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CREATING LIVING CHARACTERS THROUGH STANISLAVSKI'S SYSTEM AND
MICHAEL CHEKHOV'S PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE

by

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B.A. College of William and Mary, 2002

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

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2023

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the application of psychophysical techniques of Konstantin Stanislavski's System, coupled with use of Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture, to prepare for multiple roles of intersectional characters in the production of Paula Vogel's *Indecent*, directed by Dr. Julia Listengarten at the University of Central Florida, January 25th through February 7th, 2022. Vogel's *Indecent* revisits the events surrounding the production of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance* on Broadway in 1923, which featured a lesbian relationship. The show's cast and producers were arrested for depicting scenes of obscenity, which reflected the intolerance of immigrant, Jewish, and queer communities in the 1920s and exemplified the pervasive political censorship on the American stage. The complexity of *Indecent* provides a rich case study with which to explore the multi-faceted dimensions of fully and authentically representing marginalized characters on stage. Using both Stanislavski's System and techniques from M. Chekhov's Psychological Gesture provided a framework for effectively representing these characters as well as navigating Vogel's complex dramatic structure, its non-linear narrative that disrupts a consecutive arc of character development, and its metatheatrical nature as a play about a play.

Dedication
for my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Vivian Majkowski and my amazing committee, David Reed and Michael Wainstein, who have helped to guide me along this journey.

Special thanks to Dr. Julia Listengarten and Sage Tokach for inspiring me to think deeper and do better.

And to my sisters, Eugenia and Caroline.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF ACRONYMS (or) ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Plot Synopsis.....	3
Complexities of Vogel’s Dramatic Structure.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY	16
Psychophysical Techniques	16
Stanislavski System	16
Michael Chekhov’s Psychological Gesture (PG)	21
Text work	27
Image Structuring.....	28
Punctuation	29
Accent Work	30
Oral Posture	31
Ginny Kopf’s Accent Roadmap.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: REHEARSAL.....	35
Rehearsal Structure	35
Cultural Inclusion.....	36
Dramaturgy	44
Jewish Representation.....	47
Character work.....	49
Yekel.....	51
Peretz.....	63
Schildkraut	69
CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE	74
Daily Practice.....	75
Wedges.....	76

Discoveries.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	79
GLOSSARY	81
APPENDIX A: DREW STARK RESUME.....	87
APPENDIX B: CHARACTER BREAKDOWN.....	89
APPENDIX C: UCF SCENIC BREAKDOWN.....	92
APPENDIX D: CHEKHOV MOVEMENT EXERCISES: OPEN/CLOSE, RADIATING FROM CENTER.....	96
APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF VOCAL WARM-UP EXERCISE WORKSHEET	99
APPENDIX F: PRIMARY SOURCES FOR ORAL HISTORIES AND ORAL POSTURES..	109
APPENDIX G: YIDDISH DIALECT NOTES	111
APPENDIX H: PHOTO AUTHORIZATIONS	115
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	117

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Letters from Poland, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. *Pictured:* Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo..... 3

Figure 2: The Dead Troupe, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. *Pictured:* Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 6

Figure 3: Scenic Design, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Scenic and Lighting Design by Bert Scott and Vandy Wood. Projection Design by Tim Brown. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo..... 7

Figure 4: 1950s on Broadway, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto), Ensemble: Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 8

Figure 5: “The troupe can smell the grass in the meadow,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo..... 10

Figure 6: Lemml Introduces the Troupe, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo..... 12

Figure 7: Introduction of the Elders *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo..... 13

Figure 8: Otto’s Kiss in the Berlin Cabaret, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. ... 14

Figure 9: Vowel sounds and oral posture with corresponding IPA symbols..... 31

Figure 10: *Indecent* rehearsal with Dr. Listengarten. Pictured are Dr. Listengarten, Blake Parker, Drew Stark, Giuseppe Pipicella, Forrest Stringfellow, Paul Pelletier, Jr., Kimber King, and

Andre Braza. Photo by Maddie Lane, courtesy of Orlando Sentinel. 30 November 2021. Digital Photo (Lane).....	37
Figure 11: Opening Gestural Movements, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured: Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	39
Figure 12: Otto rejoicing in “Ale Brider,” <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss) and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	40
Figure 13: Opening Title: “from ashes they rise,” <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured: Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	41
Figure 14: Movement rehearsal photo, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King, Rosalind Krabill, Prof. Christopher Neiss, Kate Milazzo. Photo by Maddie Lane, courtesy of Orlando Sentinel. 30 November 2021. Digital Photo. (Lane)	42
Figure 15: An example of ‘altitudes’ and the cast creating performance sculptures, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured: Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera) and Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Mendel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	43
Figure 16: An Impossibly Long Line, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Hasidic Immigrant). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.	50
Figure 17: Yekel confronts Rifkele, example of Yekel’s PG, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.	51
Figure 18: Peretz reading the <i>God of Vengeance</i> , <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Paul Pelletier Jr. as Ensemble, Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), and Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	53
Figure 19: Rifkele confronts Yekel on Broadway, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	55
Figure 20: The Progression through Europe, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	57

Figure 21: Yekel asks Rifkele how much a Torah costs, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 58

Figure 22: Yekel makes his decision, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 59

Figure 23: Yekel’s rage against his wife and daughter, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel) and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 61

Figure 24: Yekel grabs the Torah, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 62

Figure 25: An example of Yekel’s physical dominance over his wife Sarah, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel), and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 63

Figure 26: Peretz’s physical manifestation of illness and frustration, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza as Ensemble, Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz) and Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Nakhmen). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 64

Figure 27: Peretz argues with Asch, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Nakhmen), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram) and Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 65

Figure 28: Peretz urges Asch to burn his play, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Nakhmen), Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), and Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 68

Figure 29: Schildkraut’s PG “Lecken the crème,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Virginia), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Dorothee), Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 69

Figure 30: Rudolph Schildkraut Makes an Entrance, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut), Kimber King as The Elder (Esther), Andre Braza and Paul Pelletier Jr. as Ensemble, and Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Ensemble). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo. 70

Figure 31: Dorothee confronts Schildkraut, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Harry Weinberger), Kimber King as The Elder (Esther), Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Virginia), Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Morris Carnovsky), and Paul Pelletier Jr. and

Andre Braza as Ensemble. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.	71
Figure 32: Schildkraut explains how audiences want an American daughter, <i>Indecent</i> , TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.....	73
Figure 33: <i>Indecent</i> Cast Photo Backstage. Pictured Band member Heather Langs (Clarinet), Forrest Stringfellow, Drew Stark, Emmitt Williams, Kate Milazzo, Paul Pelletier Jr., Giuseppe Pipicella, Kimber King, Andre Braza, and Mia Woods. Photo by Hannah Schorr. 6 February 2022.....	74
Figure 34: Drew Stark Resume.....	88
Figure 35: The Characters of the Dead Troupe pg. 1	90
Figure 36: The Characters of the Dead Troupe pg. 2	91
Figure 37: <i>Indecent</i> Running Order pg. 1	93
Figure 38: <i>Indecent</i> Running Order pg. 2	94
Figure 39: <i>Indecent</i> Running Order pg. 3	95
Figure 40: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 1	112
Figure 41: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 2	113
Figure 42: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 3	114
Figure 43: Photo authorization for Maddie Lane.....	116
Figure 44: Photo authorization for Tony Firriolo’s photos of <i>Indecent</i>	116
Figure 45: Photo authorization for Hannah Schorr.....	116

LIST OF ACRONYMS (or) ABBREVIATIONS

IATT Institute for Advanced Theater Training

MAT Moscow Art Theater

PG Psychological Gesture

UCF University of Central Florida

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The focus of my thesis project as practice-as-research is the three-month rehearsal process and eight public performances of Paula Vogel's *Indecent* at TheatreUCF, in the role of Otto/Elder, directed by Dr. Julia Listengarten, at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Through this research, I examined the actor's process of developing multiple characters using Stanislavski's psychophysical methods and pairing an [oral posture](#) (See Glossary for definitions of bolded words) for dialect work with Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture (PG). I used these methodologies to transition consciously between accents and character shifts in performance. Supported by UCF's educational environment and Dr. Listengarten's collaborative rehearsal process, this production of *Indecent* informed my approach to portraying marginalized characters authentically and effectively on stage.

As I performed this role during the second year of my MFA program, I could apply some of the acting techniques introduced through my graduate coursework at UCF, specifically through the coursework and mentorship of my voice and speech professor, Vivian Majkowski, who also served as Dialect Coach for *Indecent*. To begin this process, I applied extensive [dramaturgy](#) to understand the historical framework of the show and formulated a textual analysis of each character. Continuing this exploration through the rehearsal process, I applied vocal intonations and breath with punctuation, communicating clear and connected images within the text to my scene partners.

Throughout my professional career, especially as a musical theatre performer (Appendix A), I have been cast in multiple roles within a show, but none required the shifting between characters in front of an audience. My initial approach to this show using a basic knowledge of Stanislavski's System, garnered in my undergraduate work at The College of William and Mary,

appeared insufficient to navigate the show's complexity and manage the acting challenges of portraying nine characters in *Indecent*. As Otto, the Elder, I played the following roles: Yekel, the brothel owner in *God of Vengeance*; Peretz, Asch's mentor and Jewish scholar; Schildkraut, the famous actor and director; older Asch; Judge McIntyre; and other ensemble roles, such as a Hasidic immigrant and the bartender (Appendix B). This thesis will provide case studies for three characters: Yekel, Peretz, and Schildkraut. *Indecent* challenges the acting members of the ensemble troupe to embody various characters within the Yiddish theatrical convention and orally differentiate the characters through accent and language. The audience witnesses these transformations on stage, establishing the [metatheatrical](#) convention of this play within a play.

Although my theoretical approach to acting is based on Stanislavski's System, I believed that to meet the challenges of the script's complexity, I would need to find additional methodologies to transition between characters easily and effectively. By applying the psychophysical acting methodologies of Stanislavski's System and M. Chekhov's Psychological Gesture (PG), my goal was to create dynamic and living characters supported through textual analysis and accent work. My textual analysis was informed by applying David Hammond's image structuring tools and Prof. Majkowski's punctuation technique to score and embody the text. The accent work I conducted for *Indecent* was supported by Knight-Thompson Voicework© and the dialect acquisition resources from Ginny Kopf and Nancy Houfek to develop [kinesthetic](#) awareness of the oral tract and create an oral posture specific for each character. Combining the gestural vocabulary of the PG with an oral posture specific to each character created a [kinesthetic trigger](#) to support dialect changes and psychophysical shifts between characters in the Elder archetype.

Plot Synopsis



Figure 1: Letters from Poland, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. *Pictured:* Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Indecent chronicles critical moments in Polish/Jewish playwright Sholem Asch's life between 1906 and 1952 around the journey of his play *Got fun Nekome* (translated: *God of Vengeance*) from the stages of Europe to the American theatre. *God of Vengeance*, or the play within the play, portrays Yekel, a brothel owner, who purchases a Torah scroll for his daughter Rifkele's bedroom to ensure her purity so that she can marry a wealthy Rabbi's son. After realizing his daughter has fallen in love with one of the prostitutes within his brothel, Yekel expels his wife and daughter down to the brothel and abandons his faith by desecrating the

Torah. Vogel's play *Indecent* dramatizes Asch's experience as a young playwright and the consequences of writing *God of Vengeance*, a play considered controversial for representing Jewish life through its flawed protagonist and humanizing a romantic relationship between two women. Despite the show's popularity throughout Europe and amongst the Yiddish audiences of the Bowery Theatre, the rise of intolerance in America and the interference of Broadway producers led to script changes that sanitized the 1923 Broadway production. These changes perverted this relationship, omitting crucial elements of the sapphic love story. Unable to defend the integrity of the Broadway production due to language barriers, Asch lost artistic control of his play which resulted in the arrest of the cast and producers for indecency. Many cast members returned to Europe to ultimately die in the Holocaust. Towards the end of his life, Asch grew cynical about the future and the politics of American theatre and claimed that his controversial play would not be produced again in his lifetime.

Complexities of Vogel's Dramatic Structure

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Paula Vogel dramatizes the life of Sholem Asch and the journey of his play in a metatheatrical exploration of a playwright's artistic creation from the page to the stage. In a classroom lecture on dramatic structure in Contemporary Theatre Practice, Listengarten described how [Freytag's Pyramid](#) illustrates the conventional narrative structure: the play's action rises and builds toward a climax and later resolves. In contrast, she used Paula Vogel's *Indecent*, as an example of a disruption of this patriarchal narrative, described as a collage structure that consists of smaller rising and falling actions throughout the show (Listengarten, "Avant-Garde Trends in Contemporary American Playwriting"). This distinction is relevant in reflecting on the complexity of Vogel's dramatic structure and how the ensemble plays multiple characters, particularly those shared between two ensemble members.

(The character of Sholem Asch is played by two different members of the ensemble, The Ingenue (Asch) and The Elder (Older Asch)).

Vogel creates a world that is both real and surreal, where Lemml, the stage manager, and the members of ‘the Dead Troupe’ inhabit a liminal space that blurs the boundaries of imagination and reality. The play begins with a procession of ‘the Dead Troupe’ and, after sitting in a row of chairs on stage, “from ashes they rise” (Vogel 9). The character of Lemml establishes the theatrical convention of a play within a play by engaging directly with the audience. Before Lemml introduces himself as the Stage Manager, he describes his fellow troupe members as actors “who play many, many roles.” He introduces them by naming the conventional archetypes that Vogel uses to represent over forty different characters along Asch’s journey throughout Europe and America (Vogel 9). The members of the Dead Troupe are categorized as the Elder, the Middle, and the Ingenue (See Appendix B). Lemml characterizes these archetypes in the following ways:

(The Elder are) the founding members of our troupe...They play all of the fathers, all the mothers, the sagest of our characters, or the ones who remain fools at any age. (The Middle are) our members of the troupe who are in their prime! They play all of the vamps and all of the vice, the scarred, and the schemers... (The Ingenues play) all the brides, the grooms, the writers, the socialists. So ardent in their beliefs, so passionate in their lovemaking. (Vogel 9)



Figure 2: The Dead Troupe, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured: Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

To span almost five decades of Sholem Asch's life from 1906 to 1952, Vogel applies a non-linear episodic structure, relying on the [mise en scene](#), or the arrangement of visual objects on stage, as well as other scenic elements to delineate time and place. Vogel divides her play by title markers instead of scenes and these titles are projected throughout the show (See Figure 2). For UCF's production, titles were grouped into larger scenes for rehearsals (See Appendix C for UCF's scenic breakdown). Transitions between scenes were nicknamed 'altitudes' by our movement coordinator Prof. Christopher Niess. These transitions utilized music, dance, and the arrangement of performance objects to establish visual landscapes or locations on a unit set.

Scenic designers, Bert Scott and Vandy Wood, designed a large, open playing space, with a large ramp ascending toward the center of the stage. (See Figure 3)



Figure 3: Scenic Design, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Scenic and Lighting Design by Bert Scott and Vandy Wood. Projection Design by Tim Brown. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

The dramatic composition of the play feels cinematic and relies on visual projections of these scenic “titles” to support the narrative and provide context for the audience. Vogel includes pivotal scenes from Asch’s *God of Vengeance* into the narrative of *Indecent*, beginning at the play’s initial reception at the writing salon of Y. L. Peretz, a leading figure in the Jewish community in Warsaw, Poland in 1906. Vogel weaves fragments of rehearsals and staged performances on the European and American stages, including the ill-fated 1923 Broadway production and ultimately to the troupe’s final performance within the Jewish ghetto of Lodz,

Poland in 1943. In addition to dates and locations, these projections provide important thematic information, such as the listing of Broadway titles in the 1920s and the 1950s, that juxtapose the stage action with relevant historical information (See Figure 4). Vogel employs various theatrical conventions that dismantle verisimilitude through episodic structure and by integrating “blink(s) in time” within scenes which allow time to pass quickly and propel the narrative forward (Vogel 14).

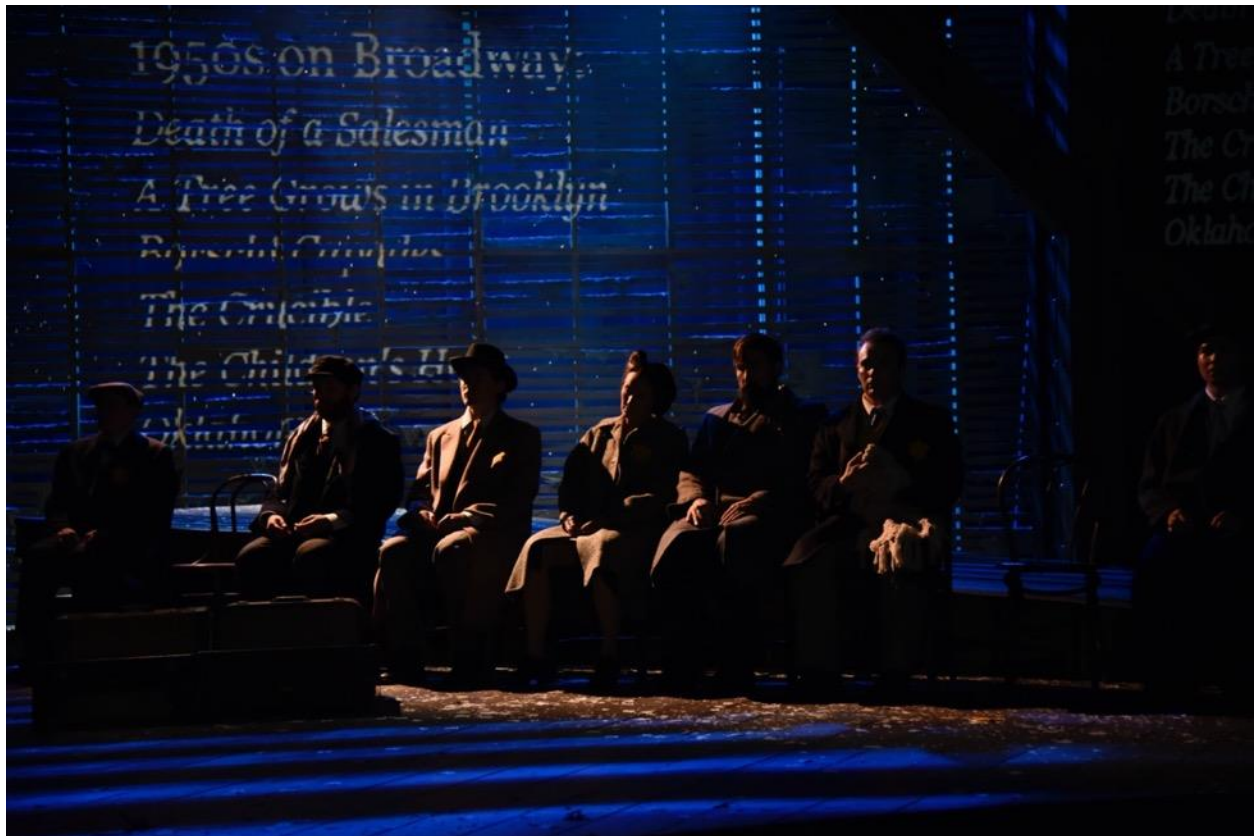


Figure 4: 1950s on Broadway, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto), Ensemble: Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Stage projections are an essential theatrical device within *Indecent* to delineate time and place, but they also indicate language shifts between characters and translations for the audience.

Vogel uses language as an important thematic element by reflecting on the challenges of [code-switching](#) for immigrants and how language reflects cultural identity. Multiple languages are used throughout the script, and many of its songs are sung in German and Yiddish. The music of *Indecent*, originally composed and arranged by Lisa Gutkin and Aaron Halva for the 2017 Broadway production, reflects the musical influences of Yiddish culture, including traditional klezmer instrumentation, such as the violin, clarinet, and accordion. *Indecent*'s vibrant musical score contains simple melodies indicative of the musical traditions of the Ashkenazi Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. Much of the score infuses the cultural significance of Jewish folk music, but also reflects upon their Jewish identity, either as a community of “brothers” in “Ale Brider” or the threat and pressures of assimilation in “Vat Ken You Makh.” In Vogel’s notes about the show, she states:

(The music) is not just a score. It’s an exquisite heartbeat of the show, so transportive, so much a spirit that it is indeed a member of the cast. I cannot imagine the play without this music that has haunted me from the start... It grows, it changes, as all great scene partners do, according to the ensemble, the audience, the company...The music allows (us) to dance, to celebrate, and to yearn. I am grateful. (Vogel 68)

As a theatrical convention, the music establishes a mood that contrasts with the dramatic action or increases its poignancy. For example, after the emotionally charged Provincetown rehearsal, the ensemble breaks the dramatic tension indicated in Vogel’s stage directions: “Beat. Another time, another light” (Vogel 36). The music interrupts with the lively 1923 song “Ain’t We Got Fun.” The haunting lullaby, “Weigela,” written by Ilse Weber, accompanies the ensemble as they are led away to their deaths. In her stage directions, Vogel calls this section of the play “the Kaddish,” or a part of Jewish liturgy recited to mourn the dead, as projections

narrate the fate of the Dead Troupe returning to ash and dust. She also includes Weber's significance as a victim of the Holocaust, who is said to have sung this in line to the gas chambers of Auschwitz (Vogel 59).



