman, I sing another song.

I follow no man in such voyages;
For if I went with thee,
Thou shouldest fare much the worse for me.
For because on one thou didst set thy mind,
Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,
That thine account thou canst not make truly—
And that hast thou for the love of me!

**EVERYMAN:** That would grieve me full sore,
When I should come to that fearful answer.
Up, let us go tither together.

**GOODS:** Nay, not so! I am too brittle, I may not endure.
I will follow no man one foot, be ye sure.

**EVERYMAN:** Alas, I have thee loved, and had great pleasure
All my life-days in goods and treasure.

**GOODS:** That is to thy damnaion, without lying,
For my love is contrary to the love everlasting.
But if thou hadst loved me moderately,
As to the poor given part of me,
Then shouldst thou not in this dolor be,
Nor in this great sorrow and care.

**EVERYMAN:** Lo, now was I deceived one I was aware,
And all I may lay to my spending of time.

**GOODS:** What, thinkest thou that I am thine?

**EVERYMAN:** Nay, Everyman, I say no.
As for a while I was lent thee;
A season thou hast had me in prosperity.

**GOODS:** Nay, from this world not, verily.

**EVERYMAN:** I had thought otherwise.

**GOODS:** Therefore to thy soul Goods is a thief;
For when thou art dead, this is my guise—
Another to deceive in this same wise
As I have done thee, and all to his soul's reprieve.

**EVERYMAN:** O false Goods, cursed thou be,
Thou traitor to God, that hast deceived me
And caught me in thy snare!

**GOODS:** Marry, thou broughtest thyself in care,
Wherefore I am glad,
I must needs laugh, I cannot be sad.

**EVERYMAN:** Ah, Goods, thou hast had long my hearty love;
I gave thee that which should be the Lord's above.
But wilt thou not go with me indeed?

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**GOODS:** No.

**EVERYMAN:** Therefore

(Exit GOD)

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**EVERYMAN:** For to get First Fall
His word
But after
Then spake
And also
They said
But all is
Then were
In hope
For my C
That he
Then of
And so I
Thus may
Of whom I think it
Till that I
But, alas,
That she
Yet will I
My Good

(Exit ED)

**GOODS**

**EVERYMAN:** Thy sins
That I can
**EVERYMAN:** I must yo
For help
**GOODS**

That ye be
**EVERYMAN:** Before M
If you do
**EVERYMAN:** I pray you
**GOODS**

verily.

**EVERYMAN:** Good deed.
If ye had
Your book
Look, the
As how th\n
to your s
**EVERYMAN:** For one le
THE SEER OF THE SOWER

I pray thee truth to say,

Good: No, so God me speed!

Therefore farewell and have good day.

EVE: O, to whom shall I make my bow?

First Fellowship: And with me go;

His words were very pleasant and gay,

But afterward he left me alone.

Then spake I to my kinsmen, all in despair,

And also they gave me words fair;

They lacked no fair speaking,

But all forsook me in the ending.

Then went I to my Goods that I loved best,

In hope to have comfort, but there had I least.

For my Goods sharply did me tell

That he bringeth many into Hell.

Then of myself I was ashamed,

And as I am worthy to be blamed;

Thus may I well myself hate.

Of whom shall I now counsel take?

I think that I shall never speed

Till that I go to my Good Deeds.

But, alas, she is too weak

That she can neither go nor speak;

Yet will I venture on her now.

My Good Deeds, where be you?

(Deeds revealed on the ground.)

Good Deeds: Here lies, cold in the ground.

They smite me so sorely bound

That I cannot stir.

EVE: O Good Deeds, I stand in fear!

I must you pray of counsel,

For help now should come right well.

Good Deeds: Everyman, I have understanding

That ye be named account to make

Before Messiah, of Jerusalem King.

If you do by me, that journey with you I will take.

EVE: Therefore I come to you my goods to make.

I pray you that ye will go with me.

Good Deeds: I would full fain, but I cannot stand.

EVE: Why, is there anything on you fallen?

Good Deeds: Yes, sir, I may thank you of all.

If ye had perfectly cheered me,

Your book of account full ready would be.

Look, the books of your works and deeds else,

As they lie under the feet

To your soul's heaping.