Figure 5: “The troupe can smell the grass in the meadow,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Indecent not only reminds us of the tragic circumstances of the Holocaust in Europe but also how relevant the production's themes of intolerance and artistic censorship persist in contemporary American culture. Vogel dramatizes the many challenges Jewish immigrants faced during the interwar period: specifically, the language barriers, the pressures of assimilation, and the marginalization of their Jewish identities on Yiddish and American stages.

The intersectionality of *Indecent* grapples with the show's reception among Jewish audiences in Europe and America and Asch's portrayal of Jewish characters as a "reflection on the Jewish race" and being "harmful to the Jew" (Asch). In "An Open Letter from Sholem Asch," Asch remarks that when he wrote *God of Vengeance* in his youth he wasn't concerned with the perception of the play as being considered immoral or moral but how this play exemplifies his fundamental desire to write "an artistic play and a true one" (Asch). The perception that his work exacerbated the rise of intolerance in Europe against the Jews is merely circumstantial and denigrates his progressive and artistic views on the universality of love. The more insidious threat, censorship, contributed more to the stigmatization of Jews and the "other-ing" of marginalized communities which precipitated the spread of ignorance and intolerance, leading to the rise of Nazism and the sequestering of Jews into the European ghettos, and ultimately to the tragic events of the Holocaust.

Within the play, Vogel criticizes American ambivalence to the ongoing atrocities in Europe before the United States' involvement in World War II in 1941. Asch recognized the rising instability of Europe and volunteered to serve as a witness to the Jewish persecution in Europe. Consequently, he suffered the "disintegration of the Jewish psyche" due to religious persecution and the guilt of a surviving artist (Vogel 38). In the play, after Asch is summoned by the House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1952, he becomes disillusioned with American theatre and prohibits the production of *God of Vengeance* during his lifetime, despite the persistence of an intrepid young theatre director (Rosen). At the end of the play, Asch is confronted by the ghost of Lemml, who died in the Holocaust, so he can remember the beauty of his infamous 'rain scene.'



Figure 6: Lemml Introduces the Troupe, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Through Lemml's eyes, the audience witnesses the hardships of the Jewish ghetto and the fate of the entire acting troupe in the Holocaust. By removing the fourth wall (between the audience and ensemble), Vogel breaks down the theatrical separation between the audience and the ensemble, actively incorporating the audience into the dramatic action of the play. Instead of merely portraying historical events on stage, the ensemble troupe can engage reciprocally with the audience to elicit a more personal attachment to the characters at the end of the play. These characters serve as an allegory for the millions of lives lost in the Holocaust. In his opening monologue, Lemml states that every night he and the troupe tell this story. "We have a story we want to tell you... About a play. A play that changed my life" (Vogel 10). The characters of Lemml and Asch reflect a completed emotional arc from the naïve optimism of impetuous youth

to the hardened, embittered, and cynical view after experiencing hardships in America. Rediscovering the love shared between Asch's characters Manke and Rifkele liberates them both. Vogel alludes to the power and legacy of an artist's creation and how the journey of that piece of themselves continues beyond the artist's life. Lemml argues that "(a) play belongs to the people who labor in it and the audience who put aside the time to be there in person" (Vogel 50). *Indecent* is a testament to Asch's legacy and the power of theatrical art to change hearts and minds.



Figure 7: Introduction of the Elders *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Vogel believes her purpose as a playwright and for theatre artists is to facilitate what Theodore Lidz calls [negative empathy](#). Vogel claims "The purpose of drama is to make us project ourselves into everything we fear, and everything we resist, and everything we are

revolted by” (Comparative Drama Conference 0:42-0:56). By recognizing the [hamartia](#) in the protagonist, the audience can achieve [catharsis](#) and create [empathy](#), deepening our perception of others in society. Vogel believes that commercialized theatre has institutionalized positive empathy to entertain audiences, and by censoring provocative material, society misses out on advancing culturally by challenging antiquated social constructs. “I think the power of art is a way for us to change our world view. I think art is our spiritual bread that we break together” (Weiner).



Figure 8: Otto’s Kiss in the Berlin Cabaret, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

In an interview about *Indecent*, Vogel says about her legacy, “I feel this production is a valentine and a love letter to the theatre” (BUILD Series 8:11-8:17). “Art is dangerous because it makes us feel. Individual plays can unite us as a community and as an audience. We come in

as very separate people, but we go out into the lobby as a community. We belong to each other at the end of the play” (Guthrie Theater 0:30-0:51). Vogel hopes this play can build a more inclusive community and provide visibility for all forms of love. “I want to see love stories of the entire spectrum. If we approach each other’s love with that respect and that embrace that Sholem Asch(‘s play) gave me, it’s an extraordinary gift” (Guthrie Theater 2:13-2:29).

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Psychophysical Techniques

The theoretical approach I use in my research employs the psychophysical methodologies established by Konstantin Stanislavski, considered the grandfather of acting, to inform my approach to creating authentic characters. During my undergraduate training, I studied Elizabeth Hapgood's translation of year one of Stanislavski's System: *An Actor Prepares*. Stanislavski's System and its terminology informed my approach to an actor's process and supported me throughout my professional career. To support my thesis research, Prof. Majkowski introduced me to the newest translation by Jean Benedetti of Stanislavski's training, *An Actor's Work*. In "Year One" of *An Actor's Work*, Stanislavski guides the practitioner of his "art of experiencing," defined as the "subconscious creation through the actor's conscious psychotechnique," or approaching the subconscious through conscious choices to unlock the imagination and avoid generalized acting (Stanislavski 18). Stanislavski believed that an actor's basic goal is "the creation of life of the human spirit in a role and the communication of that life onstage in an artistic form" (Stanislavski 19).

Stanislavski System

Konstantin Stanislavski co-founded the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) with Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1898 in response to the naturalistic theatre movement of the late 19th century. Stanislavski's predecessor, Mikahil Shchepkin, and his student Glikeria Fedotova introduced realistic acting into the Russian theatre and influenced Stanislavski as a young artist (Moore 6). In addition, the work of Anton Chekhov and his plays, which embodied ordinary characters in truthful situations, challenged Stanislavski to develop a technique "to

create an artistically conceived image of life on the stage” (Moore 7). Naturalism, the predominant literary movement of the late 19th century, rejected the ideas of Romanticism, yet reflected upon the social commentary of its writers, particularly embracing the philosophical idea of determinism and the scientific method of detailed observation. Francois Delsarte and his Science of Applied Aesthetics developed an observational approach to gestural patterns of human emotion, through the voice, breath, and physical movement. This method of acting was popularized in the late 19th century in which actors studied “prescribed” gestures and speech patterns to convey the emotional life of the characters (Moore 20). The absence of free will influenced this approach: one’s actions are predetermined. Despite the artificiality of the theatrical convention, Stanislavski rejected the naturalistic idea of presenting the mere surface of life but aimed to deepen the theatrical experience through the realistic portrayal of an actor’s artistic truth (Moore 14).

In contrast, Stanislavski believed that the key to portraying life on stage or creating an “imitation of life” with as much detail as possible must be unlocked through the connection between the subconscious and conscious mind.

Let us leave the subconscious to nature, the magician, and apply ourselves to what is available to us- the conscious approach to creative activity and our psychotechnique.

What they teach us, in the main, is that once the subconscious starts working we must try not to get in its way. (Stanislavski 18)

Stanislavski differentiated between what could be considered fantastical and plausible in the actor's mind. His technique of using the Magic ‘If,’ actualizes the power of an actor’s imagination to recreate circumstances in which an action would be plausible for an actor, “lift(ing) the actor out of everyday life” (Stanislavski 60). According to Stanislavski, an actor’s

task is “to use his creative skills to transform the story into theatrical fact” (Stanislavski 60). “Our prime task is not only to portray the life of a role externally, but above all to create the inner life of the character and of the whole play, bringing our own individual feelings to it, endowing it with all the features of our own personality” (Stanislavski 19).

According to Stanislavski, “acting is action- mental and physical” (Stanislavski 40). Stanislavski recognized the importance of the imagination to help prepare practitioners to live the experiences of the characters they are playing as if they were their own. Stanislavski recognized that “emotions cannot be stirred directly” (Moore 12). Instead of forcing emotions out of an actor through reliving past experiences or by conjuring up an emotional state, he developed a system called the “method of physical actions” which he called “the key to emotional reactions of an actor, the basis of an actor’s creativity, (and) the solution of spontaneity on stage” (Moore 11). Stanislavski points out that the etymology of the word ‘drama’ in Ancient Greek means “an action being performed” (Stanislavski 40). Stanislavski’s method of physical actions imbues the practitioner with a “simple, concrete, purposeful physical action which stirs the psychological side of the psychophysical act” through preparatory and improvisation work (Moore 19). In *The Stanislavski System*, author Sonia Moore quotes Russian physiologist P.V. Simonov from his work, *The Method of K. S. Stanislavski and the Physiology of Emotions*, who states that:

Modern rational psychotherapy does not have at its disposal the concrete means of conscious influence on neuroses which cannot be influenced by direct effort of will...

The more is our loss, because a system of such means exists; it has been thoroughly developed and checked a thousand times in practice. The system we have in mind is Stanislavski’s ‘method of physical actions.’ (Moore 12)

By reversing the natural process of human psychophysical behavior, and supplanting the action before the emotion, the practitioner can manifest the emotional response within the body in a more organic way (Moore 19).

Stanislavski's research into human psychology reflects a character's "effort of will" and their intention to accomplish that goal. To create an active, internal life for a character, a practitioner must be informed by the given circumstances to make plausible and effective choices for a character (Moore 26). For example, if you desire an apple on a tree, the underlying motivations in reaching for the apple (*i.e.*, how hungry you are) will inform how you manage the obstacles that hinder the success of that action. To understand the world of the play, the practitioner must recognize the playwright's intention for a character within the text and the director's vision of a character. Stanislavski argued that the actor must position himself as either the protagonist or the antagonist by understanding whether a character supports the author's goal of the narrative or someone who actively works against that objective. This is important for developing a more nuanced and logical sequence of actions for a character (Moore 26).

As an actor-practitioner, creating a fully realized character relies on defining the supertask (Russian: *sverkhzadacha*), *i.e.*, the theme or subject of a play, and establishing how a particular character positions himself to support or hinder that objective, and the throughaction (Russian: *skvoznoe deistvie*) which provides the practitioner with a logical sequence of actions that support the supertask (Stanislavski 684). Stanislavski's method of physical actions supports the practitioner by identifying what a character wants or desires; the obstacles in their way; the adaptations, or tactics used to achieve the objective; and the stakes, or in other words, how intensely they want to achieve that objective. Combining all the plausible actions or tactics that support the character's objective into an action palette empowers the practitioner with the

creative freedom to choose which tactic will best influence their scene partner under the given circumstances. Stanislavski believed specificity is essential in good performances, in contrast to the practice of manufacturing a generalized emotion or quality, which he characterized as the “enemy of art” (Moore 23). Stanislavski encourages the practitioner to delve into the intricacies of a character, *e.g.*, “when playing a nasty man, search for what is good in him” to create a more multifaceted character instead of relying on a broad generalization or conceptual idea (Moore 62).

Despite Stanislavski’s emphasis on finding the emotional truth of a character, he encouraged practitioners to become masters of their bodies and voices by finding truth through the “vividness of speech” and “treasur(ing) the spoken word” (Moore 13). In his words:

An actor must incarnate the behavior of the character to make it seen and heard- to be clear to the audience in every way. An actor with deficient speech or an untrained voice and body will not be able to convey the subtle nuances of inner life and will bore his audience. (Moore 13)

Stanislavski also believed that “every punctuation mark has its own intonation” (Moore 13). Instead of simply observing intonations where they occur, the practitioner must “enrich the ground” to make intonations expressive (13). Stanislavski believed that by developing an acute sensitivity to the senses and becoming aware of physical tensions within the body, the groundwork was laid for a deeper connection with both the subconscious and a more reactive body.

Critical to the effectiveness of my performance in *Indecent* was an extensive daily physical warm-up that helped not only to enhance my performance but also to establish a deeper psychophysical connection with the characters. I supported my understanding of the character’s

given circumstances by substantial dramaturgical research and textual analysis, eventually developing a logical and effective throughline of action that reflected their struggles with language barriers and identity conflicts in *Indecent*. In my performance, I used vocal inflections and a psychophysical connection to convey clear images within Vogel's text and improve the effectiveness of my speech. Furthermore, through gestural movement, I paired Chekhov's PG technique with oral posture to create effective shifts between three characters in *Indecent*.

Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture (PG)

As one of Stanislavski's former students, Michael Chekhov further developed the psychophysical approach to an actor's process. I became intrigued with the idea of including Chekhov's acting methodologies after reading an article published by Dr. Listengarten on the influence of visual art on Michael Chekhov called "Michael Chekhov and the Visual Arts: Influences, Synergies, Collaborations" (Listengarten, Michael Chekhov and the Visual Arts: Influences, Synergies, Collaborations). I knew that Chekhov's book, *To the Actor*, was on the reading list for Michael Wainstein's Graduate Acting class the following spring semester, so I decided to investigate the chapter on Psychological Gesture and its application through exercises found within the appendix. Applying Chekhov's PG to navigate the metatheatrical shifts between characters in *Indecent* appeared to be a perfect case study to apply this methodology, particularly because these characters needed to abruptly change in real-time in front of an audience.

Michael Chekhov, the nephew of the famed Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, joined a new experimental branch of the MAT, the First Studio, in 1912, under the tutelage of Russian Polish theatre director Leopold Antonovich Sulerzhitsky. Divisions within the Russian theatrical community about the aesthetic principles and merits of Stanislavski's System began soon after

the formation of the MAT in 1898. Artists such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, who were influenced by the symbolist movement, and theatre artists such as Maurice Maeterlinck and Valery Bryusov, valued ‘atmosphere’ and ‘mood’ over Stanislavski’s naturalistic detail (Chamberlain 80).

The themes of atmosphere, actors’ creativity, physicalization of inner experience, and the question of style, which were to become important elements in Michael Chekhov’s method, can be seen to have been a part of the theatrical milieu for over a decade- well before 1912, when (Chekhov) joined the MAT. (Chamberlain 80)

At the First Studio, Sulerzhitsky taught many important elements of Stanislavski’s early system, including relaxation, concentration, naivete, imagination, communication, and affective memory, which Stanislavski later replaced in the 1930s with the term ‘emotional memory’ (Chamberlain 80; Moore). Emotional memory relies on the use of an actor’s own personal memories to consciously awaken an emotional connection related to the given circumstances of the character. In contrast, Stanislavski explains that by asking the question ‘if’ to the given circumstances of the character, this process would stimulate the subconscious mind of the actor, providing a logical sequence of actions and an emotional depth to the character. “For actors, “if” is the lever which lifts (practitioners) out of the world of reality into the only world where we can be creative” (Stanislavski 48). When an actor applies the Magic ‘If,’ the actor is only limited by their imagination and reaches beyond personal experience. For example, in *Indecent*, playing the character of Yekel, a brothel owner, many aspects of his character were different from my own experience. I am neither a father nor a husband, much less living in a religious community and running a brothel in my basement. Yet, to find this character relatable, I could awaken a subconscious connection to this character by asking myself the question “if” I

were placed under these set of circumstances given to me by the author and director, then I can imagine a logical set of actions that supports an emotional life for the character. Relying on an actor's own personal experience alone, particularly as it relates to trauma, can be more inhibiting than freeing. Moore explains:

Reliving a real-life experience, the person also lives in the present time, and this influences the experience. When a tragedy occurs, we are completely absorbed in the moment, but when we remember this tragedy later, other interests penetrate the experience. Though our grief is sincere, it acquires a different quality. (Moore 43)

Although Chekhov gained popularity for his performances between 1912 and 1918 at the First Studio, his personal life began to crumble. Troubled by deep depression and conflicts within his personal life which made him unable to perform, Chekhov believed he had reached a spiritual crisis. Stanislavski and Chekhov argued about using personal experience in performance, and whether a performance should be autobiographical. Out of desperation, Chekhov sought the work of Rudolf Steiner and his work in [anthroposophy](#), or spiritual science (Chamberlain 80). "Like Kierkegaard and others before him, (Steiner) drew a distinction between the everyday self with which we normally identify and the higher ego which is our more authentic and creative self" (80). According to Chekhov, the practitioner should not forget to separate the real world from life on the stage, and that our creative goal as artists is to interpret life rather than be consumed by a superficial representation of life on the stage (Chekhov 3). Chekhov believed that an actor constantly returning to one's own experiences would lead to "degeneration of talent" (Callow xix). To avoid this, an actor must be sensitive to his "psychological creative impulses" and develop a more reactive, creative body (Chekhov 2). This process can be developed through an exploration into the psychology of human behavior and

observe the inner workings of people and the world around them (Chekhov 3). Infusing an actor's imagination into character creation, a performance "never lost its freshness and power, (whereas) the limited pool of individual experience quickly stagnates" (Callow xix).

Chekhov believed in trusting an actor and his instincts, through his improvisations and impulses, and "liberating the imagination instead of dredging the subconscious" (Callow xix). Although Stanislavski believed in a more hierarchical structure to performance creation, Chekhov believed in a more objective method of acting and the autonomy of the actor to create through creative intuition. Chekhov believed that an actor's sensitivity to his higher ego was the source of his "creative individuality" that frees the practitioner to explore a character beyond the text (Chamberlain 81). According to Chekhov, a sensitivity to the higher ego uniquely connects the actor to the audience's perspective in performance. This positions the character within an ethical construct of good versus evil, and "provides detachment, compassion, and humor to the portrayal of a character that is simultaneously liberated from the practitioner's personal experience" (81). Chekhov states that "The real task of a creative artist is not merely to copy the outer appearance of life but to interpret life in all its facets and profoundness, to show what is behind the phenomena of life, to let the spectator look beyond life's surfaces and meanings" (Chekhov 3).

To unleash the creative intuitions of the actor, Chekhov believed that an actor should first learn to become more aware of the "sensitivity of the body to the psychological creative impulses" to not only observe what is happening around them but also be able to interpret life and its meaning (Chekhov 2). Developing a sensitive body with a "rich, colorful psychology" will allow the actor to draw from unlimited creative intuition (Chekhov 4). Lastly, an actor should develop a "complete obedience of both body and psychology to the actor" that will

awaken the “self-confidence, freedom, and harmony in his practice” (Chekhov 5). To facilitate this, Chekhov believed in The Four Brothers, or the four qualities of creation: [ease](#) (lack of physical tension), [form](#), [beauty](#), and [entirety](#) (Chamberlain 88-89). These concepts are developed through a physical series of exercises: [open](#), [close](#), [mold](#) (form), [float](#) (ease), [fly](#), and [radiate](#) (See Glossary and Appendix D for a full description of two of these exercises). After the practitioner physicalizes each exercise, the actor should remain still and visualize each quality in his imagination, attempting to recreate the same psychological and physical sensations while in motion (Chekhov 13).

In “Michael Chekhov on the technique of acting,” Chamberlain describes the Psychological Gesture (PG) as “a means of expressing the entire character in condensed form through an intuitive grasp of the character’s main desire” (Chamberlain 89). Chekhov observed that gestural language is often used to describe psychological processes personified within our everyday speech (89). For example, a person may get ‘caught up’ in an idea or struggle to ‘reach’ for the right words. Applying this human tendency to a practitioner’s approach to character creation assists the practitioner in physicalizing or embodying a character with gestural qualities that correspond to a character’s intention or objective, free from the burden of language and over-intellectualizing with the analytical mind (89).

Chekhov differentiated between the gestural qualities of what he considered a natural gesture found in everyday life, with an [archetypal gesture](#), that he believed embodied the PG, through its specificity and its goal to “influence, stir, mold, and attune your whole inner life to its artistic aims and purposes” (Chekhov 66). As an archetypal gesture, the PG embodies two essential aspects: [will](#) and [quality](#). The PG must stir the will by “occupying the whole body, psychology, and soul” which “gives definite direction, awakens feelings, and gives (us) a

condensed version of the character” (Chekhov 76). Secondly, the quality of the PG must be “**strong** (lacking tension), **simple** (easy to do), and **well-formed** (specific)” and “must radiate and be performed in the correct **tempo**” (Chekhov 76). An actor must distinguish between the **inner** (thoughts, images, feelings) and **outer** (actions or speech) tempos of a character to create depth and to reflect how a character presents himself outwardly and a character’s inner mental state (Chekhov 75). “It is important that the actor learns not only to feel time on the stage, but also gain command of that feeling... The body within the space, and rhythms within the time- those are the means of expression for the actor” (Malaev-Babel 215).

The power of the PG is limited only by the actor’s imagination to create naturalistic gestures into more ‘fantastical’ PGs. “Chekhov helps (practitioners) discover certain hidden resources within themselves. Developing such resources will not only make your acting rich, unpredictable, and inspired, it will help you lift it above an everyday, primitive, naturalistic plane” (Malaev-Babel 185). The versatility of the PG makes this technique applicable to a variety of genres, and can be applied to the whole role, separate moments of the role or separate scenes, scoring atmospheres, or for a particular speech (Malaev-Babel 215). The following excerpt is an example of an exercise for finding PG:

Imagine the events and characters of the play until the characters of the play become a living performance for you. Focus your attention on moments that seem significant or expressive to you. Concentrate on the character that appears central in the moment you have chosen. Ask this character to act before you in your Imagination and follow its action in all details. Try to ‘see’ what the character is aiming at, what is the character’s wish, desire? In doing so, attempt to avoid reasoning, but rather seek to penetrate as clearly and as vividly as possible into the character’s what by means of the image before

your mind's eye. As soon as you begin to guess what the character is doing, try to find the simplest Psychological Gesture. Do it physically, looking at the same time at your image. (Chamberlain 89)

Text work

Although each practitioner's approach to the text is unique, the actor should reflect on the author's views on interpreting their work. How a character thinks or speaks is informed by the playwright's use of language, rhetorical structure, dialects, or word choices for a character. The text becomes a lexical gift that the playwright offers the practitioner. In Prof. Majkowski's Stage Voice classes, I learned to recognize the importance of finding images within the text and how to communicate them effectively to my scene partner and the audience. Fostering this relationship with the text became fundamental in discovering the intricacies of building a character from the written page.

The psychophysical connection between the actor and the text begins in the imagination. Stanislavski states that "every one of our movements onstage, every word must be the result of a truthful imagination" (Stanislavski 84). Elevating text beyond everyday speech requires the actor to imbue the text with a renewed life and vitality by using the power of their imagination to generate images for the audience. Chekhov states that "(a) line that has an image behind it gains force and expressiveness, and remains fresh, no matter how often you repeat it" (Malaev-Babel 208). This transition from the spoken word to enlivened speech requires the actor to carve out the images found within the text. Through enlivened speech, the actor avoids devolving into "shallow forms of sound" and arbitrary intonations and gestures, by actively and effectively constructing those images for their audience (Chekhov 208). After studying a play or scene, the actor must uncover important phrases and words within those phrases from which clear images

can be communicated effectively to an audience. Fostering a unique relationship with these important images will spark “creative joy” and lay a rich foundation for developing a fully realized scripted character (Chekhov 208).

Image Structuring

In our graduate Stage Voice coursework, Prof. Majkowski gave our class a handout that summarized the work of David Hammond into a practical method of structuring images within a piece of text. Hammond is an American director and acting teacher who taught at the Julliard School, Yale School of Drama, and the American Repertory Theater/Moscow Art Theater School Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University (IATT) (The State of Shakespeare) (Hammond). Although Hammond’s academic background is in Elizabethan theatre, with an emphasis on Shakespearean and classical drama, the application of his image-structuring technique breaks down any piece of text into its basic rhetorical structure, outlining a framework of images contained within. His technique categorizes words within the text according to their importance, distinguishing the operative words from the rest of the line of text. Operative words “contain the life of the line” and are complete images that must be communicated effectively for the line to be understood (Hammond 24).

Words that do not contain images, such as articles, prepositions, and conjunctions, are deemphasized. Principle verbs complete the action of an image and are considered more important than auxiliary verbs. Modifiers of nouns or verbs, such as adverbs and adjectives, do not by themselves complete the image, yet they should contain the same amount or more vocal energy as the word they modify. Modifying clauses help to clarify images and, depending on the length or size of the image, the same amount of vocal energy needs to carry across the entire image, supported by breath and tonal inflection. Hammond’s ‘Repetitive Contrast’ explains

that vocal energy should be released differently on repetitive words, so the practitioner embodies new information with each repetition. “An image that is repeated is rarely the key operative word. The dominant operative is any new quality that is added in the repetition” (Hammond 25). Hammond advises against stressing negatives and forms of pronouns (personal and possessive) within the text. This technique provides a comprehensive approach to text work for the actor, supported by a clear relationship between the main thought or idea found within the text. In this way, the actor can clarify distinct and complete images to the audience.

Punctuation

During my first semester at UCF, in Prof. Helsinger’s Shakespeare class, we studied the importance of finding operative words within Shakespearean text. We also observed the differences between grammatical and verse line breath, and how rising and falling inflections support [rhetorical devices](#) in literature. In Stage Voice II, Prof. Majkowski introduced a system that assigned rising, falling, and circular inflections to specific punctuation. Noting and observing punctuation was an approach developed by Prof. Majkowski in her work with Nancy Houfek at the IATT at Harvard.

In her coursework, Prof. Majkowski demonstrated how a practitioner’s use of breath and vocal expression through pitch, rate, and volume within an actor’s toolkit can present innumerable possibilities when approaching text work. As a class exercise, we investigated how to play with pitch, rate, and volume within the framework of punctuation, how the breath is used to support images and phrasing, and how to assign certain inflections with various forms of punctuation to clarify images and support the aural contract with an audience. The audience engages in an aural contract with the practitioner, relying on the speaker to communicate when images are being clarified or completed. Vocal inflections help to aurally distinguish when a

speaker has finished speaking or has completed a particular thought or image. For example, a period (or end-stop) signifies the completion of a thought, containing a full image, and should correspond with a strong down-inflection of pitch, signaling to the listener that the speaker has completed his thought.

Punctuation can be a valuable tool for actors when discovering a character's [inner tempo-rhythm](#). By paying attention to the punctuation in a script, an actor can better understand the character's emotional state and how they would naturally speak. The use of pauses and inflections can create a unique rhythm for each character, helping the actor to fully embody their role. Punctuation delineates phrasing for when a character breathes and can provide context for a character's mental state. Chekhov argues the possibility of maintaining two contrasting tempo simultaneously, *i.e.* how a character expresses themselves through the text and how quickly a character processes information, “unfailingly makes a strong impression on an audience” but is only possible through “a flexible, well-trained, and obedient body and a good technique of speech” (Chekhov 75).

Accent Work

Knight-Thompson Voicework© is the method introduced in Prof. Majkowski's Stage and Voice II and continues throughout the MFA Acting program at UCF in conjunction with Fitzmaurice Voicework©. Prof. Majkowski also introduced our class to [IPA](#) and we studied the mechanics of muscular articulation within the oral tract. Creating an oral posture for a character requires a kinesthetic awareness of the oral tract and tongue placement, how to feel the vibratory energy within the mouth, and where tension is being held and released within the oral tract (See Figure 9 for vowel shaping within the oral tract).

Oral Posture

In Speaking with Skill, Knight defines intelligibility as being “able to produce verbal sound actions that everybody who speaks the language can understand easily” (Knight 2). In recent years, vocal coaches and teachers are shifting away from antiquated theatrical conventions based on aesthetic standards prescribing a ‘correct’ way to speak. Knight encourages voicework to become descriptive versus prescriptive. Empowering the practitioner with the knowledge of the oral tract and the articulatory energy allows him to shape sound through conscious kinesthetic choices, allowing for flexibility and creativity in character creation. According to Knight, “actors are best served by developing a set of precise physical skills for shaping sound into articulate speech” (Knight 2).

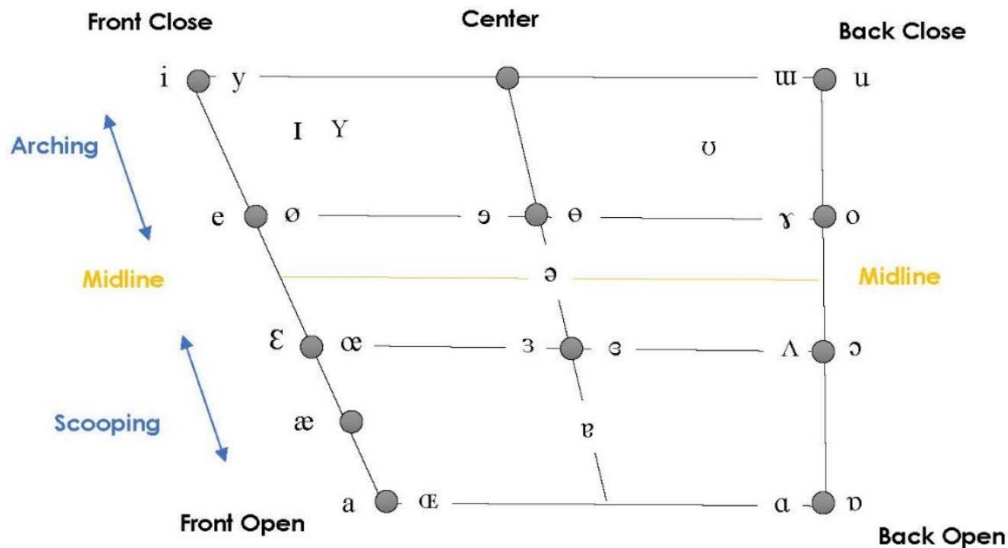


Figure 9: Vowel sounds and oral posture with corresponding IPA symbols.

As our bodies respond to change over time, humans start to hold more tension in our skeletal muscles, or the muscles that “we consciously use to move our internal structure of bone and cartilage around” becoming less reactive to new stimuli to eventually become desensitized

within our environments (Knight 4). To counteract this, the practitioner must find ways to let go of these residual tensions to be able to feel sounds move through our body and become sensitive to “subtle changes in vocal sound and action” (Knight 7). Stanislavski warns how muscular tension and physical tightness can be destructive to the creative process and “harmful to the process of experiencing, to the external, physical embodiment of what is being experienced and to the actor’s overall mental state” (Stanislavski 120).

Although my movement training supported a general kinesthetic awareness of my body, I was unaware of how residual tensions inhibited vocal production, and how to release them. In Prof. Majkowski’s class, we studied how to recognize and deconstruct habitual behaviors within our bodies and learned how to restructure with more effective vocal conditioning through a guided physical warm-up. Prof. Majkowski introduced our class to a mental, physical, and vocal warm-up, adapted from Nancy Houflek, that became part of our daily practice through our classwork and integrated into our warm-up exercises for *Indecent* rehearsals. The purpose of this warm-up is to become more present within our bodies and activate breath and vocal energy inside the oral tract.

The full warm-up begins by rediscovering the body’s alignment and awakening the body’s energy flow. After activating the actor’s subconsciousness through the five senses, the practitioner deepens their kinesthetic awareness of breath through the three-dimensional expansion of the rib cage and stretching through the planes of breath (expansion from the front to the back of the body, upwards and downwards, and from side to side). The warm-up continues by loosening the hips and shoulders, stimulating resonance from the body towards the head, and warming up the facial musculature to access the vocal floodgates (the neck, the jaw, the lips, the tongue, the soft palette) from which residual tension impedes vocal production. Lastly, the

warm-up explores pitch, vocal placement, and volume through a blending and articulation exercise series to keep the voice more forward-placed (See Appendix E for vocal warmup).

Ginny Kopf's Accent Roadmap

During rehearsals for *Indecent*, Prof. Majkowski gave each cast member selected pages from Ginny Kopf's *The Dialect Handbook*, including "The Actor's Checklist" and the "Dialect Acquisition Form." "The Actor's Checklist" is a detailed guide of numerous ways a practitioner can learn to research, absorb, and engage in a new dialect. Many of these were incorporated into the rehearsal process of *Indecent*, such as researching the cultural characteristics of a dialect, finding primary sources and studying their oral posture, marking up the script with phonetic and irregular sound shifts, memorizing lines with the dialect, and playing around or [ad-lib](#) using the dialect (Kopf 84-86). Kopf's 'Dialect Acquisition Form' outlines how to approach a dialect acquisition in six steps. The first step is to define the cultural characteristics of the character, including their socio-economic level and education. The second is to consider the character within their cultural environment and how that character operates, specifically in voice and movement. The third step is understanding the [tone](#) and [focus](#) for the character, particularly for placement of vocal energy and how sounds and articulations are formed within the oral tract. Creating a [kinesthetic trigger](#), or a phrase that embodies the characteristics of the dialect, allows the practitioner to "drop" into a specific oral posture. The fourth step is describing the [vocal patterns](#) of a particular dialect, including inflection patterns, rhythm and phrasing, tempo or speed, stress patterns, and volume intensity. The fifth step includes assessing the body language of the culture, including dress, movement, and mannerisms. The final step lists unique pronunciations or unusual phrases, idioms, or grammatical changes (Kopf 28-31). These guidelines helped to create more specific vocal choices and speech patterns for the characters of

Indecent. In this thesis, I combined the gestural vocabulary of the PG with a kinesthetic trigger to drop into the oral posture of the character more effectively.

CHAPTER THREE: REHEARSAL

Rehearsal Structure

Throughout my professional career, I grew accustomed to putting up a show in a condensed, two-week rehearsal process. Yet, for UCF's *Indecent*, the cast was given almost three months of preparation. Most weekday rehearsals were held for four hours in the evening, with a three-hour rehearsal on Sunday afternoons. This rehearsal schedule was adjusted to reflect UCF's academic calendar and our current academic course schedules. In addition, *Indecent* rehearsals were broken up by Thanksgiving and the conclusion of the fall semester with the UCF's holiday break. Once we returned from holiday break, the production team scheduled a week to review the show in the studio before technical rehearsals started on the stage.

Rehearsals began with a group warm-up, usually led by one of the graduate students, for approximately ten minutes, applying many of the vocal and physical exercises taught in Prof. Majkowski's Voice class. Due to time constraints, many of these warm-up exercises were abbreviated from the larger series of exercises of our daily practice, yet our primary focus would be on activating the breath throughout the body by the three-dimensional rib expansion in a modified standing series, hip and shoulder openers, tweeter and woofer blending, and other articulation exercises (See Appendix E for vocal warmup). Despite its challenges, the duration of this rehearsal process provided the opportunity to explore the practical application of the acting methodologies examined in this thesis and, supported by UCF's academic environment, to invest in the complexity of *Indecent* fully: how to incorporate the cultural elements of music, language, and movement while approaching these marginalized characters authentically and respectfully.

Cultural Inclusion

We started the first week of the rehearsals learning the music and lyrics written by Lisa Gutkin and Aaron Halva. Our musical director, Jason Bailey, began teaching us the melodies and pronunciation of the German and Yiddish lyrics. Mr. Bailey helped us to coordinate musical phrasing with proper breath support and maintain a forward-placed facial resonance. Overall, the music of *Indecent* contains simple melodies that alternate between solo lines and ensemble sections and includes very few sections of two-part harmonies. (The more complicated songs, “Bei Mir Bist Du Schon” and “Wiegala,” are sung by the Ingenue and the Middle as duets.) Because of my musical theatre background, I learned to treat musical lyrics as a monologue and the translations of the lyrics located in the script helped to facilitate that process. One of the biggest vocal challenges I encountered musically was in a section that Otto sings in “Vat Ken You Makh” which resides in a higher part of my vocal range that was difficult for me to support vocally, particularly with the choreography. After discussing other options vocally with Mr. Bailey, I experimented with singing the vocal line an octave lower than in the score and chose this option during performances.

Working in collaboration with Dialect Coach Prof. Vivian Majkowski, we explored how to sing and speak within the oral posture of the Yiddish dialect. In one of our first dialect rehearsals, Prof. Majkowski provided the cast Ginny Kopf’s dialect acquisition resources, gave a brief introduction to IPA, and lectured the cast about the intricacies of the Yiddish oral posture. She also encouraged us to research and observe primary sources found on YouTube (See Appendix F for Primary Dialect Sources). Prof. Majkowski pointed out that the Yiddish oral posture evolved from a blending of Hebrew, Slavic, and Germanic languages in which there are three distinct articulations of the Yiddish dialect. They include: the uvular non-aspirated stop-plosive to replace the American “r”, the unvoiced velar fricative in the German “ch”, and the

unvoiced pharyngeal fricative for the “h” in the name “Hannah.” Unlike many American speakers, the root tongue is advanced, and the back body of the tongue remains flexible. The body of the tongue arches in the front and scoops towards the middle. Articulations generally made by the tip of the tongue are moved further back toward the blade. The muscularity of the jaw remains relatively stable, with no bracing, as evidenced by the lack of movement in viewing primary sources. Another important characteristic is tension in the nasal/labial fold, bringing the voice forward, without nasality (Majkowski) (See Appendix G for Lecture Notes).



Figure 10: *Indecent* rehearsal with Dr. Listengarten. Pictured are Dr. Listengarten, Blake Parker, Drew Stark, Giuseppe Picicella, Forrest Stringfellow, Paul Pelletier, Jr., Kimber King, and Andre Braza. Photo by Maddie Lane, courtesy of Orlando Sentinel. 30 November 2021. Digital Photo (Lane)

After we had learned the music, Dr. Listengarten and associate director Sage Tokach began putting the show on its feet, gradually working through each scene of the show. Rehearsals would often alternate between approaching scene work and learning the choreography for the musical numbers in the show. Dr. Listengarten, and Ms. Tokach, aimed to create a collaborative rehearsal environment that included thoughtful discussions about each

scene as an ensemble, including members of the creative team, the cast, their understudies, and cultural liaisons. Their style of conducting rehearsals encouraged experimentation and the scaffolding of performance sculptures and visual landscapes to define specific locations within the play to establish dramatic playing areas. This process became known as ‘storyboarding’ or using our collective experience as a foundational approach to the rehearsal process. For example, as the troupe travels throughout Europe performing the *God of Vengeance*, the audience's position shifted to reflect traveling to the various performance locations. Performance objects, such as luggage and chairs, were layered and stacked together to create theatrical sculptures. These suitcases also became performative objects, meant to signify the Jewish diaspora as Jews throughout history have been forced to gather their possessions and relocate from their home. We discussed how stacks of suitcases and articles of clothing have been used to represent the lives lost during the Holocaust and how these objects have been used in contemporary Holocaust memorials.

To build a community as an ensemble with productions like *Indecent* requires an acute awareness of the sensitivity of the material, methods of active communication, and gathering the consent of its participants. Cognizant that much of the subject material might be [triggering](#) for the practitioners, Dr. Listengarten arranged for each rehearsal of *Indecent* to conclude with the theatrical intimacy practice of [de-roling](#). The purpose of the ‘de-roling’ is acknowledge the work done in the space and to psychophysically separate the work conducted in the rehearsal from the practitioner’s personal life and from the outside world. An example of our de-roling exercise would be for each member of the ensemble to stand in a large circle so that each cast member feels connected physically. Each member of the circle finds eye-contact with someone across the circle and, relying on visual and aural cues, the group integrates a series of three

coordinated breaths accompanied with a synchronized movement or gesture (raising our arms above our heads with a grand gesture on an inhale, then exhale towards the center of the circle while vocalizing and shaking each of their limbs). This process gave the ensemble an opportunity to connect and to breathe together as a collective unit, through coordinated breath, movement, and shared eye contact.