EVE: Our Lord Jesu help me!

For one letter here I cannot see.

Oh, also.
Help my Good Deeds for my piteous exclamation. C: I know your sorrow, well, Everyman. — Because with Knowledge ye come to me, I will comfort as I can. A: A precious jewel I will give thee, Called penance, valiant of adversity; Therewith shall thy body chastised be, With abstinence and perseverance in God's service. Here shall you receive that scourge of me Which is penance strong that ye must endure, To remember thy Saviour was scourged for thee With sharp scourges and suffered it patiently; So must thou, ere thou escape that painful pilgrimage. (Confession gives scourge to Knowledge.) Knowledge, keep him in this voyage, And by that time Good Deeds will be with thee. But in any wise be sure of mercy, For your time draweth fast; if ye will saved be, Ask God mercy, and he will grant truly. When with the scourge of penance must doth him kind, The act of forgiveness then shall be found. G: Everyman and Knowledge close. Confession.)

Everyman: Thanked be God for his gracious work! For now I will my penance begin. This hath rejoiced and lighted my heart, Though the knots be painful and hard within. Knowledge: Everyman, look upon your penance that ye fulfill. What pain that ever is to you be; And Knowledge shall give you counsel at will. How your account ye shall make clearly. Everyman: O eternal God, O heavenly figure, O way of righteousness, O goodly vision, Which descended down in a virgin pure Because he would every man redeem Which Adam forsook by his disobedience; O blessed Godhead, elect and high divine, Forgive me my grievous offence! Here I cry thee mercy in this presence. O ghostly treasure, O ransomer and redeemer, Of all the world hope and conductor, Mirror of joy, foundation of mercy, Which illumineth Heavens and earth thereby, Hear my damorous complaint though it late be: Receive my prayers unworthy in this heavy life! Though I be a sinner most abominable, Yet let my name be written in Moses' table. O Mary, pray to the Maker of all things, Me for to help at my ending. And save me from the power of my enemy, For Death assaileth me strongly. And, Earl, that I may by means of thy prayer Of thy Son's glory to be partner, By the means of his passion, it I crave I beseech you, help my soul to save. Knowledge, give me the scourge of penance; My flesh therewith shall give acquaintance. I will now begin if God give me grace. (Knowledge gives scourge to Everyman.) Knowledge: Everyman, God give you time and space! Thou I bequeath you in the hands of our Saviour Now may you make your reckoning sure. Everyman: In the name of the Holy Trinity, My body sore punish'd shall be: Take this, body, for the sins of the flesh! Also thou delighted to go gay and fresh, And in the way of damnation thou didst me bring; Therefore suffer now strokes of punishing. Now of penance I will waste the water clear To save me from Purgatory, that sharp fire. Good Deeds: (Good Deeds rise from the ground.) Good Deeds: I thank God, now I can walk and go And am delivered of my sickness and woe. Therefore with Everyman I will go and not spare. His good works I will help him to declare. Knowledge: Now, Everyman, be merry and glad! Your Good Deeds cometh near; ye may not be sad Now is your Good Deeds whole and sound. Going upright upon the ground. Everyman: My heart is light and shall be evermore. Now will I smile faster than I did before. Good Deeds: Everyman, pilgrim, my special friend, Blessed be thou without end! For thee is prepared the eternal glory. Ye have me made whole and sound, Therefore I will hide thee in every sound. Everyman: Welcome, my Good Deeds! Now I hear thy voice I weep for very sweeteness of love. Knowledge: Be no more sad, but ever rejoice; God seeth thy living in his throne above. (Knowledge gives Everyman the garment of comfort.) Put on this garment to thy behoove. Which is wet with your tears, Or else before God you may it miss When you to your journey's end come shall. Everyman: Gentle knowledge, what do ye it call? Knowledge: It is the garment of sorrow, staid, instant, occasion, behoove, benefit. From pain: Consolation That geteth it pleaseth Good Deeds: heal.° (Everyman)


Beauty: Here What would Good Deeds: I And help thy advise you, a Strength: We To his help discretion: S Everyman: Ah I give thee is Strength, Daunt and my God All be in con I desire m Strength: And distress, Thou dost write: And found, We will not d.
From pain it will you borrow.
Contrition it is
That geteth forgiveness;
It pleaseth God passing well.
Good Deeds. Everyman, will you wear it for yourNeal?