Figure 11: Opening Gestural Movements, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured: Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Using the techniques of coordinated breath and establishing a cohesive movement vocabulary was an important challenge for our movement director, Prof. Christopher Neiss. During movement rehearsals, Prof. Neiss shared videos of his research, including video clips made by Bruce Bierman, who served as the dance dramaturg for *Indecent* productions at Arena

Stage and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Bierman’s influence was particularly evident in Prof. Neiss’s choreography for the opening “awakening” sequence of the troupe and the two most culturally significant musical numbers in the show, “Ale Brider” and “Vat Ken You Makh.” Prof. Neiss wanted to emphasize how the intricate hand gestures of historical Hasidic and Yiddish dance were connected to Middle Eastern culture (Neiss). “Ale Brider” is a lively musical number that includes all the thematic elements of the show, through music, language, and gestural movement. In this musical number, the lyrics state that “We are all brothers, and sing happy songs. We stick together, like nobody does!” (Vogel 10). In our production, the ensemble reenacts the marriage of Asch and Madje, and I represented Asch’s father. This was one of the most joyous parts of the show, with circular and group formations weaving about the stage, and contrasts with the more solemn opening of the show.



Figure 12: Otto rejoicing in “Ale Brider,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss) and Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.



Figure 13: Opening Title: “from ashes they rise,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured: Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Chana), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Halina), Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Mendel), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera), Drew Stark as The Elder (Otto) and Ensemble members Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Our opening of *Indecent* begins with a procession of the acting troupe descending the large ramp to stand in front of a row of chairs on an open stage. Dr. Listengarten described this place as a liminal space, not existing in a particular existential plane. Cueing through an inhalation of breath, the troupe sits down collectively. Fragments of torn parchment, reminiscent of burnt ash, begin to fall on the stage as the musicians start to play, and the troupe slowly awakens in their corporal forms, and begin to move, starting first with the gesticulation of their hands. As the troupe’s consciousness awakens, Prof. Neiss encouraged the cast to create specific poses corresponding to the music. I chose this opportunity to incorporate the PGs I was experimenting with for each character within my archetype. Although the initial moment of

lifting my hat was given on a specific musical count by Prof. Neiss, I was given the freedom in the rehearsal process to personalize these gestures, and slowly interact with other members of the troupe and to create improvised and genuine moments of connection.



Figure 14: Movement rehearsal photo, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King, Rosalind Krabill, Prof. Christopher Neiss, Kate Milazzo. Photo by Maddie Lane, courtesy of Orlando Sentinel. 30 November 2021. Digital Photo. (Lane)

Visual images, provided by Dr. Listengarten and Ms. Tokach, encouraged the ensemble to engage in Chekhov's method of character creation to stimulate creative impulses in the movement sequences. In a classroom discussion in American Theatre, Dr. Listengarten admitted that for each show she directs, she finds a piece of visual art that reflects the themes within the theatrical work (Listengarten, Michael Chekhov and the Visual Arts: Influences, Synergies, Collaborations). The paintings of Marc Chagall influenced her approach to *Indecent*, specifically his work *Over Vitebsk* (or *Over the Town*). Marc Chagall is an example of a Jewish artist who fled Europe to the United States to escape persecution from the Nazis. The intersectionality of Marc Chagall's artwork is significant to *Indecent* because, as a Jewish artist, he attempted to

reflect his cultural heritage through his artwork. In his paintings, Chagall embodies a lyrical quality representing aspects of his European life, Jewish faith, love, and family. Prof. Neiss described the movement quality during the transitional “altitudes” are attributed to the floating figures found in Chagall’s painting, reminiscent of the Laban effort shape term of floating (Neiss). Rehearsing these transitions was a significant portion of the rehearsal process, to map out traffic patterns for the ensemble, discovering how and when to add or change costume pieces, or adjusting the performance structures, consisting of detailed arrangement of chairs and suitcases for each scene.



Figure 15: An example of ‘altitudes’ and the cast creating performance sculptures, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured: Andre Braza as Ensemble (Solomon Krauss), Kimber King as The Elder (Vera) and Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Mendel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Dramaturgy

Before rehearsals began, *Indecent*'s dramaturg, Gabby Lawlor, and guest artist, Ayelet Golan, provided a comprehensive dramaturgical packet for the actors. This document contained interviews with our cultural ambassador committee, historical research, photographs, and hyperlinks to websites with cultural relevance to the show. In addition to this resource, I began to conduct my research into many of the historical figures that I would play during *Indecent*. During rehearsals, we explored various themes, and one of crucial elements was the significance of language as a cultural marker, specifically the use of Yiddish.

To reflect their unique cultural heritage Polish-Jewish artists such as Yitskhok Leybush (Y. L.) Peretz and Sholem Asch blended their folklore, customs, and traditions in their art. As the economic growth increased within the industrial centers of Russian-controlled Poland at the turn of the 20th century, Jews began to form a large ethnic minority in large urban cities such as Warsaw and Lodz. Warsaw became the center of Jewish culture led by Y. L. Peretz, a diaspora nationalist, who founded the Shrayberklub, or Warsaw Writers Club (Stepien 14-15). Peretz, along with other European scholars and playwrights, urged their Jewish contemporaries to express Jewish life and their communities in Yiddish to produce a catalog of literary work that reflect Jewish culture. The Czernowitz Conference in 1908, attended by both Peretz and Asch, proclaimed that the pressures of assimilation threatened the legacy of Yiddish culture and that only through the preservation of the Yiddish language, considered the “national language of the Jewish people,” would maintain their Jewish heritage and serve as a bridge to Jewish and European cultures ("Yiddishist Movement"). The prevailing cultural movements among the major ethnic groups in Poland inspired the rising nationalist and socialist political tensions and the outbreak of World War I fragmented the country even more. At the time Sholem Asch wrote *God of Vengeance* in 1906, Yiddish theatre artists were fascinated by the Jewish underworld,

which included the poor, destitute, or those considered to be “indecent” and immoral (Lawlor and Golan 8).

Despite the play’s controversial representation of Jewish figures, *God of Vengeance* is considered Asch’s most celebrated work and successfully toured throughout the stages of Europe. The vibrant immigrant Jewish communities in New York’s Lower East Side popularized his work in this country and reflected the cultural impact of the Yiddish theatre houses on the American theatre. After the First World War, strict immigration policies followed, including The Immigration Act of 1917, which required immigrants to be able to read and write in their native language, as well as national origin quota restrictions that sharply decreased the influx of many Eastern Europeans (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Cort Theatre). Growing nationalism and the rise of Jewish intolerance in Europe mirrored the rise of censorship and aggressive foreign policies within the United States in the beginning of the 20th century (Guthrie Theater 1:28-1:56). The journey of Asch’s *God of Vengeance* from the Yiddish theatre to Broadway demonstrates the appropriation of a culturally significant play and the pressures to sanitize and edify societal norms for the commercial appeal of American audiences.

One of the more remarkable aspects of this dramaturgical process was considering how the perspective of cultural representation within literature can evolve into what is defined as ‘indecent.’ In an article by Aneta Stepień, “‘Folk-lore’, Modernism and Psychoanalysis in the Work of Isaac Bashevis Singer,” Stepień provides an extensive look into the prevalent themes of Jewish literature through the unpublished lecture notes of Isaac Bashevis Singer, a contemporary of Asch and Peretz, who was considered a prominent figure in the development of Yiddish literature in the early 20th century. Many Yiddish writers and early 20th-century avant-garde artists were influenced by Freud’s scientific publications of human psychology and social

philosophers such as Nietzsche. Many of these ideas conflicted with their previous religious identities, yet many of these writers were fascinated by the lived experience of social outsiders and the underbelly of the human condition. Stepien writes “Singer’s notion of ‘folk-lore’ most explicitly manifests the blend of the diaspora experience, the position of Yiddish literature in Poland at the beginning of the Polish Second Republic, while incorporating Nietzsche’s ideas on myth and Freudian language of psycho-sexual states” (Stepien 13). Considered progressive for its time, the complexity of *God of Vengeance* lies in Asch’s defiance of social mores: highlighting the hypocrisy of religious communities and the [hamartia](#), or the fatal flaw, of a non-conventional hero.

Many Yiddish stories at the time were written about or involved characters within the Jewish settlements or shtetl communities scattered across Western Europe, particularly along the Russian and Prussian border. The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* is an example of a story based on the life and customs of these Jewish communities. The 1964 Broadway musical is based on the short story *Tevye and his Daughters* and other tales written by Sholem Alecheim, a literary contemporary of Asch. In *Indecent*, Vogel thematically alludes to another literary contemporary of Asch, the Yiddish playwright, S. Ansky. Ansky, a member of Y. L. Peretz’s Warsaw Writing Club, wrote *The Dybbuk* between 1913-16. In Scene 17, Vogel introduces the idea of a [dybbuk](#), or the spirit of a dead person who lives inside of a person, when Lemml mentions that he might be “a dead soul inside of a stage manager” after returning to Asch’s home after the *God of Vengeance* trial (Vogel 49). Vogel reintroduces this mystical element within the narrative in the final scene of the play, Scene 21, when Lemml’s ghost appears to Asch. Vogel’s *Indecent* and Ansky’s *The Dybbuk* allude to characters who can transcend the existential plane to interact with the living.

Jewish Representation

One of the most unique aspects of the rehearsal process was the inclusion of our cultural ambassadors. These UCF students assisted Lawlor in her dramaturgical research, compiled a lobby display for the production, and facilitated community engagement. Some members observed rehearsals and gave the creative team feedback on areas of improvement. Many of these students were members of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, which is an international campus organization serving the UCF community. Their inclusion in the process was integral to the play's development, and it served to inform and share with the cast their experiences growing up Jewish. This was important, as many of the cast did not identify as Jewish, and they helped to provide insight into cultural traditions and the significance of religious terminology. Included within the dramaturgy packet that Lawlor and Golan compiled were brief personal statements by each of the cultural ambassadors; how they viewed themselves as intrinsically linked or distanced from their cultural heritage, and the conflicts they have experienced in finding their authentic selves. In her dramaturgical notes, Lawlor describes the connection between the queer community and the Jewish community as members of marginalized communities (Lawlor and Golan 3). One of our cultural ambassadors, Madison Mintzer, reflected on her identity and described her involvement in the *Indecent* process:

I am queer and half-Jewish, and was raised with both Christian and Jewish influences. My religious and cultural identity is a thing that has brought me both turmoil and joy throughout my life, and I feel very honored to be able to contribute to a show that is extremely important to me. I am also thankful that I have the opportunity to offer an authentic perspective to the development of this production. *Indecent* is a great piece of work that does something very special: it criticizes a cultural norm. The conversations and themes of this play are things that were and are currently still extremely relevant to

all cultures. How do we criticize ourselves without opening our culture up to misinterpretation? I have had quite a hard time writing this, as I don't know what to write that will help anyone better understand the Jewish experience or the significance of this play. The "Jewish Experience" isn't even a thing, and is really a product of Anti-Semitic thinking. It is putting the "other" into a quantifiable group so that the majority can understand what makes them an "other". This is something that speaks to the spirit of the show itself. Sholem Asch wanted to show that there isn't one binary for what a Jewish person can be. This show illustrates the beauty and ugliness of a culture that is a large part of my identity. I think that is a very relatable thing to all people, but especially to the Jewish culture, which experiences an interesting form of hatred. (Lawlor and Golan 16)

In her director's notes, Dr. Listengarten discusses her deeply personal connection to *Indecent*. My Jewish roots, my Eastern European background, the heartbreaking stories of my grandparents about their family members who perished in the Holocaust, my journey as an immigrant arriving in America in my early twenties with a small suitcase that contained several pairs of clothes and a stack of favorite books- all these experiences and memories profoundly connect me with the complex world of this play. (Listengarten, Director's Note)

Dr. Listengarten also invited special guests to observe and comment on the rehearsal process and speak with the cast and ask questions about the Jewish experience. One of those guests was Rabbi Rick Sherwin who spoke about the Jewish experience, provided historical context, answered questions about many of the Jewish terminology used in *Indecent*, and related

the dangers of othering in our society and the contemporary relevance of this production (Sherwin).

Character work

Supported by extensive dramaturgy on a play's historical context, authenticity within a character also requires a specificity of cultural characteristics that reflects movement choices and physical appearance. The complexity of transitioning between characters within the Elder archetype in *Indecent* presented a mental challenge for me as the actor and a more realistic one for the costume designer, Prof. Kristina Tollefson. The strategy for costuming these characters relied on establishing a base look, and then adding additional costume pieces as the character changes within each archetype. For example, at the top of the show, I tucked Yekel's prayer shawl underneath the vest I wore as Yekel during the *God of Vengeance* scenes. I began the show wearing Otto's long wool jacket to hide the layers of costuming underneath, topped with a fedora hat. During Asch and Madje's bedroom scene, I removed my wool jacket and placed Peretz's smoking jacket on top of Yekel's costume to easily remove it for the quick transition into the *God of Vengeance* scene. Some of the costume pieces informed the personality of the character as well as the conceptual ideas from Prof. Tollefson. Schildkraut wore a flowing silk robe for his rehearsal scenes that added a bit of dramatic flair. The color of the stole around his neck also changed from gold to red as the troupe transitioned from Europe to America.

Although many of the actual costumes used in the performance were not available for rehearsals, I brought in personal items to practice with that would approximate the action of taking a particular costume piece on and off. Many of these costume pieces lived in the suitcases we carried throughout the show. In more complex changes, such as my transformation into the Hasidic character at Ellis Island, we broke the show's convention and exited the stage. Assisted

by stage management, I put on a long black jacket and a brimmed black hat carefully rigged with peyes, which were torn away during the song “Vat Ken You Mach” (See Figure 18).

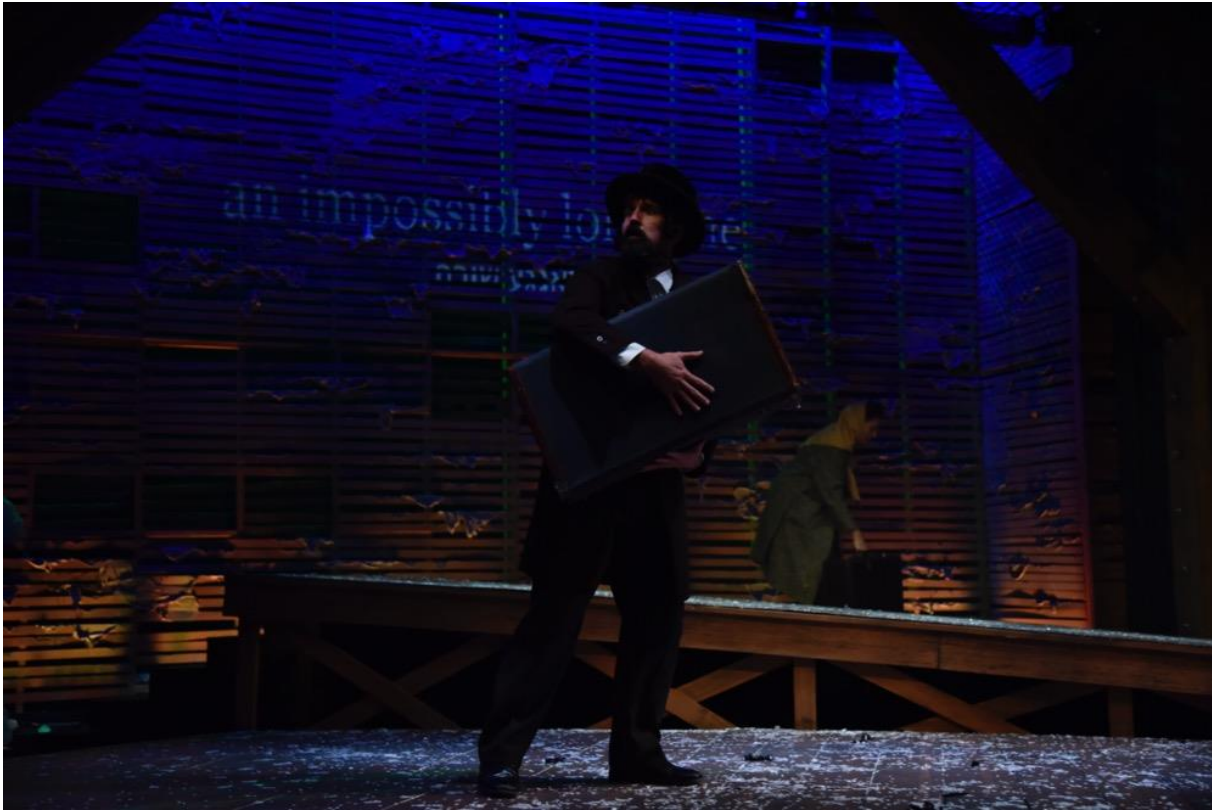


Figure 16: An Impossibly Long Line, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Hasidic Immigrant). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Despite costuming challenges, the actors of *Indecent* were presented with the challenge of creating authentic shifts in and out of these archetypal characters, especially as they transition between dialects to reflect the code-switching of immigrant speakers. My goals for approaching the scene work were to observe the punctuation found within the text with vocal inflections, maintain a consistent oral posture distinctive to the specified character, and support the images found within the text while communicating them to my scene partner and the audience.

Preserving this relationship with the text and finding genuine connections were integral to this rehearsal process with the goal of sharing those connections in performance. As Dr. Listengarten

explained in one of her final note sessions, “everything has weight- take care of the audience. Let the momentum happen, focus, trust the words, breathe in the audience” (Listengarten, Indecent Dress Rehearsal Notes).

Yekel

Psychophysical Techniques/PG



Figure 17: Yekel confronts Rifkele, example of Yekel’s PG, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

The psychological gesture I applied for Yekel was connected to the final scene in *God of Vengeance* when Yekel asks his daughter if she is still a virgin. Yekel reaches towards Rifkele, arms extended, and palms cupped upwards to hold a smaller, petite face. Yekel desperately

reaches out to her, cradling her face in his hands, hoping his dreams would not be ruined (See Figure 19).

Text Work

Yekel is a complex and flawed character who achieves wealth by managing a brothel in a Jewish shtetl, or an Orthodox religious community in Eastern Europe. He desires status and wants to redeem himself and his family. Yekel believes that if he can acquire a Torah scroll for his daughter and marry her to the son of a rabbi that he will gain higher status in the community. He is obsessed with maintaining his daughter's purity. He places his daughter on a pedestal and wants to keep her separate from the life of the brothel downstairs. He refers to his daughter Rifkele as kosher (meaning proper), "worthy of marrying the best of men," and Manke as traif (or treif, derived from the Hebrew word *trafah* meaning torn) (Vogel 14) (Sherwin). Yekel threatens his wife Sarah by telling her that he better not catch the two women, Rifkele and Manke together again.

The character of Yekel is first introduced in Scene 3 during the salon reading of *God of Vengeance* by Peretz and members of his Warsaw Writing Club. Within *Indecent*, two characters play the character of Yekel throughout the show, Peretz and Schildkraut. My approach to Peretz's version of Yekel was less about "acting" the scene, but to clearly emphasize inflections and punctuation, like the first read of a script by an actor. When beginning to read the love scene between the two women, the men refuse to read any more of the scene, explaining that "none of us are going to read this garbage" (Vogel 15). Peretz does not oppose ending the reading session, but he permits Asch to continue reading with the newest guest in the salon, Lemml. The poetry and beauty of the rain scene captures the attention of Peretz, indicated by Vogel's stage direction that states that "the men in the salon can't breathe" (Vogel 16).



Figure 18: Peretz reading the *God of Vengeance, Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Paul Pelletier Jr. as Ensemble, Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), and Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Vogel is selective about which scenes of *God of Vengeance* are included and repeated within the play. These scenes include crucial moments for Yekel's character arc and the plot of *God of Vengeance*. The scene in which Yekel discovers the relationship between Rifkele, his daughter, and Manke, a prostitute in his brothel, is only included in the Salon reading. The climactic scene in *God of Vengeance* repeated thrice throughout *Indecent* is Yekel's confrontation with his daughter Rifkele and his wife Sarah. The use of physical violence is

found throughout the original script of *God of Vengeance* and with each confrontation, Yekel asserts his dominance over the women in his home. I wanted to pay attention to the subtle differences between the Berlin version and the Broadway scenes because although the endings are similar, the dialogue that leads up to Yekel's expulsion of Rifkele to the whorehouse builds differently. Although Yekel's confrontation with Rifkele in the Last Moments of *God of Vengeance* is repeated throughout the show, I wanted to make each appearance unique and create subtle differences in my approach that would reflect the script changes in each version.