(Everyman puts on the garment of contrition.)

Everyman: Now blessed be Jesus, Mary's Son,
For now have I on true contrition;
And let us go now without tarrying.
Good Deeds, have we here our reckoning?
Good Deeds. Yes, indeed, I have it here.
Everyman: Then I trust we need not fear.
Now, friends, let us not part in twain.
Knowledge: Nay, Everyman, that will we not,
certain.
Good Deeds: Yet must thou lead with thee
Three persons of great might.
Everyman: Who should they be?
Good Deeds. Discretion and Strength they height;
And thy Beauty may not abide behind.
Knowledge: Also ye must call to mind
Your Five Wits as for your counsellors.
Good Deeds: You must have them ready at all hours.
Everyman: How shall I get them hither?
Knowledge: You must call them all together,
And they will bear you incontinence.

Everyman: My friends, come hither and be present:
Discretion, Strength, my Five Wits, and Beauty.

(Everyman, Discretion, Strength, Five Wits, and Beauty)

Beauty: Here at your will be we all ready.
What would ye that we should do?
Good Deeds: That ye should with Everyman go
And help him in his pilgrimage.
Advise you, will ye with him or not in that voyage?
Strength: We will bring him all the better.
To his help and comfort, ye may believe me.
Discretion: So will we go with him all together.

Everyman: Almighty God, loved may thou be,
I give thee laud that I have hither brought
Strength, Discretion, Beauty and Five Wits. Lack I no thought;
And my Good Deeds, with Knowledge clear,
All be in company at my will here.
I desire no more to my business.
Strength: And I, Strength, will by you stand in
distress,
Though thou wouldest in battle fight on the ground.

Five Wits: And though it were through the world round,
We will not depart for sweet nor sour.

Beauty: No more will I unto death's hour,
Whatsoever thereof befall.
Discretion: Everyman, advise you first of all:
Go with a good advisement and deliberation.
We all give you virtuous motion
That all shall be well.
Everyman: My friends, hearken what I will tell:
I pray God reward you in his heavenly sphere.
Now hearken, all that be here,
For I will make my testament
Here before you all present:
In arms, half of my goods I will give with my hands
twain
In the way of charity with good intent,
And the other half still shall remain
In queth, to be returned where it ought to be.
This I do in despite of the fiend of hell,
To go quite out of his peril
Ever after and this day.

Knowledge: Everyman, hearken what I say:
Go to Priesthood, I you advise,
And receive of him in any wise
The holy sacrament and ointment together;
Then shortly see ye turn again hither.
We will all abide you here.

Five Wits: Yes, Everyman, he ye that ye ready were.
There is no emperor, king, duke, nor baron
That of God hath commission
As hath the least priest in the world being:
For of the blessed sacraments pure and benign,
He beareth the keys, and thereof hath the care
For man's redemption—it is ever sure—
Which God for our soul's medicine
Gave us out of his heart with great pine.
Here in this transitory life, for thee and me,
The blessed sacraments seven there be:
Baptism, confirmation with priesthood good,
And the sacrament of God's precious flesh and blood,
Marriage, the holy extreme unction, and penance.
These seven be good to have in remembrance,
Gracious sacraments of high divinity.

Everyman: Fain would I receive that holy body,
And meetly to my ghostly father I will go.

Five Wits: Everyman, that is the best that ye can do.
God will you to salvation bring.
For priesthood exceedeth all other things:
To us holy scripture they do teach
And converted man from sin, Heaven to reach;
God hath to them more power given

In queth, as a request; though the remainder of the line indicates that it is actually a restitution of illegally acquired property. pine, anguish, torment. ghostly, spiritual.
THOU art the true, thus breast, hast in thee. But I, as ever I did by Judas Maccabaeus.  

(They arrive at the grave.)