For each version of Yekel's character to be distinguishable and evolve throughout the play, I wanted my action palette to reflect the changes made for the 1923 Broadway production. To create a darker, more sinister character for the 1907 Berlin production, I wanted to clearly establish contrasting choices as Yekel on Broadway. For the Broadway version, I made Yekel preoccupied with his failings as a father and husband. I wanted Yekel to appear gentler when confronting his misguided daughter for the truth. Dorothee, the actress playing Manke, the prostitute, objects to the Broadway rewrites because her character appears to procure Rifkele and manipulate her into a relationship. By removing the loving relationship depicted in the rain scene, Yekel becomes a more sympathetic character as a father whose daughter has been lured away from the life that he has provided to secure her a better future. Because of the Broadway rewrites, Manke becomes a sexual predator who has seduced Rifkele and her naivete for personal gain. She becomes the antagonist to Yekel's desire to attain a better life for his daughter. In his final monologue, Yekel blames God and the women in his life for his fate. Yekel's relationship with God becomes an unsurmountable obstacle and supports the theoretical idea of determinism. Regardless of how he strives to procure a better life for his daughter, the fate of his character is predetermined because of his morally flawed character.

In the Berlin version, Yekel abruptly and forcefully questions Rifkele about her virginity. Yekel is consumed by succeeding in his plan to advance his societal status. To purchase a Torah scroll requires a great deal of money, and like a businessman, he can only think about how much the Torah has cost him: a year's profits in the brothel. Contrasting these two scenes indicated a more subtle shift in Yekel's emotional arc leading up to the pinnacle of the scene when he expels his wife and daughter from his house and hurls down the Torah.



Figure 19: Rifkele confronts Yekel on Broadway, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Recreating the final moments of this dramatic scene required a specific gestural vocabulary for holding and maintaining the position to throw down the Torah. As a performance object with religious significance, the handling of the Torah scroll became important to discover during rehearsals. I spoke with the cultural ambassadors on how to hold the Torah during

transitional moments when I carried the scroll across the stage. However, Dr. Listengarten and I agreed that due to Yekel's heightened emotional state during the last moments of the play, he would not necessarily need to hold the Torah properly. The size of the scroll fluctuated during the rehearsal process, and it became too large of a prop to conspicuously hide or carry with me during the performance. (When not used, the Torah was kept in a large container near the back wall.) Asch reveals during the salon scene that Yekel throws down the Torah, an action that offends Peretz and the other members of the salon. This controversial action is never completed on stage and the audience is left to imagine what would happen in the next few moments of the play.

Creating a distinct landscape for each performance was important to Dr. Listengarten, especially paying attention to the perspective of the action on stage and the audience for each iteration of the scene. Navigating these variations at first was difficult to organize in my head, particularly with both the Berlin and Broadway performances occurring on the staged ramp. In the Berlin production, the theatre audience occupies the space of our actual audience. This convention is reversed in the Broadway production, where the staged audience is located upstage, but the shifted perspective creates a dramatic effect that gave the audience a view of the backstage action occurring during the Broadway performance. In Scene 6, during the *God of Vengeance*'s tour across Europe, the last moments of the play are repeated in sequence. The stage patterns shifted in a circular arc, down the ramp, as the rest of the ensemble cast moved around the stage to watch the performance. Working with my scene partner, Kimber King (who played Sarah), we wanted these theatrical moments to grow with theatricality and emotional intensity, to demonstrate how actors can embellish their performances during a theatrical run. Heightened emotional moments can become overly manufactured, resulting in an artificial and

self-indulgent performance. By elongating certain words and experimenting with pitch, we could repeat the same gestural vocabulary for a more comedic effect. The musical underscoring connected these moments with lively and brisk music that reflected the overall comedic mood.



Figure 20: The Progression through Europe, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

During Yekel's emotional moments, I would clutch the Torah in my arms, and raise the Torah above my sternum, tilting my head up, but I kept my eyes fixed on the direction where I would throw the Torah. One of my biggest challenges during these heightened emotional moments was to relax the physical tensions in my body, particularly around my neck and shoulders, and I had difficulty taking full breaths. I became aware of how debilitating these tensions became for my voice during our first run-through of the show before winter break. To

maintain a healthy voice, I knew that I had to find ways to preserve my voice during these intense emotional moments.



Figure 21: Yekel asks Rifkele how much a Torah costs, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Being confronted by his daughter about his impropriety was the largest emotional trigger for Yekel's rage. Discovering that he can no longer control her, he is forced to acknowledge his hypocrisy, and his world begins to crumble. Yekel reacts by questioning how little she is aware of the outside world or how he sought a better life for her; nevertheless, she questions the lifestyle he has given her. Yekel tries to separate her from the ugliness he has created in his life and ultimately fails to secure his daughter a better future. His hypocritical view of his daughter's purity leads to his downfall.

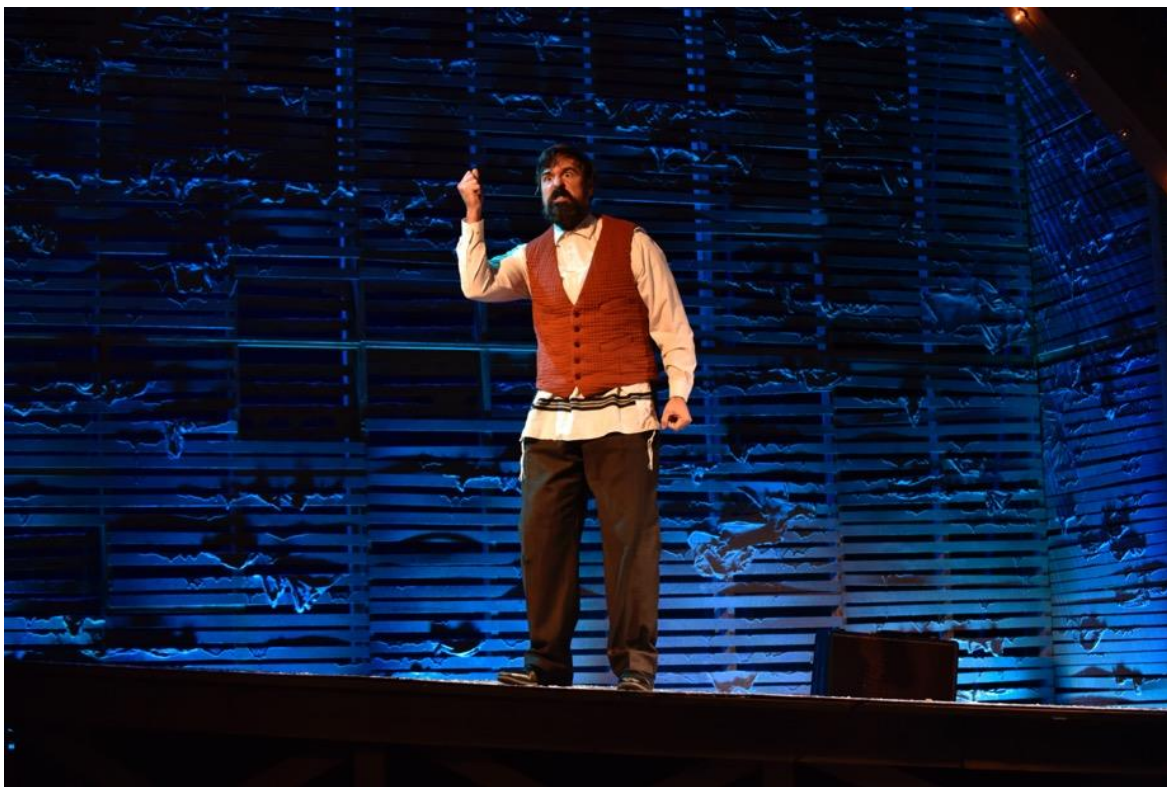


Figure 22: Yekel makes his decision, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

A father's misguided perception of his daughter and what constitutes love is an important aspect of my perception of Yekel. Watching Zero Mostel's character Tevye from *Fiddler on the Roof*, I was inspired by Tevye's perception of what he believes is right for his daughter's life and what he hopes for in a husband and her future. Another similarity between the two characters was their frank ability to speak directly to God and question God's motivations in his life. Their ability to personify their relationship with God and speak to Him directly was an aspect that I wanted to include in Yekel's final monologue. Yekel questions God for his place in this world and forces the blame of his outcome onto his wife, who was formerly a prostitute in his brothel. Yekel resigns himself to do what he knows when faced with a problem: make money. He abandons his opportunity for a better life, and he indentures his wife and daughter to make up for the money that he has lost. Ultimately, he rejects God by hurling down the Torah scroll.

Accent Work

For the character of Yekel, I needed to distinguish between using my natural dialect (when spoken as Peretz) and the Yiddish dialect (when spoken as Schildkraut). In her notes on the text, Vogel writes, “When a character speaks her/his native language, they speak in perfect English. When they speak a second or third language, they speak English with an accent” (Vogel 7). The key to dropping into his distinctive oral posture alternated between finding a kinesthetic trigger using a keyword or phrase that could reorient my mouth to the new dialect. Developing a kinesthetic trigger in the Yiddish oral posture for Yekel’s character was the word, daughter. In this example, the vowel placement of the “au” shifts towards the open back [ɔ] and mid-open back [ɔ̃], lowering the middle body of the tongue, and framed with alveolar taps for the “d” and “t,” respectively.



Figure 23: Yekel's rage against his wife and daughter, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel) and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

I confronted many vocal challenges while playing the character of Yekel while matching the emotional intensity and physical demands of the character. Playing these intense emotions required harnessing the combination of rage, frustration, disappointment, and despair on stage, particularly while displaying scenes of stage violence. Navigating these escalating emotions required carving out an aural landscape, finding places to build intensity, and creating a believable and authentic journey for the character and the audience. This aural landscape was defined by observing punctuation throughout, specifically when asking a question (raised), an

end stop (lowered), or an exclamation mark (raised with intensity). One example of matching the aural landscape to physical action and text would be the performance at the Bowery Theatre when the dialogue is spoken in Yiddish. For context, the audience has already heard the last lines, “And take the holy scroll with you. I don’t need it anymore!,” but repeating these lines in Yiddish, “Du seyfer-toyre nemt aykh mit. Ikh darf es shoy nisht mer!” required pairing the same vocal inflections as I performed them in English (Vogel 26).

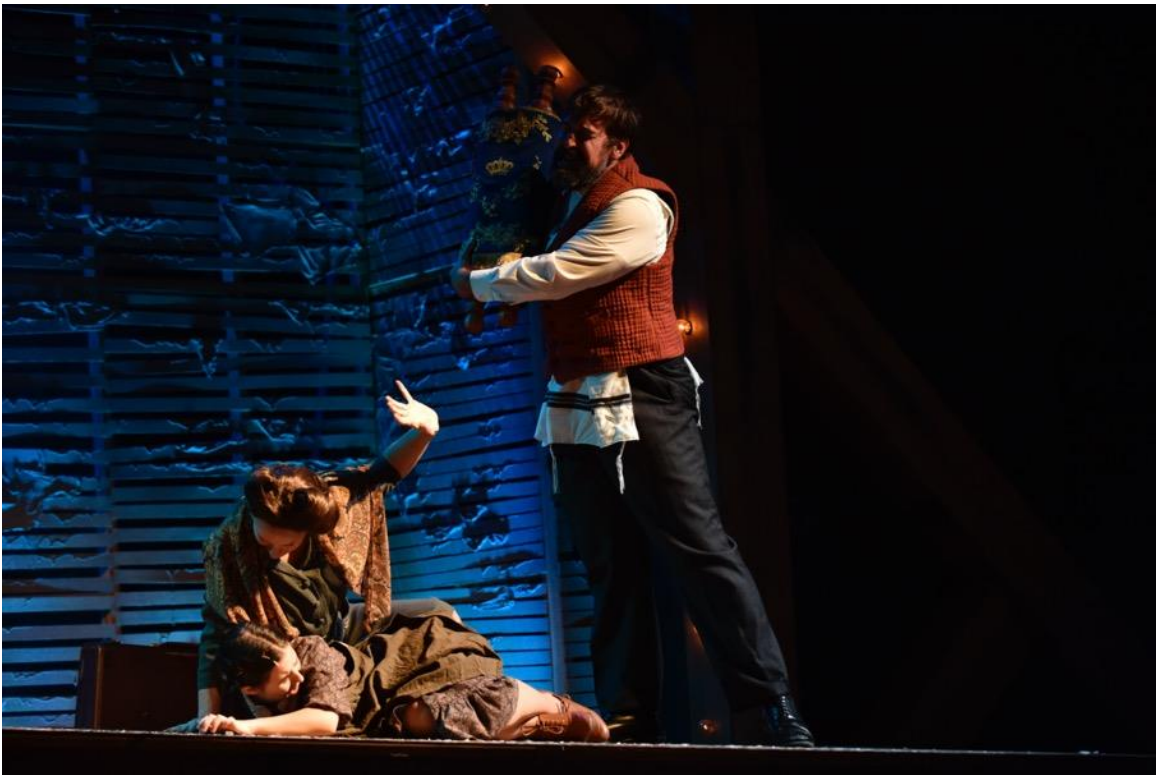


Figure 24: Yekel grabs the Torah, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

One of the vocal strategies I used during performances was expanding my pitch range. As a baritone, I am more comfortable in my lower tessitura, as my body tends to relax more fully for proper air support and reflexively eases habitual tensions in the neck and shoulders. In Prof. Majkowski’s class, we studied how intercostal tensions within the body inhibit the full expansion of breath, leading to a shallower breath, and consequently, resulting in more squeezing and a

tightening of the throat. These tensions can lead to vocal fatigue and an inability to phonate. Starting the phrase in the lower part of my voice gave me a broader range to vocally and emotionally ascend toward the final exclamation mark.



Figure 25: An example of Yekel's physical dominance over his wife Sarah, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Rifkele), Drew Stark as The Elder (Yekel), and Kimber King as The Elder (Sarah). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Peretz

Psychophysical Techniques/PG

The Psychological Gesture I applied for Peretz has the left hand extended, palm supinated, and the right hand pressed against the heart. Peretz's response to Asch during the Parlor scene about why he creates art and literature inspired my PG for Peretz. I envisioned Peretz as an older man with a commanding presence: a softly spoken and highly educated,

idealistic man who sought to find a way to preserve his cultural heritage. Peretz's agitation grows physically as he confronts Asch's persistence to publish this play.



Figure 26: Peretz's physical manifestation of illness and frustration, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza as Ensemble, Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz) and Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Nakhmen). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Text Work

Before Peretz appears in *Indecent*, Vogel introduces his character in Scene 2 with a conversation between Madje and Asch. Asch is nervous about the upcoming reading of his new play in Peretz's salon and is frustrated by having to pander to a man like Peretz to get recognition for his work. Madje describes Peretz as "a lovely man, but so nineteenth century" (Vogel 12).

In comparison to the real person, Peretz, who was born in 1852, would have been in his 50s when meeting Asch in his salon. Vogel establishes Peretz as a literary scholar, writer, and cultural figurehead of the Yiddish Renaissance and contrasts his character with the young Asch, an idealistic dreamer, who aspires to fame and greatness through his writings.



Figure 27: Peretz argues with Asch, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Nakhmen), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenu (Avram) and Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Two important dramaturgical resources I found in my research influenced my impression of Peretz: Aneta Stepień’s “Folk-lore: Modernism and Psychoanalysis in the Work of Isaac Bashevis Singer” and Yair Lipshitz’s essay, “Scrolls and Scandals: The Ritual Object as Stage Prop in *God of Vengeance*.” Both resources reflect Peretz’s traditionalist view and provide context and insight into the world of Yiddish literature in the early 20th century. “Scrolls and

Scandals” also includes an excerpt written by Peretz about his initial opinions about *God of Vengeance*.

As a published author on gender and sexuality in Jewish culture in Poland, Stepien provides context for the emergence of Yiddish literature through the unpublished lecture notes of Isaac Bashevis Singer. Stepien states that “Peretz was heavily influenced by the ideology of Polish Romantic patriotism, with its central role of folk legends and themes of mysticism as major creative material.” (Stepien 22). According to Singer’s notes, Peretz inspired a new ideology of Yiddish literature by encouraging the members of his salon to write about the traditional life of the diaspora. By immersing themselves in the customs and practices of their ancestors, they could deepen their understanding and connection to their heritage. Many of the writers in his salon began to romanticize Jewish characters who were often destitute and impoverished, “the great, the profoundly Jewish, the eternal” (Stepien 19). Vogel appears to support this worldly view of Peretz in her stage directions of Scene 3, when Peretz meets Lemml, a tailor from Balut, “eager to welcome a working man” (Vogel 13). Peretz questions Nakhmen about the subject of this play asking, “Why are so many men writing brothel stories?” (Vogel 13). Peretz believes that the Jewish writer should feel compelled to write about material about their own lived experience for the benefit of the Jewish people. In “Scrolls and Scandals,” Lipshitz cites a published essay by Peretz in 1907 that indicates that Peretz applauded the portrayal of a lesbian relationship found in the play “as Asch’s gift to the stage.” (Lipshitz 234). His major objection to the play is how the Torah is manipulated through Yekel’s character within the play to become a symbol of Rifkele’s virginity, and how Yekel defiles a precious religious object by hurling it to the ground. Peretz writes, “he doesn’t lead this scroll into the synagogue with music and dancing, as would be appropriate, nor does he put it in a holy place...(instead) he

puts it in his daughter's room, as a talisman, as a sentinel, so that the Torah will protect her from sin" (Lipshitz 235).

Maintaining a manageable perception of the Jewish people was essential to Peretz and his followers, who were preoccupied with the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. Asch questions their perspective, asking, "Why must every Jew onstage be a paragon?" (Vogel 17). Peretz claims he wants to "write something for the Jewish people," preserving a positive image of Jews (Vogel 18). The turning point in the two authors' relationship is Asch's obsession with translating *God of Vengeance* onto "every stage in every language" (Vogel 18). Asch wants his work to be seen and heard across Europe and believes his work should not be limited by what was considered a Jewish play. In his open letter, Asch comments on the unfair perception of sanitizing the perception of Jews on the stage:

Jews do not need to clear themselves before anyone. They are good as bad as any race. I see no reason why a Jewish writer should not bring out the bad or good traits. I think that the apologetic writer, who tries to place Jews in a false, even though white light, does them more harm than good in the eyes of the Gentiles. I have written so many Jewish characters who are good and noble, that I can not now, when writing of a 'bad' one, make an exception and say that he is a Gentile. (Asch)

Peretz's words continued to haunt Asch throughout his life and informed my interpretation of Older Asch in Scene 21.



Figure 28: Peretz urges Asch to burn his play, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Giuseppe Pipicella as The Middle (Nakhmen), Drew Stark as The Elder (Peretz), and Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Avram). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Accent Work

Because the character Peretz speaks in his primary language within the play, I adopted my natural accent, however, I modulated the pitch deeper to reflect the status and oral posture of an older man. I was acutely aware of observing punctuation through inflections and asking genuine questions of my scene partner. An example stands out in one of my first lines, asking Nakhmen, “Why are so many men writing brothel stories?” For the comedy to be found in Nakhmen’s response and for the joke to land properly, the circular inflection of the question needed to be supported.

Another challenge for Peretz was shifting between Yiddish words and names with my American oral posture. Shifting between the two dialects was challenging, particularly when pronouncing certain Yiddish words and proper names. An example would be the author Asch’s

name. For the first vowel sound, I occasionally slipped in using a front mid-open “a” [æ] instead of a front open “a” [a]. The diphthong in traif in Yiddish became more of a front mid-open shift between [æ] to [I] instead of a front mid-close [e] to [I]. Sometimes my southern accent would occasionally pop in with the word “tent” as with a front mid-close [e] instead of being more centralized “e” [ə].

Schildkraut

Psychophysical Techniques/PG



Figure 29: Schildkraut’s PG “Lecken the crème,” *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Mia Woods as The Ingenu (Virginia), Kate Milazzo as The Middle (Dorothee), Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), and Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

The psychological gesture I applied for Schildkraut was partly inspired by Marc Chagall’s *The Fiddler* and a gestural improvisational moment that I discovered during the rehearsal process as we were staging the rehearsal scene. It made for a precious moment, with my hands raised,

my head bobbling back and forth, pretending to be a cat that was lapping up milk, or “lecken the creme.” The left arm is upright, almost like it is holding a violin and the right-hand circles over the center of the violin. There was a sense of playfulness within the gesture, like being on display for the entertainment of others. I was also inspired by the physicality of Dr. Listengarten during rehearsals, who, as a non-native English speaker and a petite woman, she theatrically gesticulates with her hands to fill a room.



Figure 30: Rudolph Schildkraut Makes an Entrance, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut), Kimber King as The Elder (Esther), Andre Braza and Paul Pelletier Jr. as Ensemble, and Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Ensemble). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Text Work

Vogel mentions the character Rudolph Schildkraut in Scene 2 between Madje and Asch. Madje describes him as a “sensation in Berlin” with his production of *The Merchant of*

Venice and would be perfect for the character of Yekel. Vogel's title "Rudolph Schildkraut Makes an Entrance" suggests the theatricality of a very large personality. Schildkraut not only plays the lead character of *God of Vengeance*, but he is also the director. In Scene 5, Schildkraut enters commanding the stage, as he calls Lemml to assemble the cast to the stage, demanding an audience. In the stage directions, Vogel indicates that Schildkraut nods to Frieda and then kisses Elsa's hand. I wanted to support the idea of othering from those who distanced themselves from their Jewish heritage and assimilated into German culture.



Figure 31: Dorothee confronts Schildkraut, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Giuseppe Picicella as The Middle (Harry Weinberger), Kimber King as The Elder (Esther), Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut), Mia Woods as The Ingenue (Virginia), Emmitt Williams as Stage Manager (Lemml), Forrest Stringfellow as The Ingenue (Morris Carnovsky), and Paul Pelletier Jr. and Andre Braza as Ensemble. Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Schildkraut is a complex character in whom I wanted to create a superficial exterior yet demonstrate his talents as a performer to deliver a commanding performance as Yekel. His

emotional sensitivity to the rest of the troupe is reflected in his interactions with Lemml and Reina Popeska, who plays Rifkele, in Scene 8. Schildkraut fires Reina because he considers her “too Jewish” for American audiences. Instead, he hires Virginia McFadden, who lacks the training and acting experience, but speaks perfect English. He achieved fame from his abilities as an actor and director but is self-possessed by making a name for himself in the American theatre. Lemml mentions in Scene 17 that because of the *God of Vengeance*’s censorship on Broadway, Schildkraut will not gain the respectability to play roles other than Jewish characters. Historically, Schildkraut moved to Hollywood and continued his career in film. Out of the original troupe of actors, he is the only member who did not return to Europe and therefore survived the Holocaust.

Accent Work

Approaching the accent work for Schildkraut, there needed to be a dialect shift between the European version of this character when speaking in his native language and when speaking in the rehearsals he conducts at the Bowery Theatre in English. Although historically the character is Eastern European, I adopted a Yiddish oral posture when Schildkraut begins to speak English in America, as the postures are very similar. The expletive “sukin syn” is an example of a Russian curse word he uses out of frustration with Lemml and illustrates the use of the back close “u” [u]. His use of the Yiddish word “Zoy moykhl” exemplifies the articulation of the velar plosive. Another challenge for me was audibly releasing at the end of the word Ruth.



Figure 32: Schildkraut explains how audiences want an American daughter, *Indecent*, TheatreUCF. Pictured Drew Stark as The Elder (Schildkraut). Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF. 25 January 2022. Digital Photo.

Schildkraut's use of vocal inflections and melodic cadence colored my interpretation of his pitch and rate as he described specific images within the text. Many of his speeches were packed with soaring images and lengthy lines of text. Each image required the proper amount of breath support to handle the size of the image and the length of the line. One of the significant differences between the use of punctuation in this character and the other characters I played was the number of dashes, which indicate a trailing image or thought. This character also used Jewish cultural idioms, such as the phrase "oyoyoy," which can be mistakenly confused with "aiyaiyai." As I began to play more within the character, I noticed that my old dialect habits resurfaced as I became unfocused on the intricacies of the subtle differences in the sound shifts. In each performance, I had to reinvest in their distinctive qualities.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE



Figure 33: *Indecent* Cast Photo Backstage. Pictured Band member Heather Langs (Clarinet), Forrest Stringfellow, Drew Stark, Emmitt Williams, Kate Milazzo, Paul Pelletier Jr., Giuseppe Pipicella, Kimber King, Andre Braza, and Mia Woods. Photo by Hannah Schorr. 6 February 2022.

The shift from rehearsal to performance is a vulnerable part of the creative process. Many changes are constantly being made around you that can be distracting and overwhelming. During our production of *Indecent*, the COVID pandemic led to extraordinary measures that influenced how rehearsals and performances were conducted. Facial masking was integrated into our rehearsal process and many of us had only seen each other with a facial covering. As Florida began removing the mask mandate in the spring of 2022, we were asked whether we felt comfortable performing unmasked. The decision was made that we would perform unmasked after our first dress rehearsal, and two days before opening in front of an audience. The threat of

COVID exposure was still lingering, as one of our cast members tested positive for COVID after opening night and consequently missed the rest of the first week of performances. We were fortunate that all the understudies attended the rehearsals and were prepared for this possibility. As an ensemble, we were sensitive to the needs of our cast members, by responding to a new energy on stage while maintaining the show's integrity. Despite the differences in performance energy, this led to new acting discoveries and a renewed sense of play.

Daily Practice

To alleviate unnecessary stressors, establishing a feeling of preparedness becomes essential in a confident approach to creative work. Establishing a solid foundation for the work by readying the body and the mind is an essential part of any pre-show ritual. My pre-show rituals for *Indecent* began before arriving at the theatre. Before each performance, I would begin my physical warmup at home with a Fitzmaurice Tremoring© exercise, followed by a warm shower and facial massage. Tremoring helped to warm up my physical body, and I found that it would help alleviate anxiety about the upcoming performance. The steam from the hot shower would relax my body and moisten my nasal passages and throat to soothe my voice. Arriving early to the theatre, I would quickly get into my base costume which included loose dress pants and an undershirt. This process allowed me to get in the external skin of the character and feel grounded in my character's shoes and feel the connection between the breath and the stage. I continued to use the physical and vocal warm-up series that we developed in Prof. Majkowski's Voice class, and the modified standing series was adaptable while in costume.

As I waited to make my first entrance on stage, I tried to keep my body flexible and keep my planes of breath open. I would practice rotating the hips and shoulders around in a circle, in both directions, then in a figure-eight pattern. Grounding myself in my feet and the lower half of

my body, I would squeeze my shoulders towards my ears on an inhale, and then release on an exhale. As a practitioner who holds a lot of neck and shoulder tension, this exercise was particularly beneficial.

Wedges

This show's complexity challenged my expectations as a performer. The rehearsal helped build my confidence, but I am extremely self-critical of my performances. One of the challenges that I face as a theatre practitioner is the high standard by which I measure each performance. When a mistake is made during a scene, anxiety builds, and I start to mentally disparage myself and my abilities as an actor. This is particularly worrisome within a performance setting, for as I preoccupy myself with my past mistakes, I start to lose a connection with the present circumstances. In this production of *Indecent*, there were incidents where I made a mistake and instantly began to judge myself. Through this process, I am learning to become more mindful and present as an actor. The essential first step of mindfulness is recognizing when the mind wanders. Acknowledging when this happens without judgment and slowly redirecting the focus back to the present moment is an essential part of Stanislavski's Circle of Attention. Instead of being self-critical and focusing on my mistakes, I had to learn to take a breath and refocus my energy on the present moment.

Becoming more aware of breath within the body and its power as a transitional tool was essential for navigating these dynamic shifts between characters and the altitudes between scenic moments. For example, as Peretz, I utilized the breath cycle during the "blinks in time" to help coordinate physical actions with my scene partners. Sitting down in a row of chairs as a collective was made possible by a coordinated breath. Feeling the breath within the PG helped my application of the PG particularly when transitioning between the characters of Schildkraut

and Yekel. Within each transitional breath, I could envision how the spirit of the characters would fill up within my body and be released. The spiritual experience of finding these characters through the PG became more organic with each performance and proved to be an effective and efficient transitional tool during a performance. As I became more comfortable, it allowed for greater specificity to the oral posture and gestural vocabulary of the character.

My comfortability in performance was directly linked to my preparedness through the rehearsal process. Coordinating inflections with punctuation early in the rehearsal process gave me greater flexibility to play with the images within the text, helping them to appear more vibrant in my imagination and easier to communicate within the performance. Observing punctuation during the preliminary stages of character creation helped inform my action palette for each character and create more vibrant images in my mind. In performance, I had to remind myself that when I asked a question of my scene partner, I was truly asking for something, to keep the energy flow active between my scene partner and myself, instead of the question deflating into a generalized statement.

Discoveries

Developing a kinesthetic awareness of the body at rest is challenging, yet actors who delve into the psychophysical must navigate heightened emotional moments in the performance that can trigger a sympathetic response reflected within the body. Muscular tension is part of the body's natural response to mental and physical stresses. After the body initiates the fight or flight response, the breathing rate quickens and the heart beats faster to oxygenate more blood to the muscles. In this heightened emotional state, habitual tensions throughout the body inhibit proper breath support or constrict the breath and voice. Becoming emotionally available and vulnerable without adding tension within the body was one of my biggest challenges in *Indecent*,

particularly as I experienced increasing vocal fatigue during the production. This vocal fatigue was directly linked to muscular tension and locking up my breath during Yekel's emotional moments.

Learning to control these physical tensions has been a gradual process that extended beyond this production and into my coursework with Prof. Michael Wainstein in Acting III. Although I successfully employed PG within this process, I would have explored more of Chekhov's methodology in freeing the body during the creative process before the thesis began. I am grateful for the feedback I gained in Prof. Wainstein's class and for becoming more aware of when physical tensions arise in my body and how to soften them. Awareness is a gradual process, as you peel away each of the superficial layers slowly and over time, you become more deeply invested in the present moment and begin to fully "experience."

Developing a better understanding of my oral posture has led to discoveries in alleviating vocal tensions in singing and a better facility in acquiring dialects for the stage. The application of this thesis research has informed my scholarship and practical application of psychophysical techniques in performance. I learned that by developing a more kinesthetic awareness of my oral posture, I can improve my singing by loosening up tensions in the back of the tongue and lifting the soft palate to create more space for vocal resonance. For example, as a vocal exercise, I applied Schildkraut's oral posture while singing a song in my repertoire in the Yiddish oral posture. I found that it was easier to reach higher notes with less physical and mental strain. By tapping into my imagination and creativity, I can imbue my voice and body with the essence of these characters, making them vibrant and living beings on stage. With continued discipline and more practical applications of these techniques, I'm excited to take on even more challenging and diverse roles in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Through my thesis research, I examined the actor's process of developing multiple characters using Stanislavski's psychophysical methods by pairing an oral posture for dialect work with Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture (PG). Despite the complexities of Vogel's *Indecent*, I was able to navigate character shifts using psychophysical techniques, supported by a rich textual and dramaturgical analysis of the play to develop authentic characters and gain a heightened kinesthetic sense of my body by living or "experiencing" these characters. I feel that the application of these methodologies allowed me to consciously and more effectively transition between accents and character shifts in performance. In addition, TheatreUCF's production of *Indecent*, supported by an educational environment and Dr. Listengarten's collaborative rehearsal process, informed my approach to portraying marginalized characters authentically and effectively on stage.

Although the show's reception was positive, the UCF Nicholson Student Media Journal *NSM Today* printed an article titled "Theatre UCF's *Indecent* sparks discussion on Jewish representation" after the production closed. The article discussed the lack of Jewish representation among the cast and elaborated on the dramaturgical methods that Dr. Listengarten used during the rehearsal process to provide a more authentic representation for informing its cast members. A former cast member, Isa Jones, shared her reluctance in remaining with the cast because she had doubts about "playing a character with an identity that was not her own" and that "it was not her place to tell the story of discrimination and hardship when it is not something she ever faced" (Sullivan and Paul). Jones said that "I believe that casting people that are a part of a community allow us to tell stories that have more value. They have a deeper connection" (Sullivan and Paul). UCF student, Jacqueline Huss, who is Jewish and claimed that

she did not wish to become involved with UCF's *Indecent* because "You don't understand it unless it's your culture. Nobody understands the impact of antisemitism like a Jewish person does" (Sullivan and Paul).

These opinions affected me deeply throughout the rehearsal process and reflected the perspective of many members of our theatrical community who advocate for more cultural diversity on stage. Playing these characters has been one of the most challenging of my career because of the structural complexity and emotional range and depth of Vogel's characters. At the same time, I felt honored to be telling this story, not only because of its cultural relevance to the current political climate in Florida, but also how this production provided agency and visibility for queer and Jewish stories to be told. Concurrent with our production at UCF, a production of *Indecent* at a high school in Jacksonville was censored by its school board because of the play's sexual content. Even in Orlando, a Nazi rally was held in a shopping center adjacent to UCF's campus during our opening weekend. Although the protesters never appeared on campus, the immediacy of the threat warranted extra security measures around the theatre. Although these circumstances were intimidating, I felt emboldened by the fact that we were telling an important story, authentically and passionately, within this community.

This experience was profoundly impactful as a theatre-maker within an academic environment. Learning effective strategies for artistic collaboration, sharing insights and perspectives from our cultural ambassadors and the creative team, and the unique ability to bring characters to life beyond our own lived experiences are all part of being conscientious actor practitioners. By tapping into our imagination and artistry, we can creatively imbue our voices and bodies with the essence of these characters. Through this process, we can truly embrace them as vibrant and living beings on stage.

GLOSSARY

ad lib: an improvisational dialogue within the reality of the given circumstances of the character

affective memory (emotional memory): the application of an actor's personal experiences or memories that derive from an exploration of the dramatic situation and may be applied in the creative process to elicit a more genuine, natural reaction (Stanislavski 683)

anthroposophy: a spiritual movement developed by Rudolf Steiner that centers around an individual's personal development into a higher or more enlightened spiritual consciousness

archetypal gesture: Chekhov's term to describe a gesture that embodies the whole creative body, both mentally and physically, which is the complete embodiment of a PG (Chekhov 70)

auxiliary verbs: a verb that is used to form the tenses and moods of other verbs for functional and grammatical meaning

beauty: one of Chekhov's four qualities of artistic creation, finding the artistic joy within an aesthetic performance unencumbered by the ego to uplift and inspire an audience (Chekhov 15)

catharsis: the process of releasing repressed emotions

close: one of Chekhov's physical exercises that contrasts with the fullness of the environment to awaken the opposite set of muscular activation (Chekhov 6)

code-switching: the psychological process of alternating between two or more languages in conversation, particularly for an underrepresented group, that reflects the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture

communication: the dynamic relationship between the actor and his surroundings, either with an object or with another person, and either verbal or non-verbal (Stanislavski 683)

concentration: Stanislavski's belief in achieving an ideal creative state on stage, or to focus complete attention to the physical action and the actor's imaginative state (Moore 30)

de-role: the process of distancing the actor from their creative process, or separating the emotional life of a character from the actor's mental or emotional state

determinism: the philosophical premise that all events are inevitable and determined by external forces beyond human will

dramaturgy: the study of the dramatic elements and themes within a narrative to help support the director's vision and further the artistic collaboration of actors and designers

dybbuk: a Jewish belief that a spirit of a dead person occupies the body of a living person

ease: one of Chekhov's four qualities of artistic creation, the manner of behaving on stage with a lightness and a relaxed body and spirit (Chekhov 14)

empathy: the ability to understand the feelings of another person or character

entirety: one of Chekhov's four qualities of artistic creation, the ability to integrate a well-constructed continuity of character consistent with an understanding of the aims of the production (Chekhov 17)

float: one of Chekhov's physical exercises to connect movements while maintaining their simplicity and form and supported by the surrounding environment (Chekhov 10)

fly: one of Chekhov's physical exercises to overcome gravity and the weight of the body, generating a feeling of lightness and ease (Chekhov 11)

focus: the shaping of the articulators within the oral tract to produce a particular "quality" of sound (Knight 30)

form: one of Chekhov's four qualities of artistic creation, the clarity and specificity of how a character is being performed (Chekhov 14)

Freytag's Pyramid: named after the German playwright Gustav Freytag, describes the five-part dramatic structure of classical literature resembling a pyramid: the introduction, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution

hamartia: a characteristic flaw in a leading character that leads to his tragic downfall

imagination: the creative work of an actor, the inventive nature to represent life on stage as theatrical fact (Stanislavski 60)

inner tempo-rhythm: the pace of human behavior either mentally or physically within a given environment, prompting the intuitive feelings and experiences when building a character (Stanislavski 476)

IPA (or International Phonetic Alphabet): the method of using a particular set of symbols to describe the sounds of human speech

kinesthetic: relating to the acute sensory perception or awareness of physical movement and positioning of the body

kinesthetic trigger: the use of a particular word or phrase that correlates to a specific oral posture for dialect work

metatheatrical: describes the aspects of acknowledging the theatrical construct within a dramatic production and its direct relationship between the actors on stage and the audience.

mise en scene: the arrangement of scenic objects and actors on stage

mold: one of Chekhov's physical exercises to create strong and deliberate movements within an environment and to develop an inner satisfaction for a well-formed action (Chekhov 10)

naivete: the theatrical realness of the given circumstances, similar to a childlike quality that is truthfully experienced for the first time on stage

negative empathy: the social ability to collectively share emotions about the more negative aspects of the prevailing culture

obstacles: either a physical or mental challenge that impedes the completion of a particular task

open: one of Chekhov's physical exercises to gain a greater sense of freedom within an environment and learn to move without tension (Chekhov 6)

operative word: an essential word within a sentence, usually containing an image, that is stressed to convey meaning or the speaker's main idea

oral posture: the shape and positioning of the oral tract, primarily the placement of the tongue and the jaw, to produce sound.

principle verbs: a verb that possesses the action of the subject

positive empathy: the social ability to collectively share emotions about positive aspects of the prevailing culture

quality: Chekhov's term to describe the sensation of feelings that arise from the actor's perception of a character (Chekhov 136)

radiate: one of Chekhov's physical exercises to explore beyond the physical embodiment of gesture and awaken the spiritual essence of a character (Chekhov 13)

relaxation: the premise that an actor's body should be in a constant state of readiness and that muscular tension inhibits the completion of natural movement and the inner creative process (Moore 53)

repetitive contrast: one of Hammond's rhetorical principles in finding the operative word in a sentence: repeated images are rarely operative unless a new quality has been added and become the dominant operative. When repeated for emphasis and no image is added, the repeated word may be operative (Hammond)

rhetorical devices: a linguistic tool or technique used by an author or a speaker to convey meaning or persuade an audience

simple: one of Chekhov's essential qualities of the PG, the gesture must be easy to perform to serve as a condensed essence of the psychology of a character (Chekhov 71)

stakes: the subtext, or given circumstances of an action, or how those thoughts or mental images influence the actor's mind (Stanislavski 684)

strong: one of Chekhov's essential qualities of the PG, the action must be performed with a lack of tension and strengthen the activation of our will and stir creative impulses (Chekhov 64)

supertask: Stanislavski's term to describe a play's main theme or a summary of the author's purpose (Stanislavski 684)

tactics: any adjustment or action taken to achieve the character's objective (Moore 38)

tempo (inner): reflects changes within the qualities of Chekhov's PG, describes an interpretation of a character's cognitive changes in thoughts, images, feelings or will impulses (Chekhov 75)

tempo (outer): reflects changes with the qualities of Chekhov's PG, describes an interpretation of a character's outer behavior of physical action and speech (Chekhov 75)

throughaction: Stanislavski's term for a logical and coherent sequence of all the actions of a particular character (Stanislavski 684)

tone: a vocal term used to describe the pitch and resonance of sound, (Knight 30)

triggering: psychophysical reaction to a specific stimulus, particularly concerning trauma

vocal patterns: the characteristic way in which a character speaks or expresses themselves distinctive within a dialect

well-formed: one of Chekhov's essential qualities of the PG, that must be clear and recognizable with the qualities of a character (Chekhov 71)

will: Chekhov's term for the strength of a character's desire within the dynamic power that exists in the atmosphere of the play (Chekhov 50)

APPENDIX A: DREW STARK RESUME

DREW STARK

drewstarkactor.com

Eyes/Hair: Brown
 Height: 6'1"
 Weight: 220
 Voice: Baritone
 Range: E2 - G4

Professional Experience:

New York			
<i>A Night In Vegas</i>	Rick/ u/s Bobby/Tim	Bleecker Street Theatre	Dir. Joe Marshall
Regional: Non-Musical /Shakespeare			
<i>Henry V</i>	Montjoy	Orlando Shakes	Dir. Carolyn Howarth
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Belle's Husband/Merchant	Orlando Shakes	Dir. Jim Helsingier
<i>Charlotte's Web</i>	Templeton/Mr. Arable	Orlando Shakes	Dir. Nick Publitz
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	Mr. van Daan	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Francine Reynolds
<i>Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express</i>	Michel*	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Peppy Biddy
<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	Marlowe*	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Francine Reynolds
<i>33 Variations</i>	Mike	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Ivan Rider
<i>Unnecessary Farce</i>	Agent Frank	Prather Productions	Dir. Paul Bernier
<i>Macbeth</i>	Rosse	Playhouse on the Square	Dir. Drew Fracher
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Claudio*	Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival	Dir. Claudia Beach
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	Quintus/Aemilius*	Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival	Dir. Stephen Hancock
<i>Richard II</i>	Servingman/Herald	Virginia Shakespeare Festival	Dir. Jerry Bledsoe
<i>Suddenly Last Summer</i>	Doctor Cukrowicz	Provincetown Tennessee Williams	Dir. Augustin J. Correo
<i>The Lost Colony</i>	Manteo*	RIHA/The Lost Colony	Dir. Jane McCulloch
Regional: Musical			
<i>Kinky Boots</i>	Don/George/Mr. Price u/s	Orlando Shakes	Dir. Joe Walsh
<i>A Big Day for Baseball</i>	Team Manager	Orlando Shakes	Dir. Nicolette Quintero
<i>Young Frankenstein</i>	Frederick	The Little Theatre on the Square	Dir. Peter Marinaro
<i>Damn Yankees</i>	Applegate	The Little Theatre on the Square	Dir. Jordan Cyphert
<i>West Side Story</i>	Bernardo	The Little Theatre on the Square	Dir. Jason Loete
<i>Bright Star</i>	Daryl Ames*	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Francine Reynolds
<i>Sweet Potato Queens: The Musical</i>	George	New Stage Theatre	Dir. Randy Redd
<i>My Way: A Tribute to Frank Sinatra</i>	Man #1	Seaside Repertory Theatre	Dir. Craige Hoover
<i>CATS</i>	Rum Tum Tugger	Prather Productions	Dir. Amy McCleary
<i>Funny Girl</i>	Nick Arnstein	Prather Productions	Dir. Brian Enzman
<i>Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</i>	Pharaoh/Dan	Prather Productions	Dir. Ann Neiman
<i>Legally Blonde</i>	Chad/Dewey/Kyle	Prather Productions	Dir. Seth Reines
<i>Seven Brides for Seven Brothers</i>	Benjamin/Adam u/s perf*	Prather Productions	Dir. Brian Enzman
<i>Kiss Me, Kate</i>	Bill Calhoun	TriArts at the Sharon Playhouse	Dir. Stephen Reed
<i>White Christmas</i>	Jimmy	Cumberland County Playhouse	Dir. Abby Crabtree
<i>A Chorus Line</i>	Al	C.R. Productions/Cohoes Music Hall	Dir. Tralen Doler
<i>Dames at Sea</i>	Dick	Temple Theatre	Dir. Peggy Taphorn
<i>Honk!</i>	Bullfrog	Playhouse on the Square	Dir. Robert B. Fleming
<i>Peter Pan</i>	Sharkey/Hook u/s perf*	Playhouse on the Square	Dir. Shorey Walker
<i>Bat Boy: The Musical</i>	Sheriff/Delia	Playhouse on the Square	Dir. Scott Ferguson
<i>La Cage aux Folles</i>	Chantal	Main Street Theatre	Dir. Bill Mutimer
Film/Television			
<i>White Collar</i>	Stand-in/Featured Extra	Fox Television Studios/TVM Productions	Dir. John Kretchmer
<i>On a Summer's Day</i> (student film)	Lead	College of William and Mary	Dir. Scott Rosman
<i>Two-Sided Coin</i> (student film)	Lead	University of Central Florida	Dir. Bradley Hubbell

*Dance/Fight Captain Fight Choreography/Choreography resume available upon request.

Education/Training:

University of Central Florida: M.F.A.: Theatre. Class of 2023
Theatre Education Associate: New Stage Theatre
Florida Theatrical Association Scholarship Recipient: 2022
Musical Theatre: CAP 21 Summer Musical Theatre Program, Build Your Book with VP Boyle
Acting: Jim Helsingier, Michael Wainstein, Liz Wiley, Anne Hering **On-Camera:** Belinda Boyd, Marci Phillips, Erica Jensen, Jennifer Rudolph
Voice/Speech: Vivian Majkowski, Dr. James Meaders, Carol Joy Sparkman, Eddie Schneckler, Barbershop/Madrigals
Dance/Movement: Modern/Jazz (Lynn Simonson, Charles Wright, Denise McCarthy, Alexandra Beller, Ezra Caldwell), Ballet, Tap, Alexander Technique, Pilates mat certification: Teri Steele, Dance New Amsterdam Summer Intensive Scholarship Recipient, DNA Raw Material Showcase
Stage Combat: David Reed, Andrew Ray, "Pops" Doersch, SAFD: Certified/Trained: Rapier & Dagger, Quarterstaff, Unarmed, Knife, Broadsword.

Figure 34: Drew Stark Resume

APPENDIX B: CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

CHARACTERS: THE DEAD TROUPE

The troupe plays everyone.

The Stage Manager, LEMML

The Ingénue, CHANA, also:

Rifkele

Madje

Elsa

Immigrant

Ruth/Reina

Virginia McFadden

Bagelman Sister

The Ingénue, AVRAM, also:

Asch

Immigrant

Morris Carnovsky

Eugene O'Neill

John Rosen

The Middle, HALINA, also:

Manke

Immigrant

Freida

Dorothee Nelson/Dine

Dr. Hornig

Bagelman Sister

The Middle, MENDEL, also:

Nakhmen

Immigrant

Harry Weinberger

Officer Benjamin Bailie

Rabbi Joseph Silverman

Figure 35: The Characters of the Dead Troupe pg. 1

(Vogel 5)

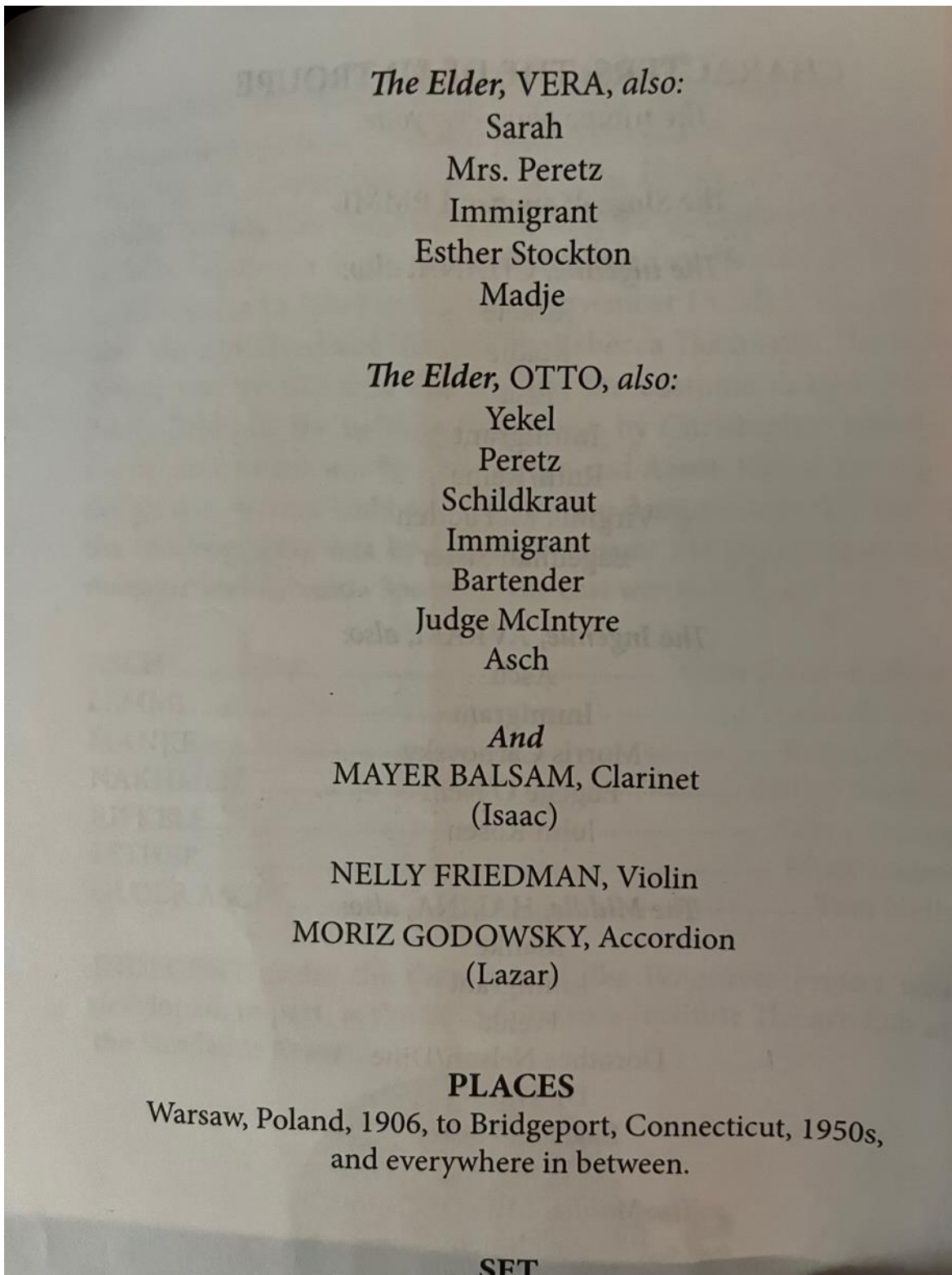


Figure 36: The Characters of the Dead Troupe pg. 2

(Vogel 6)

APPENDIX C: UCF SCENIC BREAKDOWN

Indecent

Running Order

Scene 1 (pg. 9-11):

- 1.1 Indecent: The True Story of a Little Jewish Play
Ghost Waltz
- 1.2 From Ashes They Rise
- 1.3 Lemml Introduces the Troupe
Ale Brider

Scene 2: (pg. 11-13):

- 2.1 Madje Asch Reads the God of Vengeance

Scene 3: (pg. 13-18):

- 3.1 A Salon at The Peretz Home
- 3.2 In The Midst of Act One
- 3.3 Act Two: The First Scene in The Rain
- 3.4 The Last Moments of The Play

Scene 4: (pg. 18-20):

- Ich hab noch einen Koffer in Berlin*
- 4.1 1908, Berlin: A Cabaret

Scene 5 Pages (pg. 20-22):

- 5.1 The Deutsches Theatre Elsa Heimes and Freida Niemann
- 5.2 Rudolph Schildkraut Makes an Entrance

Scene 6 Pages (pg. 23-24):

- 6.1 Opening Night, The Last Moments of The Play
- 6.2 1911, St. Petersburg
- 6.3 1914, Constantinople
- 6.4 1918, Bratislava

Scene 7 Pages (pg. 24-26):

- 7.1 Ellis Island: An Impossibly Long Line
- 7.2 Sholem Asch Shows Lemml America
7a. Vat ken you makh?

Scene 8: (pg. 26-32):

- 8.1 New York City: The Bowery Theatre
- 8.2 New York City: Rehearsal for The English Transfer
- 8.3 Introducing Virginia McFadden

As of 12.1.21

Figure 37: *Indecent* Running Order pg. 1

(Nave, Listengarten and Tokach 1)

Indecent

Running Order

Scene 9 (pg. 32-34):

- 9.1 Opening Night at The Provincetown Playhouse: In The Wings
- 9.2 The Performance
- 9.3 Onstage/ The Curtain Falls

Scene 10 (pg. 34-37):

- Full Company Meeting: The Provincetown Playhouse
- 11. "Aint We Got Fun"

Scene 11: (pg. 37-38):

- A Doctor, A Diagnosis
- "Aint We Got Fun" (reprise)

Scene 12: (pg. 38-42):

- 12.1 Opening Night on Broadway, Intermission
- 12.2 Beginning of Act Three
- 12.3 Officer Bailie Enters the Wings
- 12.4 The Last Moments on Broadway

Scene 13 (pg. 42-43):

- 13.1 The Cast And Producer Arrested for Obscenity
- 13.2 Rabbi Silverman- A Sermon, Temple Emanu-El

Scene 14 (pg. 43-44):

- After A Night in Jail

Scene 15 (pg. 45-48):

- 15.1 Eugene O'Neil at the Hell Hole, a West Village Bar
- 15.2 Staten Island: Sholem and Madje Asch's Home

Scene 16 (pg. 48):

- The Verdict: People of The State of New York Vs. The God of Vengeance

Scene 17 (pg. 48-51):

- 17.1 Lemml Watches the Sunrise Over Staten Island
- 17.2 Staten Island: Sholem Asch in His Study

As of 12.1.21

Figure 38: *Indecent* Running Order pg. 2

(Nave, Listengarten and Tokach 2)

Indecent

Running Order

Scene 18 (pg. 51-53):

START: "Bay mir bistu sheyn"

18.1 Grossinger's Catskills Resort: The Bagelman Sisters

18.2 1939: Nahkman Rehearses

END: "Bay mir bistu sheyn"

18.3 The Ararat Theatre Troupe, Krakowa Street

18.4 The French Embassy in Poland

Scene 19 (pg. 53-55):

1939-1941: Letters from Poland

Scene 20 (pg. 50-60):

20.1 Łódź, Ghetto, Poland: An Attic Turned into A Stage

20.2 A Blink in Time

20.3 The Rain Scene

20.4 They Feel the Rain

"Wiegala"

Scene 21 (pg. 60-62):

Moving Day, Sholem and Madje Asch's House

End of Play

Figure 39: *Indecent* Running Order pg. 3

(Nave, Listengarten and Tokach 3)

**APPENDIX D: CHEKHOV MOVEMENT EXERCISES:
OPEN/CLOSE, RADIATING FROM CENTER**

The following are excerpts taken from the chapter titled, “The Actor’s Body and Psychology” from Michael Chekhov’s *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*:

EXERCISE 1: OPEN/CLOSE

Do a series of wide, broad but simple movements using a maximum of space around you. Involve and utilize your whole body. Make the movements with sufficient strength, but without straining your muscles unnecessarily. Open yourself completely, spreading wide your arms and hands, your legs far apart. Remain in this expanded position for a few seconds. Imagine that you are becoming larger and larger. Come back to the original position. Repeat the same movement several times.

Now close yourself by crossing your arms upon your chest, putting your hands on your shoulders. Kneel on one or both knees, bending your head low. Imagine that you are becoming smaller and smaller, curling up, contracting as though you wanted to disappear bodily within yourself, and that the space around you is shrinking.

Resume a standing position, then thrust your body forward on one leg, stretching out one or both arms. Do the same stretching movement sideways to the right, to the left, using as much space around you as you can. Do different, wide, well-shaped, full movements. Make your movements complete, with sufficient strength and in moderate tempo. Avoid dancing movements. Do not hold your breath while moving. Do not hurry.

Pause after each movement. (Chekhov 5-6)

The purpose of this exercise is to awaken the body and give “sensations of freedom and increased life” (Chekhov 6). I found this introductory exercise to be beneficial when starting my warm-up routine, checking in physically to the sensations within the body, becoming more present and mindful, and focusing on the cycle of breath.

EXERCISE 2: OPEN/RADIATING FROM CENTER

Imagine that within your chest there is a center from which flows the actual impulses for all your movements. Think of this imaginary center as a source of inner activity and power within your body. Send this power into your head, arms, hands, torso, legs and feet. Let the sensation of strength, harmony and well-being penetrate the whole body. See to it that no areas of the body inhibit the flow of this energy from the imaginary center, but let it course freely.

Imagining that your arms and legs originate from this center within your chest (not from the shoulders and hips), try a series of natural movements: lift your arms and lower them, stretch them in different directions, walk, sit down, get up, lie down; move different objects; put on your overcoat, gloves, hat; take them off, and so on.

See that all the movements you make are instigated by that power which flows from the imaginary center within your chest. After the movement is accomplished, do not cut short the stream of power generated from the center, but let it flow and radiate for a while beyond the boundaries of your body and into the space around you. (Chekhov 7-8)

The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate the mind-body connection and follow the creative impulses within your creative self. Chekhov believed that by facilitating this creative flow emanating from an imaginary center of the body would create an ‘ideal’ instrument “to give it all kinds of characteristic features demanded by the part you are working on” (Chekhov 8). I found this exercise to be uplifting and empowering, particularly at the end of my warm-up routine. Exploring how this energy can flow into the space stimulated an awareness of my inner creativity and power.

**APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF VOCAL WARM-UP EXERCISE
WORKSHEET**

This resource was compiled during Prof. Majkowski's Voice II Class. This includes verbal cueing and the basic framework for an active voice and body.

Warm-Up Worksheet (adapted from Nancy Houfek and Vivian Majkowski)

How do we start to meet our characters?- Start to understand inner tempo rhythm-

(Shake out- 1 min) Start: Big X on the floor

Did you include all of the elements?

Are you vocally present? Play with alignment/warm-up/volume? Breathing?

Alignment and Energy Flow

(images, deep relaxation, muscle alertness, body awareness)

Take a moment to check-in, standing in alignment (feet underneath hip points- men approximately one fist, women- two fists) and slowly start to shift forward and back, feeling the whole foot along the floor, weight in each of the toes. Keeping your knees relaxed, shoulders falling down and back, top of the head forward and up. Begin to start to rotate around the keystone of the foot. As we move up the body, we begin to rotate the pelvis forward and back, right and left. Then move in a circular pattern in one direction, and then the other. We move up to the sternal bowl. Forward and back, right to left. Then again in a circular pattern in one direction and then the other. Drop the chin to chest and begin to nod to the right and left. Gently start to roll the head around its axis making sure to lift the neck in the backspace as to not compress the cervical vertebrae. Now rotate the other way. On an inhale, lift the head, focus on an object in front of you, and exhale one knee (left) knee in the air.

Begin swinging the leg forward and back, making sure to keep your breath and voice in the room, playing with pitch and with increasing intensity. Rest the L foot on the floor and be sure to notice where your body is becoming freer and more released. Inhale into those areas, seeing where you can release more, exhale the R foot in the air. Again, begin swinging the leg forward and back, playing with pitch and the height of the leg. Rest the R foot on the floor and again notice more freedom. Place the L foot in front of the R, starting by rocking the pelvis forward and letting the arm swing forward and back. Release the voice with the arm swing as the arm goes forward. (Count to 4). Let the arm swing. Now back the other way. (Count to 4). Ease the arm swing and allow the arm to settle. Be aware of the freedom and release in the shoulder joint. Repeat on the opposite side. Place the R foot in front of the L, starting by rocking the pelvis forward and letting the arm swing forward and back. Release the voice with the arm swing as the arm goes forward. (Count to 4). Let the arm swing. Now back the other way. (Count to 4). Ease the arm swing and allow the arm to settle.

Now we are going to shake all of our extremities, keeping our voices present and active, on a count of 3 and release into an open X on our mats. (One, two, three)

Future/past thoughts- 3 planes of breath-

(Images- opening up five senses- getting actor brain inside the room)

Now, as we release into our big X on our mats, we acknowledge that we bring thoughts of the past and future into this practice today. We want to acknowledge them, and to not ignore them, but we must also be present in this practice, and we do this by focusing on our breath. Checking into our planes of breath, we cycle through an up/down breath, breathing in, and release. Side to side: breathe in, and release. Front to back: breathe in, and release. Finally we engage in a

beach ball breath, expanding all sides of the ribcage, making sure to see and feel the ribs and they slide out and away and release in. As we do this, we remember the 4 parts of breath: Ribs, belly, belly, ribs. And then the pause. Dropping into this pause, we ignite the vocal focus line by placing a thumb into the belly button and pinky finger on the pubis symphysis. Finding an image to place into your dantian (I like an image of an old-fashioned thermometer with red, hot mercury) rising up through the vocal focus line through the 5 lumbar, 12 thoracic, and 7 cervical, (and using our other hand to tap the third eye) we take a breath, igniting the sound and release on a ha. Ask yourself, “where is vibration available? What do I need to open up?”

Exhale one foot on the ground, knee in the air. Exhale the other foot on the ground, knee in the air. Grab your shins with your forearms and give yourself a hug, rocking gently along the spine, imprinting the spine into the floor.

We cycle now into the four things that muscles can do. Take a deep breath here, breathing in your image for squeezing (I like the image of a spongy stress ball) and squeeze. Tighten your butt, your thighs, eyes, arms. And release back into the big X. Finding your down and wide breath, we breath in our image of stretching (I like the image of sticky saltwater taffy) stretching your legs, your limbs, your tongue, your mouth, opening your eyes wide as they can go, then release back into the big X. Again, finding that down and wide breath, we breathe in our image for shaking (Like bacon sizzling on a hot griddle) shake your whole body, arms, pelvis, head. And release back into the big X.