EVENMAM: Aha, I am so faire I may not stand;  
My limbs under me do fail.  
Friends, let us not turn again to this land,  
Not for all the world's gold;  
For into this cave must I creep  
And turn to earth, and thereto sleep.  
BEAUTY: What, and this grave? Alas!  
EVENMAM: This, there shall ye consume, more and more.  
BEAUTY: And what, should I stand here?  
EVENMAM: Yes, by my faith, and never more appear.  
In this world live no more we shall,  
But in Heaven before the highest Lord of all.  
BEAUTY: I wish I had all this. Add an, by Saint John!  
I take my hat in my hand and am gone.  
EVENMAM: What, Beauty, wilt thou, will ye?  
BEAUTY: Peace! I am dead. I look loft behind me,  
Not if thou wouldest give me all the gold in thy chest.  
(End discourse)

EVENMAM: Aha, wherefore may I live?  
Beauty goeth fast away from me.  
She promised with me to live and die.  
STRENGTH: Evenman, I will thee also forsake and deny:  
Thy name lieth not at all.  
EVENMAM: Why, then, ye will forsake me all?  
Sweet Strength, tarry a little space.  
STRENGTH: No, sir, by the good of grace!  
I will thee die from thee fast,  
Though thou wert all thy heart to-blast.  
EVENMAM: Ye would ever hide by me, ye said.  
STRENGTH: Yes, I have you far enough conveyed.  
Ye be old enough, I understand,  
Your pilgrimage to take in hand.  
I repent me that I hither came.  
EVENMAM: Strength, you to displease I am to blame;  
Yet promise is debt, this ye well wot.  

Maccabaeus, A. Jewish leader of the second century b.c. known for his courage (1 Macc. 3). Shall ye consume, The grave devours all, both the great and the small, top, on an unadorned tuft of wood or flax. Hence, like a peasant housewife. Beauty is saying, I'm pocketing my spinning materials and am off. In-brest, buried in two. Not, know.
EVERYMAN / 161

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Except my Good Deeds that bideth truly,

GOOD DEEDS: All earthly things is but vanity:

Beauty, Strength and Discretion do man forsake,

Foolish friends and kinmen that fair spake—

All flee save Good Deeds, and that is I.

GOOD DEEDS: Fear not, I will speak for thee.

EVERYMAN: Here I cry God mercy,

GOOD DEEDS: Shorten our end, and diminish our pain:

Let us go and never come again.

(GOOD DEEDS leads EVERYMAN into grave.)

EVERYMAN: Into thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend;

Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost,

As thou me boughtest, so me defend

And save me from the fiend's bost.

That I may appear with that blessed host

That shall be saved at the day of doom.

In manus tuas, of mights most

Forever, commendo spiritum meum."  

(Enter EVERYMAN and GOOD DEEDS)

KNOWLEDGE: Now hath he suffered that we all shall endure;

The Good Deeds shall make all sure.

Now hath he made ending;

Medhinks that I hear angels sing

And make great joy and melody

Where Everyman's soul and received shall be.

(Enter ANGEL.)

THE ANGEL: Come, excellent elect spouse, to Jesus! Here above thou shalt go.

Because of thy singular virtue.

Now thy soul is taken thine body from,

Thy reckoning is crystal clear.

Now shalt thou into the heavenly sphere,

Unto the whilch all ye shall come

That liveth well before the day of doom.

(Enter ANGEL and KNOWLEDGE.)

DOCTOR: This mortal man may have in mind.

Ye hearers, take it of worth, old and young.

And forsake Frile, for he deceiveth you in the end—

And remember Beauty, Five Wits, Strength, and Discretion.

They all at the last do Everyman forsake,

Save his Good Deeds there dde thou take.

In manus tuas .... commendo spiritum meum, into thy hands I commend my spirit.
But beware, for if they be small,
Before God he hath no help at all.
No excuse may be there for Everyman.
Aye, how shall he do then?
For after death amend may no man make,
For them mercy and pity doth him forsake.
If his reckoning be not clear when he doth come,
God will say, 'He, madman, in ipsum eternum.'

*Be . . . eternum, Go, sinners, into eternal fire.*

And he that hath his account whole and sound,
High in Heaven he shall be crowned;
Unto which place God bring us all thither,
That we may live body and soul together.
Therefore help the Trinity.
Amen, say ye, for saint charity.

(Exit Doctor)

(Thus endeth this moral play of Everyman.)
LIST OF REFERENCES