Allowing our bodies and muscles to melt into the floor, we close our eyes, and start activating our actor brains, by awakening the Five Senses. Picture yourself in a safe space, a happy place. Begin by asking yourself what this place looks like. Smell like? What are the sounds that you can hear? Can you reach out and touch something? What does it feel like? How does the air feel

on your skin? What does the air around you taste like? Remind yourself of all these discoveries, how this makes you feel, and how it enlivens your senses to be aware of this place in time. Tuck this image inside your dantian, and release it up on the vocal focus line on a ha. Now bringing awareness back into the body, we begin to start wiggling your toes, and fingers, your ankles, and wrists, and more of your core body becomes awake and ready.

Breath: Ribs and Support

(support isolations, breath exercises, rib isolations, ab stretches) Transversus work, Planes of breath- stretching, Modified up-dog/back-bend (ab stretches)

Making your feet as wide as your mat, exhale (L) foot on the ground, knee in the air. Exhale (R) foot on the ground, knee in the air. Flop the knees to left. Try to release those limbs to the floor. Release your right arm above the head and feel the pull across the side ribs. Place the left ankle on top of the knee and reinvest in the stretch. Release the ankle. Pulling the right knee back towards the midline of the body, then the left knee, flop the knees to the right. Release your left arm above the head and feel the pull across the side ribs. Place the right ankle on top of the knee and reinvest in the stretch. Release the ankle.

Pulling the left knee back towards the midline of the body, then the right knee. Both feet should be on the ground, knees in the air. Cross left ankle over right knee. Exhale the knee up towards the chest and begin rotating in the hip socket clockwise, and then counterclockwise. Interlace the fingers behind the thigh and pull toward you. Make sure the neck is relaxed and released along the floor. Lower the foot to the ground, and keeping the legs crossed, press against the lower thigh or ankle, feeling a stretch in the iliopsoas, whichever feels more comfortable. Repeat to the opposite side. Uncross the legs, release both feet on the ground, knees in the air. Cross

right ankle over left knee. Exhale the knee up towards the chest and begin rotating the hip socket clockwise, and then counterclockwise. Interlace the fingers behind the thigh and pull towards you. Lower the foot to the ground, and keeping the legs crossed, press against the lower thigh or ankle, feeling a stretch in the iliopsoas.

Uncross the leg, rest both feet on the ground (knees in the air). Flop the knees over to one side (left) and stretch the arms out to a T position, perpendicular to the body, hands facing down. Acknowledge the stretch within the side body and pull the knees up closer to the elbow joint. Turn the head in the opposite direction of the knees (right) and start a circle up and around the head for 10. (Count and clap) And back the other way for 10. (Count and clap) Activating the transversus, release on a ha. Twice. Ha, ha. Pull the knees back up towards the chest, and release to the opposite side. Flop the knees over to one side (right) and stretch the arms out to a T position, perpendicular to the body, hands facing down. Acknowledge the stretch within the side body and pull the knees up closer to the elbow joint. Turn the head in the opposite direction of the knees (left) and start a circle up and around the head for 10. (Count and clap) And back the other way for 10. (Count and clap) Activating the transversus, release on a ha. Twice. Ha, ha. Release the legs long along the mat. Reach your arms up above your head, interlace the fingers with the pointer finger reaching high above the head. Stretching long along the mat, reach up toward the opposite wall, feeling the stretch in the side ribs. Stretch over to the right, making a C curve bringing the legs and feet away from the midline of the body. And then recover. Stretch over to the left side, again making a C curve and feeling the stretch in the side ribs. Recover. Unlace the hands and place them on either side of head, approximating the ears. Exhale both feet on the ground. Prepare for Wheel stretch, inhale through the ribs, and then with the exhale, push the center of the body towards the ceiling, feeling a good stretch in the abdominals. Press and

hold for 15. Gently uncurl and release to back into floor. Reaching the left arm above your head, rotate the body to the left into a fetal position, resting the head on the bicep. Roll back over into child's pose and keep the arms lengthened above the head and weight back into the heels. Walk your fingertips over to the right, back to center, and then to the left.

Body Resonance

(hip releases, shoulder girdle releases, tremors, woofer opening)

Initiating through the pelvis, roll through base of the spine towards the head and release face down, belly down towards the floor. Grasping the ankles with both hands and keeping the head relaxed forward, we initiate Modified Bow Tremor. Try to initiate the pull with the front of your thighs, keeping the butt and lower back relaxed, head and shoulders released. Release the hands, place them in front of you on the mat, and quickly release back into child's pose.

Coming into healthy cow, place your weight back into your hands, forming a table-top position with hands approximating the shoulder joints, and with the chest parallel to the mat. Placing the upper teeth on the lower lip on the place between wet and dry, blow through the teeth with a puff of air like you are blowing a candle out on a cupcake. Once. Twice. Three times.

Release back into child's pose, forming a triangle to frame the third eye, across the forehead and bridge of the nose. Begin to warm up the tweeter on an "m", using short phrases and coloring the bones in the face. Blow through the lips, unvoiced. Voiced. Now with the tongue. Voiced. Keeping the tip of the tongue on the bottom teeth, give a big professional yawn.

Rolling back into leap frog, straighten the legs, allowing the upper body to hang over. Begin to roll back up, shaking out on three short phrases to standing. (Clap 1, 2, 3)

Placing the hands in front of the pelvis, scoop the hands under and activate the transverse to warm up the woofer. These should be cave-like sounds, and begin by loosening up the sounds

through the body by them beating out the sounds across the chest, down one leg and up the other. Grab one arm and pound out the back. Switch sides. Shimmy it out.

Facial Musculature and Head Resonance

(five floodgates, tweeter resonance)

Allow the neck to fall towards the chest. Rotate the head to the (right) and nod, aha. Back to the other (left) side, aha. Rotate back to right, bring your right arm up and pull gently pull down, releasing the head and shoulder blade. Bring the left arm up perpendicular to the floor, palm down. Allow the arm to release down through the corridor, find a “crunchy” spot or an area that needs some release, and begin to rotate back and forward. Reinvest in the stretch and flip the palm facing up and release back down through the corridor, finding another spot to rotate forward and back, adding some variety to the size of these circles. Bring the arm back up, perpendicular the body, bring your fingers back towards your head, release the tongue and wag both arm and tongue. Release the upper arm. Switch sides. Rotate back to left, bring your left arm up and gently pull down, releasing the shoulder blade. Bring the right arm up perpendicular to the floor, palm down. Allow the arm to release down through the corridor, find a “crunchy” spot or an area that needs some release, and begin to rotate back and forward. Reinvest in the stretch and flip the palm facing up and release back down through the corridor, finding another spot to rotate forward and back, adding some variety to the size of these circles. Bring the arm back up, perpendicular the body, bring your fingers back towards your head, release the tongue and wag both arm and tongue. Release the upper arm from the top of the head.

Interlace the fingers and place on the widest part of the skull, release the elbows towards the ground. Make sure that your knees are unlocked and that you aren't compressing the spine.

Look towards the left. Look towards the right. Release the hands from the back of the head.
Slowly stack the cervical vertebrae one at time, resting each one on top of the other.

Begin massaging the masseter muscle with the fingertips, working your way up and over the temporal mandibular joint, into the temporalis, the scalp, forehead, and back over the TMJ.

Warming up the pisiform bones and the base of our palms, start to dig into the muscle, allowing the muscle to release. Inhale, and then exhale press into the masseter muscle. Pulling the fingers along the jawline, hook the pinky fingers on each side of the mouth. Pull the sides of the mouth up to form comedy, then a diagonal, then tragedy, then the other diagonal. Pulling fingers through, we trill unvoiced, then voiced. Putting up our spit guard, we blow through the tongue unvoiced, then voiced. Grabbing each lip, we start to massage each one. Pull them apart in opposite directions, twisting and pulling them off the face. Articulate the tip of tongue, up, down, left, right. Circle clockwise, and then counterclockwise. And add other big professional yawn.

Pitch, Placement and Volume

(blending, extending, forward placement)

We start blending by reaching our left arm above our heads and activating the woofer, we blend moving downward, focusing the sound through our third eye, using short phrases as we move all the way down towards the tweeter, resting at our pubis. Play with rotating the pelvis in a figure-eights while keeping the body relaxed.

With an image of peanut butter on all the surfaces of your teeth that you are trying to clean off, begin chewing an “m”, playing with pitch. Inhale, chew an “m” and then when I clap, we will release on a trill. Inhale, “M’ (clap, trill). Good, now we will do that again, focusing on a target,

when I clap, we will releasing on a trill, breathe in our target, and release on a forward placed “ha”.

Articulation

(precision, strength, imaging)

Now our articulation exercises: Unvoiced bilabial stop-plosive, “puh, puh, puh”, and its voiced cognate, “buh, buh, buh”. Now an unvoiced alveolar stop-plosive “tuh, tuh, tuh” and its voiced cognate “duh, duh, duh”. Now unvoiced velar stop-plosive, “kuh, kuh, kuh” and its voiced cognate “guh, guh, guh”. Repeat the whole sequence: puh, buh, tuh, duh, kuh, guh.

Lastly, we have an image of Sally. What is she wearing today? Oh, girl, is that new? How did you get the money to buy that? Oh, she sold what? Her seashells. What kind? Big, small, tacky ones with rhinestones bedazzled on them. But where? By the Seashore. Which beach? Cocoa Beach? Laguna Beach? Sanibel Island? Now, place all those images together. Sally, sells seashells, by the seashore. Repeat faster, with more clarity in your images.

Fingers together, palms together, head lowered. Namaste.

**APPENDIX F: PRIMARY SOURCES FOR ORAL HISTORIES
AND ORAL POSTURES**

The following links were used to demonstrate oral postures for *Indecent*.

First Person with Fritz Gluckstein

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJTisX6jit0>

Religious life in Poland: Efraim Lieberfreund

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPngfs_WNwo

Notes: Includes sections of singing in Hebrew: 2:26

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Adam Boren

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIBKIVJCffQ>

Notes: Includes different older men voices (5:44, 9:22)

Songs from Testimonies: Jack M.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Cx_yzB_xrg

Notes: (4:15, 6:10)

Holocaust Survivor Testimonies

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qXVVYG2v2I>

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I00xEG6IROo>

Link: <https://youtu.be/b5iQkeprWf0>

Notes: Includes female and male primary sources

APPENDIX G: YIDDISH DIALECT NOTES

The following are rehearsal notes from dialect sessions with Vivian Majkowski. The notes are dated and include diagrams of vowel shaping and oral posture for the Yiddish dialect.

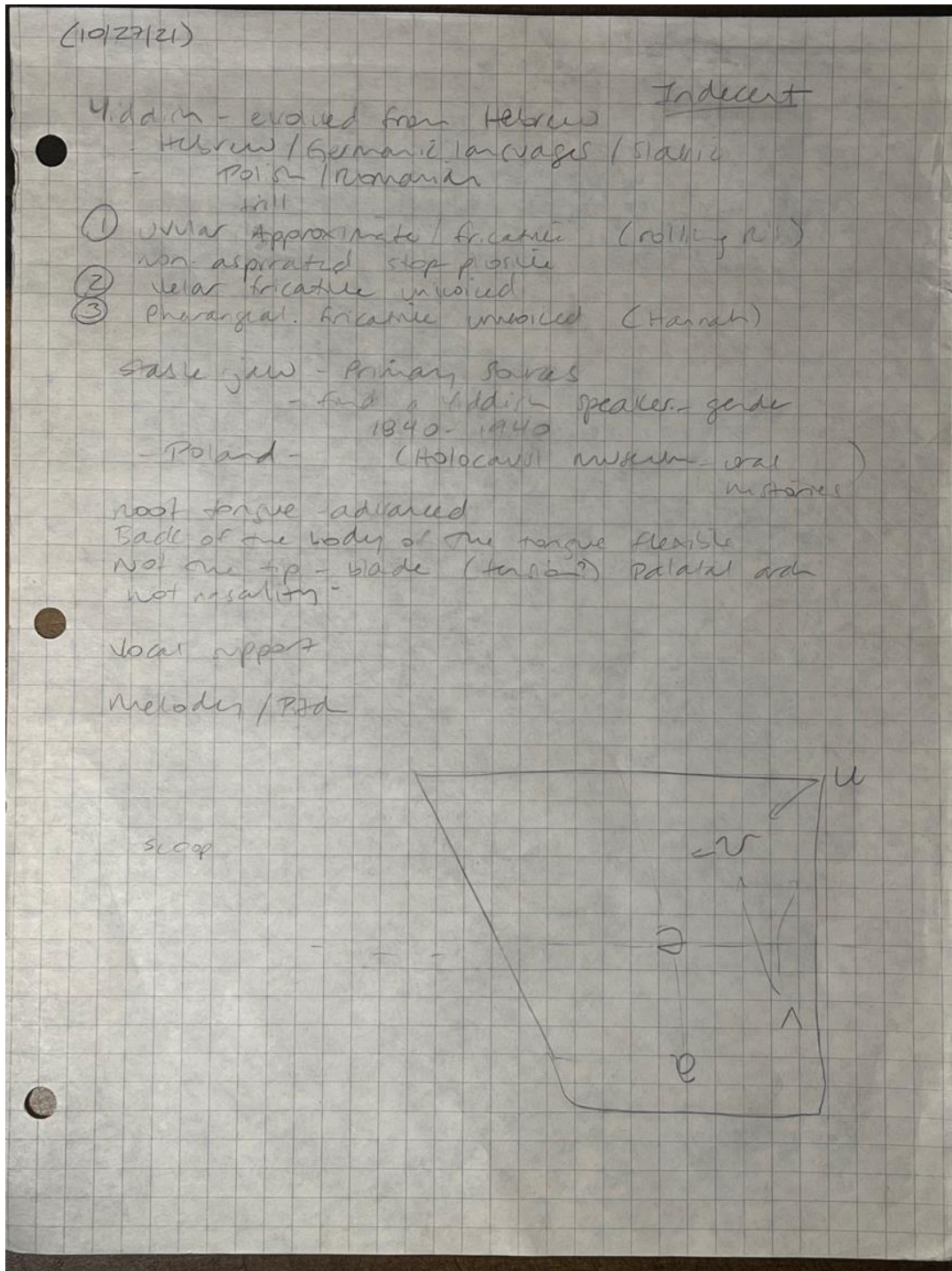


Figure 40: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 1

(dated 4 October 2021) (Majkowski)

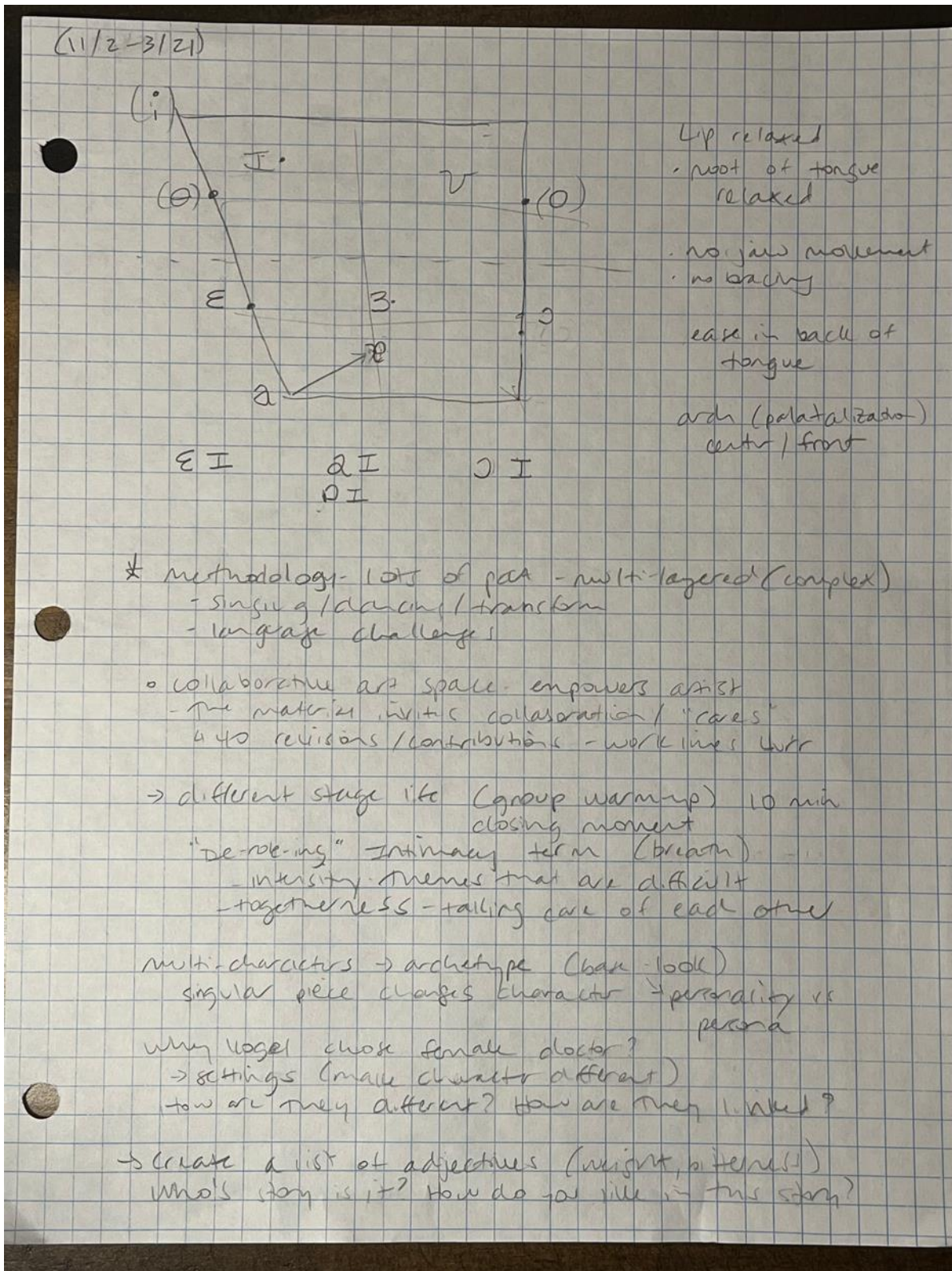


Figure 41: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 2

(dated 2-3 November 2021) (Majkowski)

Suzan Lori-Parks - revision & repetition
 o as made for a community / outside of my community

Matthew Lopez - Inheritance - AIDS, gay, fantasia

Story-boarding - collective - foundational base
 chair as performance object (memories)
 suitcases - practical / personal Mark Chagall - floating

11/4

Tension Nasal / Labial fold
 ↳ brings voice forward

Mason Faithful - cabaret feel

- loose; counter-culture

- unorthodox - Freida scene - Rudolph opinion

11/7

American oral posture - release back body of tongue to release

Jaw movement - Yiddish - does not exist
 ↳ stylize

Lip corner retraction - lips (pretty active)

Arch front/mid → scoop (middle of tongue)

Channeling of the tongue
 Saul Rubinek - 2nd generation - melody/rhythm

→ send primary source link → mordecai

Figure 42: Majkowski Dialect Notes pg 3
 (dated 4 November 2021 and 7 November 2021)

APPENDIX H: PHOTO AUTHORIZATIONS

Hello,

I authorize that **Robert Stark** has permission to use my photos taken for The Orlando Sentinel upon his request.

Thank you so much.

Regards,



July 10th, 2023

Figure 43: Photo authorization for Maddie Lane

Heather Gibson

To: Robert Stark

😊 ↩️ ⏪ ⏩ ...

Fri 7/7/2023 11:14 AM

Thanks, Drew. You have permission to use these photos. Please credit them "Photo by Tony Firriolo, courtesy of UCF."

Heather Gibson, '17MBA

Director, Marketing and Communications

College of Arts and Humanities

University of Central Florida

Figure 44: Photo authorization for Tony Firriolo's photos of *Indecent*

HS

Hannah Schorr

To: Robert Stark

😊 ↩️ ⏪ ⏩ ...

Tue 7/11/2023 4:17 PM

Drew Stark is absolutely permitted to use any picture taken by me (Hannah Schorr) backstage throughout the Indecent rehearsal/show process in his thesis.

Figure 45: Photo authorization for Hannah Schorr

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